



Feb. 25, 2018 Mk. 9: 2-10 & Gen 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18

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ENTERING THE SCENE:

At some moments we experience complete unity within us and around us. This may happen when we stand on a mountaintop and are captivated by the view. It may happen when we witness the birth of a child or the death of a friend. It may happen when we have an intimate conversation or a family meal. It may happen in church during a service or in a quiet room during prayer. But whenever and however it happens we say to ourselves: "This is it ... everything fits ... all I ever hoped for is here." This is the experience that Peter, James, and John had on the top of Mount Tabor when they saw the aspect of Jesus' face change and his clothing become sparkling white. They wanted that moment to last forever. This is the experience of the fullness of time. These moments are given to us so that we can remember them when God seems far away and everything

appears empty and useless. These experiences are true moments of grace. Henri Nouwen

Mark 9:2-10

2 And after **six** days, Jesus took with him **Peter** and **James** and **John**, and let them up a **high mountain apart** by themselves; and he was **transfigured** before them, 3 and his garments became glistening, intensely **white**, as no fuller **on earth** could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them **Elijah** with **Moses**; and they were talking to Jesus. 5 And **Peter** said to Jesus, "**Master**, It is well that we are here; let us make **three booths**, one for you and one for **Moses** and one for **Elijah**." 6 For he did not know what to say, for they were **exceedingly afraid**. 7 And a **cloud overshadowed** them, and a **voice** came out of the cloud, "This is my **beloved son**, **listen** to him." 8 And **suddenly** looking around they no longer saw any one with them but Jesus only. 9 And as they were coming down the mountain, he **charged** them to **tell no one** what they had seen, until the **Son of man** should have **risen** from the dead. 10 So they **kept the matter to themselves**, **questioning** what the **rising** from the dead meant.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Scripture uses the word overshadow to talk about God's hovering presence. Have I had such a time in my life?

PRAYER: Peter, James and John, you must have felt so special to be asked to accompany Jesus up that mountain. What a roller coaster ride that day must have been for you. You went from exhilaration to existential fear in one afternoon. It is no wonder that Jesus asked you to keep quiet about what you experienced and I am sure you were not ready to make sense of what happened. In fact it will take the Resurrection to put the pieces in place. Help in such times to know when I need to keep something to myself until I see the bigger picture. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

PETER / JAMES / JOHN: Jesus chose these three to share his transfiguration. They will go on to share more special experiences with Jesus.

Do you think from this text that they understood the ways this experience would change their lives?

HIGH MOUNTAIN: Mountains historically were seen as the abode of the gods. Science has shown that there are energy fields in mountains that both human and animal life can sense. Mountains can give us a God's eye view of things.

Where do you go to be apart with God? Is there an energy source there for you?

APART: Often we see Jesus going off, either alone, or with these same disciples to pray. It appears that he needs to get alone with God before facing something significant or after experiencing something significant.

Are you comfortable with quiet? Aloneness? If not, why not? Is there anything in your belief system that keeps you from being comfortable alone with God?

TRANSFIGURED: We speak of people being transfigured by events that forever change their lives. They have a before and after quality about them

Think of any transfiguring moments that you have had. Explore the feeling level of the experience, and how that experience has affected you.

WHITE: White is symbolic in scripture for things heavenly. It is the color that denotes good. In the spectrum of colors it contains all the colors that humans can see.

Reflect on the symbolism of the all-inclusiveness of white-ness. What can that imply for this text?

ON EARTH: Earth is the reality that is created in space and time. Jesus' transfiguration experience seems to be one that goes beyond the limits of space and time.

Have you had a 'timeless' experience? What did it feel like? What language did you use to try to describe it?



ELIJAH: Two realities are important for the Jewish faith history, the law and the prophets. Elijah represents the prophets in the Hebrew frame of reference.

Given this information, what implications do you think this had for the disciples?

MOSES: The law was seen as God's most precious gift to the people. Moses was another mountain person, and he brought the sacred law down from the mountain.

What is your most precious gift from Jesus?

MASTER: Some translations use the word *Rabbi* instead of master. Jesus seems to fill their heart hunger for more of God.

What does the word master mean to you? How is it different from Rabbi or Lord? Does Jesus have the power to attract you to an ongoing search for more of his understanding of God?

The fresco above comes from the, Convento di San Marco, Florence and is 193 x 164 cm in size. It is dated circa 1440-41.

THREE and SIX: In the ancient mind numbers had symbolic significance. Three stood for completeness. It belonged in the realm of God. We even have three persons in the Trinity. Six, on the other hand implies something earthly. It implies that something isn't quite finished yet.

