

September 27, 2026

God Revealed in Mark

“Part 2: Jesus’ Transfiguration”

Mark 9:2-8

Intro:

Last Sunday we began a three week series titled “God Revealed in Mark”, which is inspired by the fourth chapter of the book *Who Is God?* by Richard Bauckham. In that chapter, Bauckham zeroes in on three significant moments in the Gospel of Mark that give a Trinitarian revelation of God.

The first of those revelatory moments is Jesus’ baptism in Mark chapter 1. Last week, we explored that moment and what the experience for Jesus says to us today. The third message in the series jumps to the end of the gospel and to God being revealed through Jesus’ death on the cross. In that moment the temple veil is torn from top to bottom, and revelation of divine presence is given from the unlikely voice of a Roman soldier.

This morning, we are going to look at the mid-point revelation experience found in chapter 9. As was mentioned last week, these three moments in Mark’s gospel are not the only times that God in Jesus is revealed, but they mark the high points of those moments. One of those “other” moments is found just prior in chapter 8, in a private Q & A between Jesus and the disciples where Jesus asks the question “Who do people say I am?” followed by “Who do you say I am?” To the first question, several answers are given, including that Jesus is Elijah returned to earth to finish the ministry God took him away from. To the second question, Peter steps up and recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah that the Jews had been waiting for. I don’t think Peter really grasps the full impact of the declaration that he makes, because Jesus then begins to tell the disciples about his impending death and Peter tries to shut down that whole line of conversation. All of that leads us to where we are pausing this morning.

The Mountain:

Carmen Joy Imes, in her book “Bearing God’s Name”, comments that “Time after time Jesus + Mountain = something interesting.”¹ She is just referring to mountain moments within the Gospels, but I would add that throughout the whole Bible, any time something happens on a mountain it is going to be interesting. Maybe we should try to figure out a way to incorporate “Mountain” into our church name, so we could advertise that exciting things happen at the Mountain.

I would like to invite you to climb with me to the top of a mountain with Jesus, Peter, James, and John to witness the exciting thing that happens this time.

As I mentioned, Peter has just recently identified Jesus as the Messiah and subsequently tried to block the revelation that Jesus must die. Peter needs to experience something mind-blowing to really drive home the significance of Jesus as Messiah and God’s son.

As we noted last week, Mark’s gospel varies from Matthew and Luke in the description of what is going on. In the other gospels, the description of what happens to Jesus is focused mainly on his face. In Mark, the transformation is focused on Jesus’ clothing – meaning the whole of his person and not just his face. This transformation is one of the first things the disciples witness when they are gathered on the mountain.

It would have been a bizarre and, quite frankly, terrifying thing for those disciples to witness. One moment they are just relaxing with Jesus after the hike, and the next he is glowing whiter than the whitest of things, and is chatting with Moses and Elijah. Just how they recognize that these two figures are indeed Moses and Elijah we don’t know, but somehow the disciples know. This is a bizarre scene and Peter’s first response could be forgiven in light of how strange all of this is. Mark even offers an excuse for good ol’ Peter by saying that he didn’t know what else to say because the three of them were terrified.

¹ Carmen Joy Imes, *Bearing God’s Name: Why Sinai Still Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 147.

Moses and Elijah are long gone to history – Moses has died and was buried by God, and Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind hundreds of years before this. And yet, they are standing there talking with Jesus. This is no apparition or ghost. They look solid enough that the first words out of Peter's mouth are, "Let us set up a tent for each of you." Ghosts don't need tents. Likely Peter hasn't really waited for an answer and was getting started on those tents, when a cloud descends upon them all and voice speaks out from the cloud:

"This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him."

And as suddenly as they had appeared, Moses and Elijah vanish and it is just Jesus and the three disciples left.

There is a lot going on in this narrative moment.

For Jews who are looking for signs of the coming Messiah, Moses and Elijah represent the prophetic and priestly mantle that the Messiah would wear. But that is not the focus of revelation that we will look at this morning.

