

He Was Transfigured Before Them; Mark 9:2-4 0485-0487

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All of us have those events in our life that just stand out in our memory, something that happens, and it just makes this indelible mark on our memories, and we will always sort of know and remember where we were, what we were doing when such and such an event happened. For my life, I have three of those events that I can think of, three non-personal things that happen that I'll always remember, the circumstances that were going on.

when those things happened. The first would be the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan in 1981. The second would be the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger in 1985. And then the third, of course, is going to be 9 11. You might have different episodes in your life depending on your age. You don't have to show us your age.

Some of you may have episodes that go way, way back that you remember. But those events stand out for me as things that I'll always remember what I was doing, where I was at, what was going on in my life when that sort of thing happened. The event that we're going to look at today, or begin looking at today, is one of those that for Peter and James and John certainly stood out for the rest of their life.

They certainly remembered this vividly. We know this for a fact because Peter will recount this for us. Also, John, which we read earlier, will also allude to this. This life changing event known as the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ. It was a life changing event. It was an event that they would have always remembered, in part because of its uniqueness.

It is one of the, if not the most unique episodes in the Scriptures, the transformation of Jesus Christ before the eyes of Peter, John, and James. Some of you may be aware of this fact. If you don't, you're about to be aware of this. But some of you may know that many, if not most, of the stories in our Bible have parallels in pagan literature.

You may have heard this before, but particularly in the Old Testament, the major stories of the Old Testament, most all of them, if not all of them, have some sort of parallel somewhere in secular writing or in ancient writing or pagan literature. Some of those, the most more well known ones, we think of the flood accounts.

Many cultures have a flood account, a global flood account. Others such as maybe the Epic of Gilgamesh. You may have read the Epic of Gilgamesh and its parallels with scripture. There's a story called the Legend of Sargon. The Legend of Sargon is a story about a baby that was saved by being placed in a reed basket and floated down a river.

And then the baby was rescued by a person named Aqqi, who adopted the baby as her son. Obvious parallels there with the story of Moses being saved by the basket. Or the story, you may have, have some familiarity with the myth of Pandora. Pandora's box. We use that phrase to describe an event or something that lets something out of the box.

And once it's let out of the box, you can't put it back in. Well, the myth of Pandora is the story of a woman who opened this box. And by opening the box, released into the world that which was previously unknown, suffering and disease and hurt and trouble. was released into the world. The world did not know those things before she opened this box, and once they were out, they couldn't go back into the box.

Obviously, parallels there with the story of Eve and the fall of mankind. So most of our stories in our Old Testament have some sort of parallel in pagan literature. This story, however, has no parallel anywhere. By the way, I should hasten to say that those parallels in pagan literature always can be traced to a copying of the stories of Scripture, a stealing of those events and a stealing of the story from the pages of Scripture.

But when we turn to the story of the Transfiguration of Christ, this is a story which has no parallel anywhere in any human experience, anywhere in any literature, known to man. There is no parallel story that can be found in ancient Jewish literature. There's no parallel story in the Talmud and the, Qumran writings.

There's nothing in the apocryphal books. There is nothing in Muslim literature. There's nothing in Egyptian myths. There's nothing in Hellenistic myths. There's no Greek mythology that parallels with this. There's no Eastern stories that parallel with this. There's no sub-Saharan stories. There is nothing anywhere in all of the human experience that has a parallel to the Transfiguration of Christ.

And the reason for that, I believe, is that the story of the Transfiguration of Christ is a story that is inseparable from the Trinitarian nature of Christ. And because it's inseparable from the Trinitarian nature of Christ, it therefore does not have parallels in pagan literature. With that being said, this is the story that we approach this morning is a story that stands for us.

As extremely unique and very singular in its elements. Now, it will have some parallels as we'll begin to see in Old Testament literature. But we will begin to realize, I think, as we work through this, just the uniqueness of these events. So with that being said, that brief introduction, let's go ahead and read our passage from verse 2 down through verse 13.

So beginning from verse 2. And after six days, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.

And Peter said to Jesus, Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out from the cloud. This

And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, He charged them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean.

And they asked Him, Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come? And He said to them, Elijah does first come to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should

suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.