Think of things come in three's. Experience the feeling level of that number. Then try to think of the number six. Does it feel different?

BOOTHS: Every year the Jews celebrated the feast of Tabernacles. It was one of their most important feasts and was loaded with symbolism. It celebrated the kingship of YHWH and looked to the consummation of the Messianic age. People built shelter like structures, often on the roofs of their homes, and lived in them during the days of the festival. This reminded them of the wandering years after fleeing Egypt.

What booths have you constructed so as to remember a freeing event? What feelings do you remember from that event?

EXCEEDINGLY AFRAID: The disciples are thrown into abject fear as they experience the numinous. It was thought that a person could not see God and live.

When were you last terribly afraid? How did you try to talk about that experience? How can your memory of that experience help you to understand this text?

CLOUD: Clouds in scripture signified God's presence. They protected people from the too-much-ness of God and therefore allowed God and the people to be in the same place at the same time.

What signifies God's presence for you today? What protects you from the too-much-ness of the holy? Since Jesus, is that protection necessary?

OVERSHADOWED: This word appears often when God is interacting with creation. In Genesis as God created, in the desert as God led the people, in Luke where Mary conceived Jesus, and many more. There is a hovering, brooding dimension to this reality.

Have you ever had the sensation that the Holy Spirit was overshadowing you? What do you think was the disciple's response to the voice out of the cloud?

BELOVED SON: At his baptism Jesus heard these words from the heavens. Now he hears it again, and the disciples hear it as well. *How would your life be different if you really understood that you are a beloved child of God? Could you then do as Jesus did? What keeps you from realizing this truth? Where did you learn that? Do you still want to hold on to that idea?*

LISTEN: Listening involves much more than simply hearing. It means trying to stand under something. *Remember that last time you asked someone to really listen to you. Did their body language change? Have you ever had someone do that for you?*

SUDDENLY: Like immediately, this word alerts us to what is happening to the disciples. They have been on a roller coaster ride of emotions on this mountain. *Did you hear what I heard, see what I saw?" Have you ever been on an emotional roller coaster? What do you remember about that experience that could help you understand what the disciples were going through?*

CHARGED: This is a strong word. One can only imagine Jesus' voice and body language as he said this. *Let the strength of the word charged settle in you. How have you felt when someone charged you with something?*

TELL NO ONE / KEPT THE MATTER TO THEMSELVES: The disciples were not able to truly understand their experience as yet. *When was the last time you were in that situation? Did that make it easier to keep the matter to yourself?*

SON OF MAN: Jesus totally identifies with our humanity. This is the favorite way he uses to describe himself *If we see Jesus as the supreme example of what we are all called to be, what could this mean for our understanding of God? How would it change the way we hear the 'good news? Would it really be new news?*

RISEN: We are so comfortable, at least intellectually with the idea that Jesus rose from the dead, that we tend to forget that there was no precedent for this reality in the time of Jesus. *Spend a minute wondering with the disciples just what Jesus was trying to say with this rising business. Do you think you would have done better than the disciples in being able to understand?*

QUESTIONING: Mary pondered, the disciples questioned. If you really stop to notice, people were constantly wondering, questioning, pondering in the gospels. When we really let the scriptures deal with us, we are apt to find more questions than answers. *Does that frighten you, or excite you? Do you trust, like Jesus trusted, that God is faithful to the promise that nothing is ever lost in God's reality? Does that give you the courage to continue on?*

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mk. 9:2-13 // Mt. 17:1-13; Lk. 9:28-36; Mk. 9:5 // Jn. 1:14; Mk. 9:10 // Mk. 8:31;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Gn. 22: 1-2, 9-13, 15-18; [Ps. 116: 10-19](#); Rom. 31-34; Mk. 9: 2-10; Revised Common Lectionary: Gn. 17: 1-7, 15-16; [Ps. 22: 23-31](#); Rom. 4: 13-25; Mk. 8: 31-38;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

The essential religious experience is that you are being “known through” more than knowing anything in particular yourself. Yet despite this difference, it will feel like true knowing. ..With this access point, God becomes more a verb than a noun, more a process than a conclusion, more an experience than a dogma, more a personal relationship than an idea. There is Someone dancing with you, and you no longer need to prove to anyone that you are right, nor are you afraid of making mistakes. Another word for that is “faith.” Richard Rohr

Peter, years after the death of Jesus, claims his Mount Tabor experience as the source for his witness. He says: "When we told you about the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we were not slavishly repeating cleverly invented myths; no, we had seen his majesty with our own eyes ... when we were with him on the holy mountain" (2 Peter 1:16-18). Seeing God in the most intimate moments of our lives is seeing God for others. Henri Nouwen

We must each find our separate meaning in the persuasion of our days until we meet in the meaning of the world.
Christopher Fry

Something of the drop of experience is truly of me, because it is my experience. Something is also truly of God, because of God's creative efficacy. This is the basis for sacrament: something in human life can lead human life consciously into God because the same event is as truly of God as it is truly of the world. Pg. 60.

