

14th February 6pm They Saw Jesus' Glory

Service led by Anthony Manning, Sermon by Sam Whiteside

Bible readings by Hanne Manning and Rosie Lee. Prayers by Anthony Manning

This transcript is only of the readings and the talk

1st Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 [NIVUK 2011]

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

2nd Reading: Mark 9:2-9 [NIVUK 1984]

2 After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. 4 And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

5 Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' 6 (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

7 Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!'

8 Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

This is the word of our Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

[Sam:] Hello. Shall we just pray before I speak?

Heavenly Father, I just pray tonight that You will hear our prayers, You will hear our worship, and as we open Your Word, that You will bless us in an abundant way. Lord, we just thank You for Your Word tonight. In Jesus' name, teach us through it. Amen.

Have you ever had a mountaintop experience? Of course you have. It's Valentine's Day! So you've had a mountain top of experience when you fell in love, when you got married, maybe when your children came along, and you enjoyed them. Mountaintop experiences! Mountaintop experiences when you came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, mountaintop experiences when you pass an exam, or achieve something for which you reached in your life. Have you had any mountaintop experiences recently? Are you expecting any? One mountaintop experience that I had was when a young man came to give his life to Christ. But he was accompanied by his mother. And although his mountaintop experience was

coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ, that was great, and it was a great mountaintop experience for me because I'd known this young man for some years. But the greatest mountaintop experience on that occasion was this smile on the mother's face when her son came to know Jesus.

Are you expecting a mountaintop experience this week? This month? This year? Maybe several? The mountaintop experience that we experienced tonight in our reading, Mark 9 and verses 2-9, is an occasion, in fact the second occasion when Jesus took Peter, James and John up the mountain, on one of His missions, He took them with Him. And you remember that it was the same three disciples, Peter, James and John, who accompanied Jesus on the raising of Jairus' daughter. So a question for us tonight is how willing are we to accompany Jesus on missions? That's question number one. There will be several questions, as we go through tonight.

A word about the mountain: not named, but generally known as Mount Hermon. 9,200 feet high, about 12 miles north-east of Caesarea Philippi, quite a trek. I wonder how far we are prepared to go with Jesus on His mission? And are we finding it a little difficult, maybe because of COVID-19? And this Transfiguration probably occurred at night. Although Luke in his account, Luke 9 and verse 32, was careful to emphasise and show that the disciples were in fact awake. It wasn't a dream. They didn't dream this incident.

Also, in all that happened, did you realise, as we went through the reading tonight, that there was no communication between Moses and Elijah, and the disciples. They spoke with Jesus, it says, They spoke with Jesus. And I wonder why that was? Well of course, Moses and Elijah were not in their normal country, situation. They were in Heaven. And of course, and so was Jesus. He was transfigured before them. And that the disciples, Peter, James, and John, were on this planet still. And so the communication was between Elijah, Moses, and Jesus.

And you notice that they spoke about the Cross? Well, although they didn't say 'the Cross' in the Scriptures, they were talking about Jesus' departure, which would include the Cross, but they were talking about His Resurrection in the reading, Mark 9, verse 9, when Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone. That was rather strange, wasn't it? But it was because they were not in the same situation as the prophets of old and Jesus were in their situation now. Peter, of course, true to life, suggests building three shelters (Mark 9, verse 5). And here's another question. How about our own impulses, our own ideas? Sometimes, sometimes we get into a certain situation, which God has taken us to, Jesus up the mountain, as it were, and we have our own ideas. What about those?

Well, there's some outlines, but what I want to get at tonight is really, let us think about what we see in the Transfiguration. What do we see? Do we see the glory of the sinless and perfect humanity of Jesus, ready to return home to Heaven? He could have done, because He was sinless. But He chose to share in human death. But more than that, to be the perfect sacrifice for sin, and the means, of course, by which salvation could be achieved. Surely every Christian's mountaintop experience! But the Transfiguration, although it was significant as an event, and, of course, was significant concerning the person of Jesus, it was also a very important part of the spiritual education of the disciples. "Listen to My Son, whom I love," said the voice from the cloud (Mark 9, verse 7). This event, you see, confirmed their faith, although they'd have been perhaps beginning to waver a bit. In the previous chapter, Mark 8, the disciples had been told that Jesus was going to suffer many things, and be killed (verse 31). And of course, anyone that follows Him must be prepared to take up his cross and follow (verse 34). So maybe the disciples' faith was wavering a bit at this time.

And as we look forward from there to the future, the early church, we find the Transfiguration also had a profound effect on that church. 2 Peter 1 and verse 16 through 18 tells us, listen to what it says:

16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. **17** For he received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." **18** We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

How is our faith? How is our faith today, many years later? And how much are we listening to the Lord, and how much are we taking notice of the Holy Spirit's leading?

And then again, the Transfiguration also shows that the testimony of the Old Testament prophets, of whom Moses and Elijah were there, as representatives on the mountain, they also were being shown to the disciples before their very eyes. The prophecies that had been told were there before their very eyes. In Deuteronomy 18, and verse 15, it says

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

"You must listen to Him." Peter of course had been unwilling to do that. Remember (Mark 8:32) when Jesus was predicting His death, Peter was saying, "no, no, no, no, no, no." And Jesus had to rebuke him and say "Get thou behind me, Satan" or "Get you behind me, Satan."

It's a reminder that one way in which God speaks to us, one way in which Jesus speaks to us, is through the Scriptures. And the question is, are we listening? Are we listening? During the week I shared with Denise and Steve the fact that somebody asked once, "Where did Noah keep his bees during the flood?" And of course he kept them in the ark-hives. I hope you don't keep your Bible in the archives. Use it every day. Read it every day. It's necessary sometimes, and very often, for God to speak through His Word, the Bible.

And talking about scriptures, we had another reading tonight, 2 Corinthians 4 verses 3 to 6, that's those four verses. In 2 Corinthians, Paul talks in verse 3 of this chapter, and he talks about the veil. And he links it with 2 Corinthians 3 and 13, where the veil covered Moses' face. But there's another veil, the veil that is represented in our reading tonight, a veil that seeks to hide the present age from the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Satan was, and still is, seeking us to turn away from the light. Paul declares that man is made in the image of God, obviously linking it to Genesis 1:26. But sin has marred that image. However, Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). He shines in the heart of the believer. And the illumination that He gives accompanies regeneration. He shines, therefore any unbelief by mankind is not the obscurity of the message, but the hostility of humans, human beings. And that hostility is largely made up of not listening, not listening to Jesus when we have been told to listen to Him, just as the disciples at the Transfiguration on the mountaintop were told to listen to Him by the voice in the cloud.

So can I ask you to be bold. Go up the mountain, see the glory of God, listen to Jesus. You will have the light of life! And if you're already a Christian, go up again. We all need to go up and hear the voice every day. Your faith will be strengthened. Your life will be more abundant. It will be a mountaintop experience. And as a postscript: in the resurrection morning, when Jesus shall appear in the heavens, shining in all His glory, and His holy angels with Him, it will be a joyful time. He will be present. He will be present with us. And He will present us to the Father, saying, "These are the children You have given to Me." And we will rejoice together. What a mountaintop experience that will be!

Shall we just pray.

Heavenly Father I just pray tonight, that You will anoint Your Word, that You will speak to us, that we will be ready to go where You want us to go with You, we may be willing to go, that we may listen to Your voice and we will obey it. And we will rejoice in giving You all the glory, and all the praise. In Jesus' name, Amen.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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