Let's pause and ask God's favor once more. Gracious Father, we ask, Lord, for your favor to shine upon the discussion of your Word. Cause us to Lord hear rightly and to speak rightly cause us to see you with greater clarity Seeing you with greater clarity cause us to love you and grant that we may understand something more of your Affection for your son of your love for your son and by extension your love for your people We pray Lord that you would glorify yourself in these words that are spoken in the And the minutes that are to come when we prayed this prayer in the name of Jesus, our Lord and our Savior.

Amen. As we approach this story, as we read earlier, the story of the bush that burned was but was not consumed. That story really serves as a paradigm for us to fixate in our mind the elements of that story, because that story will help guide us into this story. The story of the bush that burned. In many ways has parallels with this story, and that sets the proper mindset, the proper mindset to come to this also on a mountain, also a revealing of God, also a terrible display of God, also a speaking of God out of the cloud, so many things that parallel the two stories for them.

So as we approach this, we approach the story with something of the reverence and something of the of the holiness of taking our shoes off because we are now on holy ground. This passage itself speaks to us of such. Holiness is this. So as we begin our passage, we begin from the very beginning and from verse two and after six days, and we pause right there to just make a quick note to ourselves of the unusualness of what we just read after six days.

In all of Mark's Gospel, there are exactly two instances in which he delineates a specific time frame that passes between one story and the next. Every story in Mark's Gospel, every miracle, every parable that's told, every confrontation with the Pharisees, everything that happens in Mark's Gospel is introduced by one of two words.

immediately or and except for the initiation of the supper from the Passover in chapter 14 and this account as we read after six days so only two events in all of Mark's story does he give us some sort of specifically delineated time frame for the beginning of that story and so as thus it makes us set up and take note the mark has given us instead of immediately or and he says after six days.

So that lets us know that what happened before and what's about to happen now there's a connection between the two that we should see. The mark has led us from one to the other and what he's leading us to see here I believe is to just as we said earlier. He is inviting us to think of Moses, to look to Moses, to have in our mind that event of Moses in which he was prepared for six days as he entered the cloud.

There was this preparation time of six days before God comes and meets with him on the mountain. And so as Mark is inviting us here to look to this story and to have in the back of our mind. Moses and Moses three meetings with God on the mountain. We have that in our mind as we approach this because we read in Exodus chapter 44 that on the seventh day was when God comes and meets with Moses.

Now let me also hasten to just add really quickly that Matthew and Matthew's parallel account in Matthew 17, he also says the same sort of thing. After six days, then on the seventh day is when this happens. Now if we were to read in Luke's account, Luke will say after about eight days now

that doesn't stumble us up where there's no inconsistency There's especially no contradiction here because we know of the inherent should we say ambiguity in?

Tracking the number of days. We all know the quandary that you get put in when somebody says How many days until Christmas? And you say, well, there's five days until Christmas. Oh, wait, wait, does, do I count the day that I'm on? And do I also count Christmas Day? That would make it seven days. So it's either, it's either five, six, or seven days between now and Christmas.

So there's that quandary that we always have when somebody says, how many days until this? The same sort of thing is happening here. Luke says, literally, he says, after about eight days. So Luke is clearly counting the beginning and the ending day. Matthew and Mark are both saying after exactly six days, so on the seventh day is when this begins to happen.

And as we read here, we are invited now to be thinking of Moses and Moses experience on the mountain. In your notes here, we've got a chart that I put together for you. We won't go through all of this, but you can, I would invite you to just meditate upon this through the week. It'll help you as you think through this passage, but in particular, if you think through this before we get back together on Wednesday.

Then this will have us really in a good frame of mind for that. But you can see the parallels that exist here between the transfiguration event and Moses. traveling up the mountain to meet with God on those two occasions in Exodus 24 and Exodus 34. Both of them involve Moses being called and Moses goes up the mountain.

Both of them, involve Moses, I'm sorry, three people are taken up. Jesus takes Peter, John, and James. Moses takes Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu. They go up the mountain. There's the cloud that envelops them. There's this bright light. There's the radiance of Jesus clothes and Jesus face. Also with the radiance of Moses face, the voice speaks from the cloud.

