

JESUS TRANSFIGURES ON A MOUNTAIN

Mark 9:1-13

Key Verse: 9:3

"His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them."

The meaning of Jesus' death on the cross was a heart moving message. The meaning of Jesus' death on the cross includes all the meaning of Bible truth. It also includes God's plan of salvation that came out of his divine compassion. The meaning of Jesus' death on the cross is the revelation of God's love to the whole world. The meaning of Jesus' death on the cross is the fulfillment of God's heart to save people from their sins. The meaning of Jesus' death on the cross is to give us God's promise that all our transgressions are forgiven and we become children of God. We will have everlasting inheritance in God's house. The meaning of Jesus' death satisfies our souls because it gives us the meaning of life and it also gives us a clear destination. Usually, at churches, when any pastor speaks on the meaning of Jesus' death, the listeners first close their eyes, and next many a man snores until the message is over. But last Sunday our message on the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross was indeed heart moving. One lady put on beautiful makeup. But she began to cry in the middle part of the message. Her makeup was washed away and her eyes looked red. There is one young boy who was determined not to be moved by the message. For the last ten years he never opened his heart to God's servant's message. But last Sunday, when he heard the meaning of the death of Jesus, first he frowned. Next, his eyes were shining. Next, he closed his eyes and began to shed many tears. It was a miracle that such a boy cried many tears, hearing the message of the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross. After the message, when we sang hymn #139, "In the cross...In the cross," most of us sang from our hearts though many could not sing properly because of their tears. Still, the sound of hymn singing reverberated in this large sanctuary. As we studied, without knowing the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross, our hearts are hardened and we become slaves of sorrow and fatalism. But when we know the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross, heavenly sunshine smears into our souls and we are happy and we have no anxiety syndrome, nor security problem. There is happiness in the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross. May we [meditate](#) on the meaning of Jesus' death and deepen our relationship with our Lord [Jesus Christ](#). He was on the cross to make us his own children by forgiving all our transgressions and iniquities, and to bring us back to his glorious kingdom to live there forever in love and peace. Today's passage is the story about Jesus transfigured on a mountain. Let's see about the meaning of Jesus' transfiguration.

I. Those who will not taste death in this world (1)

Look at verse 1. "And he said to them, 'I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the [kingdom of God](#) come with power.'" As human beings, no one wants to face death. One young man was very angry that in television commercials there were too many advertisements about funeral homes. The young man really didn't like to see the funeral home advertisements in the television commercials. This shows us that all of us want to live. Nobody wants to taste death. That's a general human instinct. In verse 1 Jesus said,

"I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power." This verse teaches us two things. One who believes in Jesus is saved at the moment he accepts Jesus as his Savior. Salvation does not come after one's death. Salvation comes at the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior; our sins are forgiven and the Holy Spirit seals us as children of God. John 5:24 says, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." According to this verse, our everlasting life starts at the moment we meet Jesus; we are forgiven and we become children of God. Most importantly, we will not taste death while we still live in this world. When we look up at the cross of Jesus, we feel tragedy at his crucifixion. But that is the moment we are saved. I know you all watched the movie, "Ben-Hur," starring Charlton Heston, a Northwestern graduate. He had a knife in his heart to get revenge on Masalla, who had been a friend when they were boys. Later, Masalla became the Roman commander of the Judean country. When Ben-Hur had a knife in his heart, he was always angry and murderous, even though he was from a noble family in Judea. He was condemned by Masalla because he was against Rome. And he was sent to a galley to row a boat. Sometimes he rowed the boat at normal speed, sometimes raving speed, sometimes charging war speed. After galley life for three years, he came back to his home country Judea. His gorgeous house was all ruined. Still, his slave girl Esther was there with her crippled father who had been tortured by the Roman soldiers. One day, Esther was going to hear Jesus' words on the plain. But Judah Ben-Hur did not want to go there because he only thought about how to do away with Masalla, his lifetime opponent. One night, Judah Ben-Hur came home late. Esther did not welcome him as before. Then Judah Ben-Hur asked her why she was unkind to him that night. She answered, "You are no more Judah Ben-Hur. You are just like Masalla. You have a sword in your heart with only a revenging spirit." Later, Judah Ben-Hur followed Jesus to the cross. He heard Jesus' words, "Father, forgive them," and the sword in his heart was taken away; he began to have the peace of God. Esther took his mother and sister who had leprosy to Jesus at the time Jesus was crucified. His beloved mother and sister were cured from leprosy and they looked as beautiful as before. This story tells us that those who do not believe in Jesus taste death because of their hatred and revenging spirit, fear of death, and their wishes to make a lot of money and live in this world forever, which is impossible. I talked about Judah Ben-Hur because it is a good illustration of what it means to not taste death before we see the kingdom of God with power. Those who look up at Jesus' cross and come to know the meaning of his death as the Lamb of God receive forgiveness. Most importantly, looking up at Jesus' cross, we receive eternal life. Eternal life starts when we meet Jesus. As soon as we believe in Jesus, we cross over from death to life, our sins are washed away, and we have his life in our souls. Therefore, we have eternal life and we never feel death in our lifetimes. This happens to those who believe in Jesus in their souls. Do you want to taste death moment by moment? Or do you want to taste eternal life in Jesus and live in this world tasting Jesus' eternal life in your soul? Let's read verse 1 one more time. "And he said to them, 'I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'"

