

The Transformer

Mark 9:2-9

February 15, 2015 SOH

Theme: Remembering Christ's Glory

Though I've seen the river thousands of times, I've been there only once. The headwaters of the Colorado River are high on a mountain in Rocky Mountain National Park at a small lake, a pond really, Lapoudre Pass Lake at 10,174 feet. Not very imposing, yet it is a grand sight in the mountains, really a fitting place for the Colorado River to begin its halting journey to the dry deserts where it now waters farms and cities instead of running free into the Gulf of California. You can't raft the river here, in fact most of the year, you can't even float a canoe, it's often just a marsh, the natural result of beaver dams. It's a long way from the Grand Canyon and you can't generate electricity, or irrigate farms, or water a city, but you can water your horse here. It's a beautiful spot that calls for you to plop down on the grass and have a picnic as gaze over the amazing landscape.

Can you blame Peter for wanting to stay on the mountain top? The mountains grand vistas are often hard to visually take in; we're not used to such dramatic views it's hard to focus your eyes on that much scenery. And there with Peter on the mountain is his Rock Star, Jesus. He's the rising star in the first century world of rabbi's. Why the name "Jesus" was gathering more hits than any other in the wwj—the "world wide Jerusalem information web." Jesus

had taken Peter along with James and John up the mountain. They were in the inner circle with "The Man" himself.

Imagine for a moment, Paul Hewson, invites you to his cabin in the mountains of Colorado, just you and two other friends. For a whole day, it's just the three of you. WOW! What? You look like you don't know who Paul Hewson is....oh, you might know him by the name Bono of the rock band U2. There you are sharing a sandwich and a soda while discussing the theological implications of songs like; "Rattle and Hum," or "I still haven't Found What I'm Looking For," or maybe, "Sunday, Bloody Sunday."

Well, some would find that a pretty cool moment. Imagine your favorite hero or 'rock star' inviting you to a clandestine and very exclusive meeting. It'd be pretty amazing having a deep theological chat over chips as I ask Bono, "Can we ever answer the call of God like you challenge with the words from your song;

And it's true we are immune  
When fact is fiction and TV reality  
And today the millions cry  
We eat and drink while tomorrow they die

(Sunday, Bloody Sunday)

The real battle just begun  
To claim the victory Jesus won.

But wait, there's more! It's not just your hero, but the hero's of history show up too – live and in-person. Elisha as himself and the one and only Moses, it's a triple header just for you. No wonder Peter's a little beside himself. Giddy with joy he blurts out, let's build a private little three-chapel church right here where you can preach all day to me and we'll just hang together. It'll be just for the six of us – the 'rat-pack' forever.

In Peter's giddy outburst, he misses the point. Why it was just a few days earlier, while walking to the villages of Philippi right on the coast of the Med (some nice beaches there too), that Jesus had posed the question Peter had an answer for; "Who do you say I am?" asked Jesus. Peter's answer was profound – "You are the Messiah" yet, I wonder, did he really understand his own words. Peter's concept is much like ours. We want a Jesus like the t-shirt that reads, "Jesus is my homeboy."

Come on, now, deep down isn't that what you want? A Jesus just for you? Your best friend. The guy who not only has the answers, but can make it happen – the way you want it too, of course? The friendly pal Jesus is the image of quite a bit of commercial kitsch you can find in any Christian bookstore, and now that big business has figured out Christians have money to spend; you'll find a lot of it in corners of grocery stores and convenience stores too. The only problem is that perspective and understanding of Jesus is way too narrow. It's too focused on how we want to

perceive him, not as he really is. It's what can happen when you're too close for too long and all you see is the river bank; you can't see the whole river.

The mountaintop is a great place to visit.

Scottish Theologian, Henry Drummond once wrote about mountaintops;

*"God does not make the mountains in order to be inhabited. God does not make the mountaintops for us to live on the mountaintops. It is not God's desire that we live on the mountaintops. We only ascend to the heights to catch a broader vision of the earthly surroundings below. But we don't live there. We don't tarry there. The streams begin in the uplands, but these streams descend quickly to gladden the valleys below."*

We call it the "Transfiguration of Jesus" and most pastors re-visit this passage every year just like we do with Christmas and Easter. Why is this such an important passage that we keep coming back year after year? As we're introduced to this event, Mark writes that Jesus was "**Transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.**" If you're using "New Tide" you know, "Tide II," this would be like using "Tide 100."

The word 'transfigure' means to change form or appearance, or to glorify. The Greek here in verse 2 is passive. This is something happening to Jesus not something he or the disciples have caused. Then a voice is

heard from a cloud, and it's not the first time we've heard a voice from a cloud either; first at Jesus' baptism a declaration that he is God's beloved Son and now again a declaration of Jesus' divine nature.

I'm sorry to break it to you but Jesus is not your 'homeboy' or your BFF, he is not just a prophet - they bow to him. His is not your "ace" up your sleeve to be pulled out whenever it's convenient. He is the great I AM, El Shaddi, Addoni, El-Elyon, El-Olam. God, God Almighty, Lord, The Most High God, Everlasting God.

It's at the mountaintop, those moments when God is revealed to you, those rarified occasions when the veil between this world and the real world - the kingdom of God, is pulled back just a smidgen and the intensity is nearly too much and everything is revealed for that moment, however fleeting, and you are transfigured. You are changed from the glimpse of His presence. That's from just a glimpse, imagine if he reached out and actually touched you.

The transfiguration is important because it helps us remember that the beautiful little baby Jesus, the disciple's friend, the one you find comfort in, pray to, whose name pops out so easily, is not one we should be so comfortable tossing his name around without awe in our voice. He's also the one who created the galaxies and the laminin - the glue holding your cell walls together and enabling new cells to grow for healing. It's Jesus who hung on the cross and lay in a grave for three days. And it's the same Jesus who

walked out of that tomb. It's the same Jesus who said, I will never leave you, I leave you my peace, not the world's peace. It's the same Jesus who promised the presence of the Holy Spirit to you. The same Jesus who proclaimed "your sin is forgiven" and the same Jesus who waits for you to come home when you get so mad at him you call him names.

Wait a minute. The more I think about it, isn't that the kind of friend we really need in life? Maybe that's one reason we come here together struggling and working to climb so we can breathlessly peek once again from the mountaintop and re-new that image of the glory of God in Jesus and once more sense giddiness in the joy of discovering Him. When you hear the words, "This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him!" You can say, "It is good for us to be here." It is good for you to be here because tomorrow you go out there to follow in the footsteps of Peter.

**"Suddenly, when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus."**