There's this declaration of the character of God. Then Moses comes down the mountain. Jesus and the disciples come down the mountain. And there is astonishment on the part of the people as they come down the mountain. So many parallels and more that we could see here. So I'll just leave that for your own meditation there.

The connections that we see between Moses, the Moses event and this event here. So after six days. Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John. So the first question I ask is why three? Why does Jesus choose three to take with Him? And this reminds us, of course, of the long-standing tradition that we read all the way back from Deuteronomy chapter 18 of the witnesses that are required to establish a fact or to establish a testimony.

In Deuteronomy chapter 18, God says that no one will be convicted on the testimony of one witness but instead two or three witnesses are required. This thing, the same thing, continues through our New Testament as we see even Paul saying to the Corinthians that when I come to you, every charge will be established by multiple witnesses, by two or three witnesses.

So Jesus is taking with him up the mountain these three witnesses, these witnesses are going to be commanded to silence until after the resurrection, but after that they will serve as the witnesses for what they see. We will see this because again, we read earlier John's testimony. We saw this, we experienced this with our eyes, with our physical senses.

We also read Peter's testimony in 2 Peter 1. We were on the mountain, we heard the voice, the cloud covered us, the cloud enveloped us. We experienced this, so he takes these three witnesses and the question that we then ask, well, why these three? Why Peter, James, and John? And we're never told exactly why these are the three that Jesus seems to consistently single out, but we do see a pattern and that pattern begins all the way back in chapter one.

that these are the three disciples that appear to be the ones that are singled out by Jesus for additional revelation, additional teaching, additional experiences with Jesus. These were the first three that were selected and called to follow Jesus. If we think back to the list of the apostles that Jesus called unto himself, these were the first three named.

of the apostles. The episode in which they go into Jairus home and he raises Jairus daughter back from the dead, these are the three that go in and experience that event with Jesus. Later on in chapter 14 in the Garden of Gethsemane on Jesus most difficult of all nights, these will be the three that Jesus takes with Him and asks them specifically to pray for Him.

If we were to add in one more name, Andrew, and look to chapter 13, we would see that those four get a private explanation of what's called the Olivet Discourse that we talked about last week. So there's this group of three that seems to be the ones that Jesus is investing additional revelation into, additional teaching, and additional training into.

And they also are given this additional experience, this opportunity to experience what the other nine will not experience. So there's a pattern that has shown up in Mark's gospel, and that pattern is the smaller the group of people, the greater the revelation. The smaller the group of people, the greater the revelation.

Think of the two feedings, the 5,000 and the 4,000. That was a revelation of Jesus and who He was. But if you think about the nature of the revelation, it was revealing Jesus as the shepherd, as the provider. Which is a revelation of Jesus, but nothing on par with what happened later the night, after the feeding of the first feeding, of the 5,000, on the water.

When Jesus comes walking to them on the water and you remember all the points in that story all the elements of that story in which Jesus was saying to those in the boat. I am Yahweh I am the Creator God and so a smaller group of people 12 people on the boat. They received greater revelation here now there's three people and we're going to see in just a minute how these three are taken into solitude and they're receiving the greatest revelation yet.

So three male disciples receive the greatest revelation yet. At the end of Mark's gospel, three female disciples will receive a similar revelation when they are the ones who discover the empty tomb. So he takes them up for this, for this particularly special revelation, and he led them up a high mountain.

So we could spend some time Pondering maybe what mountain this was. That's not a good use of our time this morning. So we'll just say, we don't know what mountain this was. There was about four mountains that it could have been. Mount Tabor, Mount, Mount Carmel, Mount Hermon. And it really doesn't matter because we could spend some time debating whether maybe it was this mountain or that mountain.

In the end, God didn't tell us which mountain it is. or was because we don't need to know because quite honestly, if we did know what we would do, what would we do with it? We'd make some sort of religious shrine out of it and turn it into something that it wasn't. So God doesn't tell us what mountain it is, but instead we're just told that it is a high mountain.

And immediately we begin to make connections with a consistent theme throughout the Old Testament in which we see again and again and again, that the mountain is the place in which God so often chooses. to reveal himself to humanity. Think of Exodus 19 and God's revealing of himself on Sinai. Think of the Elijah story, Mount Carmel.