II. Jesus transfigures on a mountain (2-3)

Look at verse 2a. "After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone." Up until now, Jesus participated in the earthly messianic ministry. During those times, his disciples came to know that Jesus is the Son of God Almighty and many pressing crowds of people were healed. In addition to this, Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. Another time, Jesus fed four thousand people with seven loaves. Jesus had done such marvelous miracles. Jesus also healed so many sick people day and night—even a blind man and a man with leprosy. He also wiped tears from the widowed woman who was following her son's coffin by raising her son from death (Lk 7:15). The four gospels tell us that Jesus revealed God's love endlessly. He revealed God's compassion in sending his one and only Son to this world. During the time Jesus was shepherding, he looked drained. He also looked like a poor farmer. Jesus' shepherd life made him look a pathetic person. His disciples were not impressed by Jesus' outward appearance, even though they recognized that Jesus is the Son of God Almighty.

One day, Jesus took the top disciple Peter, and James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them (2). His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them (3). Here Jesus shows his original image as God to his disciples. It was because his crucifixion was approaching and, while his disciples believed that he is the Son of God, they didn't grasp its deep meaning. So he wanted to show them his original image as God. His disciples had seen their master Jesus as a poor man with rugged clothes. And his face was drained because of his shepherd heart toward so many sick people. Now, when his disciples saw his original image as God, they saw he was really wonderful. His clothes became dazzling white. I thought about dazzling white for a time. I could not explain it. I wonder if any of you can explain what "dazzling white" means. His transfigured image was whiter than anyone in the world could bleach it. As I said before, this was to show them his original image before his crucifixion. Even though he dies on the cross, he will rise again as the Risen Christ. He will ascend to heaven and restore his position as God the Son.

What does the color white indicate? White always symbolizes in the Bible the holy God or a holy angel. Isaiah 6:1-3 says, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'" Here the angels covered their faces. It was because the Lord on the throne looked dazzling white. They could not look at him. If they looked at him, they felt they would be blind angels. Especially, Isaiah 6:3 says, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty...." In this verse, Holy, Holy, Holy, Almighty God revealed himself to Isaiah as an image of dazzling white. Holiness is God's attribute. The only holy one is the Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. This holy God has no stain or any color the world can produce. So we can say that the Holy, Holy, Holy God Almighty is dazzling white. Revelation 1:14 says, "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire." Our holy, holy God Almighty is clearly described as white like wool, as white as snow. The end of Revelation 1:16 says, "His face

was like the sun shining in all its brilliance." This also tells us that our Lord Jesus is Holy, Holy Almighty God whose image is, in all its brilliance, white. Revelation 4:11 says, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." Jesus is the Son of God Almighty who is worthy to receive glory and honor and power. Here the word "glory" is like the brightly shining sun. This also explains that Jesus' transfigured image was like a blazing fire. Revelation 5:12 says, "In a loud voice they sang: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!'" This verse explains that Jesus is worthy of receiving glory. As I said before, glory reveals shining glory. It is dazzling white and tells us that Jesus is the holy God.

III. Jesus receives counseling from Moses and Elijah (4)

Jesus is the Son of God. Still, he is a perfect man and perfect God. We often think of his crucifixion as a familiar story. But one who receives capital punishment—crucifixion—trembles before he is executed. Jesus worked hard. But his final goal was to die on the cross as the Lamb of God. He knew it was God's hope for all human beings. He knew that it was God's plan of world salvation.

Still, Jesus is a perfect man, as well as the perfect God. So he needed counseling. After showing who he was to his disciples, he wanted to meet Moses and Elijah, who were known as suffering servants. Here we learn that Jesus was a perfect man and perfect God. He suffered so much during the time of earthly messianic ministry and was despised and rejected and intimidated by the Pharisees. Now he had to take up his cross and die on it as the Lamb of God. He needed counseling. So he met Moses and Elijah. It was very necessary for Jesus to receive counseling from suffering servants. He met, in a transfigured appearance, Moses and Elijah. It is very apparent that Jesus heard from them about their sufferings as a shepherd and as a prophet. Jesus was strengthened by their counseling.