Lee. Bernard. *The Future Church of 140 BCE*. NY. Crossroad Pub. 1995.

On Mount Tabor the disciples realized for the first time who Jesus really was. He was always transparent to the Divine, only they didn't see it. On Mount Tabor, they recognize him. He is the Son of God. His true essence appears and even gleams through his clothes. The Divine permeates everything unchecked. Pg. 238. (part of a sermon on Jesus' transfiguration. Jager. Willigis. *Search For the Meaning of Life*. Liguori. Missouri. Liguori /Triumph. 1995.

Our problem comes from a distinction that we have become accustomed to make: The distinction between what is "sacred" on the one hand, and what is "profane" on the other. But his distinction is false. Everything that exists, exists in God by his creative power, and he is holy, indeed, holiness itself. There is nothing "outside" of God, because "outside of God" does not exist. If there were anything "outside of God" God would be limited, not infinite, and therefore would not be God at all. So God is not "over here" and creation "over there." Creation necessarily exists in God. If it didn't it wouldn't exist at all for there is no other "place" where it could exist: Nothing is "outside of God."

James Duncan "Pray Always": breathing in God's creative energy. NCR. 12/9-22/11 Pg. 7a

The deep knowing that is wisdom arises through the simple act of giving someone or something your full attention.

Attention is primordial intelligence, consciousness itself. It dissolves the barriers created by conceptual thought, and with this comes the recognition that nothing exists by itself. It joins the perceiver and the perceived in a unifying field of awareness. It is the healer of separation. Eckhart Tolle,

When you have the profound awakening that you are part of a cosmic process that's going somewhere, you find yourself falling more deeply in love with what's possible than you are with what has already happened. And this shift inevitably challenges almost all of your values and beliefs, including your ideas about what it means to love another person. What are the conscious and unconscious values that inform your relationships with other people? Are those relationships primarily based on the past—on shared personal history and outdated cultural ideals? Or are they evolutionarily inspired, informed by the understanding that we're part of a process that's ever-aspiring to go somewhere new? Are your relationships alive with the evolutionary impulse, with a shared love for what's possible? Once we awaken to them, these future-oriented spiritual values are going to impact, in the most profound way, every notion we have of what life is supposed to look like.

—Andrew Cohen

What is it that makes a [human] life "divine"? Surely if this special quality characterizes [a human being], it must in some sense be recognizable. The "divine" life is, in fact, characterized by a faith which frees [a human being] from all forms of servitude, even and perhaps especially in religious matters (see [Paul's epistle to the] Galatians' *passim*). This faith brings [a human being] under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit of love living in the Church of God. The "divine" [human being], or the "son [and daughter] of God," is then, paradoxically marked by a great humility and self-effacement. He [or she] is not violent but forgiving and kind (Matthew 5:43-48). He [or she] is free from any need for aggressive self-assertion. He [or she] does not worry about his [or her] own needs, but trusts completely in God for everything (Matthew 6: 19-34). The [human being] who leads a "divine" life is, then a perfect son [and daughter] of God in imitation of Christ, who in all things looked only to the will and love of His Father. The divine [human being] lives in constant contact with an inner source of divine life, or as Meister Eckhart would have said, with "the divine birth within us." 108-109

"Divine grace" is, then, the gift of godlikeness in a creature who is loved by God as His son [or daughter].

Thomas Merton. *Love and Living*. Naomi Burton Stone & Patrick Hart, editors (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jonvanovich, 1985)

"This then is what it means to seek God perfectly: to withdraw from illusion and pleasure, from worldly anxieties and desires, from the works that God does not want, from a glory that is only human display; to keep my mind free from confusion in order that my liberty may be always at the disposal of His will; to entertain silence in my heart and listen for the voice of God; to cultivate an intellectual freedom from the images of created things in order to receive the secret contact of God in obscure love; to love all men as myself..."