Or later on in the story as Elijah is running from Jezebel and the three times that the Son of God comes to him on the mountain. So God again and again in the Old Testament chooses a mountain as the place to reveal himself to humanity. Jesus, likewise, takes up the same theme, the same mantra. In your notes there, there's just a little chart there that shows us some of the things that Jesus does on the mountain.

He prays on the mountain. He preaches on the mountain. He chooses his apostles on the mountain. He teaches on the mountain. So the mountain seems to be a place in which God says, this is where I will. Often choose to reveal myself to people. So Jesus leads them up the mountain. So already we know what to expect.

If we didn't know what the story was about, if we didn't know the story and how it goes along, we still would know we need to be expecting something. Because now we've got a small group of people, Peter, James, and John, and they're going up a mountain by themselves. So we immediately know something big is about to happen.

So he leads them up this high mountain by themselves. This will represent The greatest seclusion that Jesus has experienced since the beginning, he has found moments of partial seclusion in which he could Rise before the sun and go pray for a little while or maybe go on the mountain and pray while the disciples are on the waves on the boat.

But his seclusion has been short lived and people have always been nearby and they've often come and done what? Interrupted him. This will be the greatest seclusion that Jesus will experience yet. You remember all the times that Jesus seems to try to be getting his disciples off to themselves. And yet he can't succeed because there's the crowd.

There's the crowd here. But he goes up the mountain. He leads them up the mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them. So that word transfigured, it is a word that we're familiar with in the English. The root of the word is a word that we have dealt with in the past. If you think back to the Long distant past when we were in Philippians, you might remember Philippians and we were in chapter 2.

You don't remember Philippians We need to do it again. So back in chapter 2, you remember that passage? That was a very difficult passage to work through that although he was in the form of God He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped You remember that passage and we wrestled with that passage and we found that that passage really rested upon one word Form, which is the Greek word *morphe*.

And as we looked at that, we saw that this *morphe* speaks of, well, not the essence, or, or, not the, it speaks of the form, it speaks of the essence. And so though he is in the same essence of God, he's in the same form, he did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped. Now we come to the same, or at least the same root, but now it has an additional prefix, meta And so we know this word metamorphosis, that's where our word metamorphosis comes from.

And we're familiar with the use of this word metamorphosis in our language. In our language, it speaks of a change, of a radical change that's visible and outward, and we use it for things like, well, like the tadpole, the tadpole that becomes the frog, or the caterpillar that becomes the butterfly. And we use this word metamorphosis to describe such a radical, outward, visible change, but here's the key, that is not a change in essence.

You get it? Okay, so the caterpillar and the butterfly share the same DNA. The caterpillar does not have new DNA. Then when it was a or when it becomes a butterfly or the frog the frog has the same DNA as the tadpole So this radical outward change Yet the essence the nature is the same and so this is the word that means this radical outward change while the essence remains the same and this is what mark is describing this metamorphosis, this transformation in which Jesus's essence or Jesus's nature undergoes no change, but then there is this radical, outward, visible change in what is seen.

So this word metamorphosis shows up four times in our Bibles. Shows up here, shows up in the parallel account in Matthew 17, and then it shows up two times in Paul's epistles. It shows up in Romans 12, verse 2. Do not be conformed to this world, but be Transformed by the renewal of your mind. So the transformation is a radical, what?

Outward change, but it's not a change of essence. Shows up again in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18. And this one is particularly helpful as we're thinking about the passages right before us. 2 Corinthians 3, And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another.

So here Paul says, as we behold Christ, as we look to Christ, we are being transformed. Okay, so that word speaks of an outward change that's not a change in nature or in essence. So why does Paul use that word? Paul uses that word because that is the precise word that he wants to use to describe an exterior change.

Not a soul change or an essence change. You see, the word metamorphosis is never used to describe conversion. The word metamorphosis is never used to describe salvation. Because salvation is a change of essence. Is a change of nature. It is a change of character. Instead, the word metamorphosis is used to describe sanctification.

The inner has been changed. The nature has been changed with conversion. It is the outer that Paul is now speaking of. That's what's being transformed into the image of Christ as we behold Him. And so that's why Paul uses the perfect word here. But that also shines some light, no pun intended, that shines some light into the passage before us.