In the same way, Mary the mother of Jesus sought counsel. One day, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was surprised at his greeting. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Lk 1:28-33). At that time Mary was engaged and waiting for the end of the one-year engagement, which was almost over. She was happy. In her happiness, she sang and danced around in her kitchen and called, "O, Joseph! O, Joseph!" While washing dishes, she stopped and called, "O Joseph, Joseph, Joseph! You know how much I love you. Now a few days are left in our engagement. After a few days, we can marry and we will be together. I can see your face every day. When I think about these things I am flushed," and she flushed even more. When we look at Luke's narrative, the virgin Mary seemed to have been a little bit hesitant to obey the angel's message. Then in Luke 1:35 the angel spoke strongly, saying, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

The virgin Mary learned that to conceive the Son of God before marriage with Joseph was God's plan for her. But it was very difficult for her. She sang no more. She no more turned around with a tango rhythm. She prayed quietly and decided not to go to Joseph to talk about this matter. She preferred to visit Elizabeth, whom the angel mentioned had already conceived. So she fearlessly visited Elizabeth who lived in a mountain village. She received counseling from the grandma Elizabeth and was convinced she had to be the mother of Jesus before her marriage.

Sometimes, in living a life of faith, we confront many problems. Then we are tempted to find a non-Christian friend who will tell us about the worldly vices and the easygoing way of life. Our sinful nature always directs us to visit for counseling not spiritual people, but rather worldly friends or vicious people who are against our Lord Jesus Christ. Then we can stumble and become a prey of the devil. One can give up the life of faith because of a wrong choice of counselor. Therefore, we have to be very careful about choosing a counselor. We must learn that Jesus talked with Moses and Elijah. Praise and thank our Lord Jesus who visited Moses and Elijah for counseling right before his crucifixion. Lord, help us not to choose sinful counselors. Lord, help us choose spiritual people as our counselors at the time of crisis. May God help us to do so.

IV. Peter's fantasy (5-8)

Peter interrupted Jesus' talking with Moses and Elijah: "Dear sir, excuse me for a moment. Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." (5) In his fantasy world, Peter really felt good. It was like the kingdom of God. He wanted to live there forever without any confrontation or contest or competition or final examination. He wanted to be there with great men of God, Moses and Elijah, and his master Jesus the Son of God forever, and never come back to the mundane world. At the moment he was talking to Jesus, he did not know what he was talking about (6).

As soon as Peter's request was spoken, a cloud appeared and enveloped them. And a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" (7) Peter and James and John had just listened to Jesus talk about his suffering, death and resurrection. But at that fantastic moment Peter forgot and wanted to put up shelters for Jesus and Moses and Elijah. He did not mention his tent, but he mentioned his tent in his mind. This is the reason God appeared and enveloped Jesus and Moses and Elijah and a voice came from the cloud and said to Peter, James and John: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" Peter and James and John are just like us. We hear the word of God and say, "Amen, Amen!" But when some fantastic moment comes, we completely forget about the word of God we just heard and become like the Pharisees. May God bless us to remember Jesus' cross and his resurrection in our souls. May God help us not to forget Jesus' death and resurrection at a fantastic moment.

Peter hoped this kingdom-like moment would extend and extend forever. But suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus (8). Here we learn that although we have so many things, even fantasy to be with Jesus, we must remember that someday we will be only with Jesus and nothing else. The Bible tells us that Jesus is our Christ and Lord. We have the meaning of life and existence, and

we have our future, when we are only with Jesus Christ, and no one else.

Worldly people have no idea about the Savior Jesus who died on the cross for their sins. They are only interested in computers and their accessories. I heard that one of our Ph.D. missionaries bought four computers since he came to Chicago. And many have read computer journals without fail for the last ten years. But they cannot be with computers and computer accessories in the last days. They cannot be even with their beloved ones in the world. They will be only with Jesus. We must remember, "Jesus is all the world to me, my life, my joy, my all. He is my strength from day to day," without him I have no one to be with in the last day. We have to be serious about this. Without Jesus at the last day we go nowhere; we fall into a bottomless pit where the burning of sulfur never ends.

V. They wanted to know what "rising from the dead" meant (9-13)

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. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what 'rising from the dead' meant (9,10). They were indeed curious and serious about Jesus' rising from the dead. It was because there was no one who rose from the dead in history. They had been taught Jesus' death and resurrection so many times. But Jesus' resurrection remained in their hearts as a question. In short, they had no faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. If we have no idea about the rising of Jesus from the dead, we are going nowhere and we know nothing about Jesus or about ourselves. We are just wandering around in sin. Therefore we must believe what Jesus said about his death and resurrection.

In their hearts, the disciples had a question that stemmed from a rumor: It was the rumor that Elijah would come first and restore all things (11). So they were waiting for Elijah. But Jesus taught them that Elijah had already come in the name of John the Baptist and had been killed instead of restoring all things as they had expected. Actually, the death of John the Baptist was the restoration of human souls and the preparation for Jesus' messianic ministry and his death on the cross and resurrection.

We are living in this real world. We see many kinds of people. Then we close our mouths first, and next our hearts; we learn how to make plastic smiles and how to tell others nonsense stories as a means of making the atmosphere where we belong. This is not the way we must live. We must live by believing that Jesus is the holy God. Those who believe his death and resurrection will live forever with our Lord Jesus the Almighty God in a dazzling white place where many saints welcome us, praising our victory as pilgrims. May God give you Jesus' real image as the holy God on the transfiguration mountain.