Thomas Merton. *New Seeds of Contemplation*. (New York, New York: New Directions, 1961. Pages 45-46

"Am I sure that the meaning of my life is the meaning God intends for it? Does God impose a meaning on my life from the outside, through event, custom, routine, law, system, impact with others in society? Or am I called to create from within, with him, with his grace, a meaning which reflects his truth and makes me his "word" spoken freely in my personal situation? My true identity lies hidden in God's call to my freedom and my response to him. This means I must use my

freedom in order to love, with full responsibility and authenticity, not merely receiving a form imposed on me by external forces, or forming my own life according to an approved social pattern, but directing my love to the personal reality of my brother, and embracing God's will in its naked, often impenetrable mystery."

From *Seeds* edited by Robert Inchausti. Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 2002. P. 132

In chapter 20 of the [Acts of Peter](#), written sometime in the mid-second century and found at the end of the 19th century in Cairo, we find: "Our Lord wished to let me see his majesty on the holy mountain, but when I with the sons of Zebedee saw his brightness I fell at his feet as dead, closed my eyes, and heard his voice in a manner which I cannot describe."

Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Page 271.

The Eastern Orthodox tradition cherishes the role of the Spirit and the truth that God is divinizing all creation in God's creation process. We in the West have focused more on the material side of the process rather than the spiritual. Nicolas Berdyaev, an Eastern Orthodox theologian puts it this way: "The central idea of the Eastern Fathers was that of *theosis*, the divinization of all creatures, the transfiguration of the world, the idea of the cosmos and not the idea of personal salvation...Only later Christian consciousness began to value the idea of hell more than the idea of the transfiguration and divinization of the world... The kingdom of God is the transfiguration of the world, universal resurrection, a new heaven and a new earth."

(from: "*Salvation and creativity: Two Understandings of Christianity*," Nicolas Berdyaev)

In [The Treatise on the Resurrection](#) discovered at Nag Hammadi the unknown author is assuring a certain Rheginos that the Resurrection is no illusion. This late 2nd century document stands in contrast to the accepted belief of bodily resurrection. It says: "What then is the resurrection? It is always the disclosure of those who have risen. For if you remember reading in the Gospel that Elijah appeared and Moses with him do not think the resurrection is an illusion. It is no illusion, but it is truth! Indeed, it is more fitting to say that the world is an illusion, rather than the resurrection which has come into being through our Lord the Savior, Jesus Christ."

Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Page 184.

"When the Holy One redeems Israel, three days before the advent of the Messiah, Elijah will come and stand on the mountains of Israel...and his voice will be heard from one end of the world to the other." *Phikta Rabbati 36:4*.

Basser, Herbert W. [The Jewish Roots of the Transfiguration](#). Bible Review, June 1998. Page 35.

Success is not something you can pursue. It ensues, it follows you. It is the unintended side effect of following a course greater than one self." —Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

9.2-13: Transfiguration of Jesus and prophecies about Elijah (Mt 17.1-13; Lk 9.28-36). Mark's Gospel lacks depiction of the resurrected Christ (16.8n.), and some scholars argue that the Transfiguration was originally resurrection appearance (like those in Mt 28, Lk 24, and Jn 20), but one that was placed back into the narrative of the life of Jesus before the crucifixion—a representation of the glorified, resurrected Jesus within the human life of Jesus. Although it lacks the commissioning motif typical of the other Gospels' resurrection appearance (see e.g., Mt 28.18-20), that element would be omitted had the scene been moved. Further, this passage is similar to the "departures" of Moses (Deut 34.6) and Elijah (2 Kings 2.11), and to Roman depictions of the ascension of the emperor to heaven (Livy 1.16). 2: The mountain is likely Mount Hermon (see 8.27n.). 4: Moses, Elijah, these figures represent the covenant of Torah and the prophetic denunciations of corruption and idolatry, respectively. Moses, who spoke with God face to face, died, but his burial place was unknown (Deut 34.6); Elijah was taken up in the whirlwind to heaven by the chariots and horses of fire (2 Kings 2.1-12). Both therefore can represent those who stand in God's presence and communicate God's word. 5: The dwellings may suggest Sukkot. There were prophets who believed God would intervene at one of the pilgrimage festivals, usually Passover or Sukkot (Zech 14.16). 7: The cloud could evoke either the biblical motif of God as storm god (Dan 7.13), or perhaps more specifically the cloud of the tent of meeting (Ex 40.34-38). My Son, the Beloved, Mk 1.9-11n. Pg. 78.. Levine, Amy-Jill & Brettler, Marc Zvi. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 2011

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015. Pgs.49-52. . To order contact Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005. Pgs. 58-62.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2011-12. Pgs. 49-52.