Because Mark is describing, and Matthew as well, he's describing The change that takes place in Jesus as this metamorphosis. He didn't change in His essence, or in His nature, or in His character, or who He is. He instead undergoes this radical, dramatic, outward, visible change. You see, God, the Son, completely God, completely man.

Fully God, fully human. We are deficient in our thinking of God, the Son, when we think of Him as God disguised as a person. God wearing skin. That's a deficient, that's a wholly deficient view of the Son of God. Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, fully God and fully man, before the resurrection, outwardly, one nature is visible.

God chooses that prior to the resurrection, the outward appearance of Jesus would be the outward appearance of His human nature only. And so as God is revealing, as being transformed, as, as Jesus is being metamorphosed, what God is doing is He is almost like a curtain, taking the human nature and pulling it aside to saying, this is the other nature.

This is the other reality about my son. God isn't injecting anything into Jesus that wasn't there before. He isn't putting on some sort of light show. What God is doing is saying, this is also my son, but this is not seen until after the resurrection. So this is what's taking place at the transfiguration before them.

This transformation, this metamorphosis. Verse three, and his clothes.

So here we see Mark really stumbling, trying to put into words what Peter is describing for him. Because Mark wasn't there. Peter was there. And Peter is telling this, or dictating this to Mark. Or Mark is writing down what he's heard Peter teaching and what he's heard Peter saying. And so in writing down what Peter has described, Mark is, he's trying to describe the indescribable and so he begins by describing these clothes these clothes become radiant He describes the color Intensely white as no one on earth could bleach them in the King James if you're in the King James it says as no fuller Could whiten them fuller is sort of an antiquated term.

fullers anymore. Although that may We have plenty of people with the last name of Fuller, but Fuller as an ooc occupation. What Fullers used to be, Fullers used to be people that worked with wool in particular. They would not only harvest the wool, but they would wash it and clean it and bleach it sometimes and try to to get the wool white.

That's what Fullers often did. And so that's what Mark is saying. What no Fuller what no wool worker could make whiter than any of that. Now, one stark and noticeable difference that we see right away, if we were looking at the Matthew account, we would see that Matthew and Mark both describe this account very differently.

Mark focuses on the clothes. He says the clothes were intensely white. Whiter than any fuller could make them. Speaking of light, we just lost one, I guess. So, he describes the clothes, he focuses on the clothes. Matthew focuses on the face, and so does Luke. But Matthew focuses on the face. He says Jesus face became so bright, like the sun.

Brighter than the sun. So what's to describe the difference here? Do we have a contradiction? They're both describing the same event, supposedly. What we see here is not evidence for a contradiction in the scripture. Actually, what we see is evidence for the reliability. Because what these men are both doing is they are struggling to describe the supernatural in natural words.

It's as though God is saying, Words are too small. I will accommodate this experience to the limitation of human words, but words are far too small. And yes, we can describe this in words, but

the words won't describe it. And so each writer is writing or remembering a different aspect. It's as though Peter was saying, as he's describing this, The clothes.

You should have seen the clothes. It was so white. While on the other hand, Matthew, who perhaps was writing down what he heard John describe, maybe John was saying, The face, you should have seen his face. His face was so bright and so glowing. And so both men are writing a different perspective. We would have suspicion of the scriptures if they both were just verbatim and described this It's an incredible supernatural event that is beyond the capacity of words.

If they both described it with the same words, that would cause us to say, wait a minute, they're just copying each other. But instead, they're both describing a supernatural event that defies description in words. And both are saying, Let me use these words. Let me describe the clothes. Let me describe the face.

And so this is actually evidence for us of God's accommodating himself to the limitation of human language. But back to Mark's words here, his clothes became radiant, intensely white as no one on earth. So we see here touched on a theme, and the theme is a theme that we see in both Old Testament and New Testament, and that's the theme of clothing and the color white.

The color white is a consistent metaphor for purity and holiness, and we often also see this description of clothing, particularly new clothing, new robes, new linens, and that often will describe for us A sinless supernatural being, or eventually, as we read through our New Testament, it begins to describe, who do you think?

Us. As we are put into Christ. So just in your notes here, we don't, we're not going to go through each of these, but we see way back in Daniel chapter 10, describing the ancient of days, a man clothed in linen. We see from Matthew 28, this is a description of the angel, the angelic being at the resurrection.