First, we want to give some thought to transformed appearance of Jesus. This does connect with Moses and Elijah in some ways. When Moses met with God on Mount Sinai, his face took on such a holy glow that when he came back down from the mountain, the people couldn't stand to look at him and asked that he cover his face until the glow faded. But, even though his face glowed, Moses had not seen God's face. Every time both he and Elijah had opportunity to try and see God's face, their faces were hidden, either by God covering them with his hand, or by them simply turning their back because God asked to.

With Jesus, even in the transfigured state, Moses and Elijah could look full upon him. The disciples as well, are able to see the Son of God without fear for their own safety or sanity. Jesus is the way we see God in so many ways.

Second, He is also what stands between us and the fullness of heaven. This is a foreshadowing of his death. In the moment of his death, the temple curtain – or veil – was torn. There is no more limiting people's access to God. Jesus, in the transformed body on that top of that mountain, showed himself to be the veil between humanity and God.

Finally, there is the matter of the tents and the voice from the cloud. Peter's desire, albeit misplaced, was to put Moses, Elijah, and Jesus into places of honour. The moment has hints of king David's desire to build a temple for God in Jerusalem. Peter's offering is on a much smaller scale. And as with David's larger offer to build God a temple, while an admirable desire on their parts, it is not what God is asking them to do.

As the cloud descends (again, this would remind readers of Israel's history and relationship with God), a voice speaks out with a message that sounds very similar to what was spoken back at Jesus' baptism. There are a few differences though. One is that the Father is addressing a wider audience than just Jesus in the opening words "This is my dearly loved Son." (Compare with Mark 1:11 "You are my dearly loved Son.") Now others are witness to the claim of fatherhood and sonship between God the Father and Jesus. This is now a message that others need to hear. It is a confirmation of the revelation spoken by Peter just a week or so earlier of Jesus being the Messiah. Those words set the tone for what should be expected from the Messiah. If there was any question or doubt in the minds of Peter, James or John, the voice from the cloud should have erased them.

The second part of this message is that those listening, and reading now, in Mark's gospel, are to listen to Jesus. It is that simple.

Conclusion:

Why would the Father change the second part of the message from what He said at the baptism of Jesus? Is He no longer proud of Jesus? Of course he is. But just as the announcement of who Jesus is in relationship to the God the Father is to set us straight, the second sentence is a caution for Peter (and James, John and all

of us who read these words) not to get ahead of ourselves and miss our own role in this revelation.

Remember that Peter wanted to put up tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. This is a way to assign glory to those individuals. But that is not his, or our job. Carmen Joy Imes puts it this way “Glory is a bit more of what he (Peter) had in mind for Jesus rather than the suffering Jesus had predicted... the divine voice puts Peter in his place: your job is to listen to Jesus, not to try to manage my (His) glory.”²

In Peter’s case, he needed to set aside the agenda of glory and power and revolution that he had associated with the Messiah figure, and instead, listen to and absorb what Jesus had to say about how his mission actually worked. Peter’s pre-existing ideas would get in the way of Jesus’ purpose.

We too need to listen to Jesus. Yes, we do reflect Christ in the way that we live and how we treat others, but we also can be prone to trying to force God’s glory to fit an image that we have in our minds. That is not our job. Yes, our words and actions can have an impact, positive or negative, on how other people view God, but God’s glory is not defined by my deeds or misdeeds.

Jesus is glorified when we listen to his instruction on our lives. He is glorified when his people take his teaching to heart and live in that teaching each day. Listening involves daily prayer and reading of the Bible. Hearing involves meeting with other Christians to study and understand the Bible from various perspectives.

When we fail to do those things, when we set our own agenda, or our own vision of how people should perceive God ahead of listening in obedience, we harm God’s reputation. We place limits on what He can and should do. We are no longer following Jesus then, but expecting Him to follow us.

² Imes, *Bearing God’s Name*, 148.

So, listen to Jesus. God will look after his own glory. We need to look after taking in what Jesus is trying to tell us. Read your Bible. Pray. Have God-focused conversations with fellow believers. What is Jesus saying to you?

Let's pray.