His clothing was white as snow. Again, Mark 16 on the right side of was a man dressed in a white robe. John 20, two angels in white. We see the same consistent sort of thing. And then by the time we get to, well, Revelation 4, Revelation 3 and Revelation 4, we begin seeing Not only are angelic beings and God Himself described in terms of new linens, new clothes, white clothing, but also now those who are put into Christ are described in the same way.

Those who are, in Revelation 3 verse 4, people who have not soiled their garments. But instead they will walk with me in white. Or Revelation chapter four, the 24 elders clothed in white garments. Revelation six. They were give each given a new white robe. Revelation seven, revelation 14, revelation 19. We can follow the, the same theme throughout.

So we see here this theme of new clothes, new garments, new line. white clothing, and we also see this theme of light. God and light are two things that the Scriptures will often put together for us. For example, in Luke 9, verse 29, as Jesus was praying, the appearance of His face was altered and His clothing became Dazzlingly white, that's Luke's account of this, dazzlingly white.

So literally in that passage, Luke says his clothing became white as a bolt of lightning. So think in your mind of a bolt of lightning. I don't know if you've ever had the unfortunate experience of being somewhere in the vicinity of a bolt of lightning and the brightness of it, particularly on a dark night, the brightness of a bolt of lightning.

That's the phrase that Luke picks up on and says, like that. Bright, like that. Light, like a bolt of lightning coming from His face. Or Psalm 104 in verse 2. We sang this earlier. You who cover yourself with light as with a garment. You hear there God's accommodating of Himself to human language. You clothe yourself.

You wrap yourself with light. Now God doesn't literally wrap Himself with light. But, this is human language attempting to describe the divine. You wrap yourself with light. Or 1 John chapter 1 and verse 5, God is light and there is in him no darkness at all. So his clothing became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.

And verse 4, And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. So there appeared to them Elijah and Moses, we ask first the question, well, why Elijah and why, why Moses? And we're not told, it's not explained to us. But there's lots of reasons to connect together Elijah and Moses together with Christ.

We can think of some reasons, for example, many would speculate that Elijah and Moses will appear together again in Revelation 11 as the two witnesses. We don't know that. It could be, or it could be someone else, but perhaps Elijah and Moses are the two witnesses that appear again in Revelation chapter 11.

But we also see some other continuity and some other connection between Moses and Elijah and Christ. We see, for example, that Moses and Elijah both had very unique end of life experiences, like Jesus. They had very unique end of life experiences. Elijah, you'll recall, is the one who did not experience physical death.

Remember back in Elijah, you remember he didn't experience the physical death, but instead God took him in the chariot of fire. Or as we looked at that, we, we thought that perhaps that is more, more saying more literally that the angels carried him. So we see that Elijah was one of two people that did not experience physical death.

Moses, on the other hand, did experience physical death, but Moses is the only person. That God buried. Remember that story in Deuteronomy where God, where Moses dies and God buries him in a place where no one knows where that was. So very unusual end of life experiences. Also, we might make a connection between Moses and Elijah.

And many have made this connection. But they would say that Moses represents the law and Elijah represents the prophets. So that connection is easy to make. Moses as the law giver, remember Mount Sinai, the tablets and all that. But then also Elijah as the representative of the prophets. And you might remember when we studied Elijah, how we talked about the fact that Elijah was not the first person to serve as a prophet, but he was the first person to be a prophet.

That there were those before Elijah who said prophetic things, who acted in prophetic ways, but no one

So Elijah serves for us as sort of the first, the premier office of the prophet. And so some would say, well, here's Moses and here's Elijah together with Jesus. And what they represent is the law and the prophets and how all the law and all the prophets are here to attest to Jesus. And that makes sense.

And that may possibly be what Mark is has in mind as he's writing this for us. But there's another connection. I think this is probably the most likely connection. Although, in reality, it may be some of all of this. But I think probably the most likely connection is that both Moses and Elijah both have very strong connections.

with a theophany on a mountain. Remember what theophany means. Theophany is a revealing of God, where God reveals himself to people. And so Moses and Elijah both have very strong and repeated experiences. of God's theophany on a mountain. Remember, of course, Moses the bush episode, Moses once again in Exodus 19, Moses once again in Exodus 24, Moses once again in Exodus 34.

All the mountains and the clouds and the trumpets and the mountains quaking and shaking and all that. We also think of Elijah and Elijah's experience with mountains, Mount Carmel, and the dramatic display of God on Mount Carmel as the sacrifices were consumed. But we also think later on to Elijah's period when he was running from Jezebel and the three times that the Son of God comes to him on the mountain.

So both of them are associated closely with a mountain and a revealing of God. And what's this passage? A mountain and a revealing of God. So perhaps that's the connection. We don't know. Ultimately, it doesn't matter because what matters are simply two things. Two things that we're going to notice about Elijah and Moses today, and this will be as far as we make it today.

We'll pick back up with Moses and Elijah next week and continue on. But the things to notice about Elijah and Moses today simply are this. Number one, the topic of conversation, and number two, their role. Those are the only two things we need to see in Elijah and Moses. Number one, the topic of conversation.

So Moses, I'm sorry, Mark tells us that Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus, but Mark doesn't tell us what they're talking about. So fortunately, God has given to us Luke's account because in Luke chapter 9, Luke tells us the topic that Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus about. From verse 30, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory, this is the same event, appeared in glory and spoke of his, meaning Jesus's, spoke of his.

Departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Luke uses the word there, this translated departure, he uses the word exodus. So think about this now. Here's Moses to say, I was the one through whom God did the prefiguring, the first exodus. The exodus that was the shadow of the greater exodus. But we want to talk about your exodus.

We want to talk about your departure. So what are they talking about? They're talking about his death. They're talking about his coming suffering and his coming death, precisely what Peter didn't want to talk about. You remember from just a couple of verses ago? This is precisely what Peter doesn't want to talk about that.

Who do men say that I am? Who do you say that I am? You're the Christ. You are the Christ. Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. And I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against my church.

And now let me begin to tell you about my suffering. Let me begin to tell you how the Son of Man is going to be treated. Let me begin to tell you how the Christ will be tortured and turned over to the Gentiles and mocked. And executed. No, Jesus. No, have mercy. We're not going to talk about those sorts of things.

We're not going there, Jesus. Seven days later. That's what Elijah and Moses want to talk about. We want to talk about your departure. We want to talk about this suffering. We want to talk about your sacrifice, your vicarious sacrifice on the cross. We'll circle back to that in just a minute. So the first thing is their topic of conversation.

The second thing is their role. So don't let it be missed that Elijah and Moses are there. They appear and then they're gone. And that's a big point. They are not there to stay, despite what Peter's going to say. We'll get to that next week or the next week. They're not there to stay. They are there to testify.

This is the Christ. He is here now to suffer. This is what we want to talk about. And now, we're gone. They're here, and they fade. They are here as affirmation, as representation to say the law and the prophets point to Him. And our job is to point to Him. And now leave. And so the topic of conversation put together with their role is what we now want to see in Elijah and Moses.

So, in the last few minutes, here's what I want to do. I want to just ask the question, what does this mean? What significance does this have? So this story has for us significance on multiple levels. It has significance for, of course, Peter, James, and John, and the significance for Peter, James, and John also have continuity with us, but we'll hold that for next week.

And so this week, I just want to ask the question, what sort of significance does this event have for Christ? What sort of significance does this event have for Jesus? Now, we might feel a bit uncomfortable with that question, because this is not a typical application of Scripture to say, what is the significance for Jesus for this passage?

That's not a typical way that we apply the Scriptures. And so the first question for us to ask is, is that even the right question? Are we even right to ponder what does this mean for the Christ? What does this mean for the Son of God? And I believe that Mark has led us here. He has led us to the point to ask, what does this mean for Christ that this has happened?

I believe he's led us here in two ways. Number one, really, I think both of these center upon the same thing. The six days after six days on the seventh day after. So the seventh day after what? The seventh day after Peter's adversarial stance. Get behind me, Satan. Get behind me, adversary, for you stand between me and the cross.

And so this moment is the moment in Mark's gospel in which Jesus now really turns his face to Jerusalem. And his goal is now Jerusalem. That's where he's headed. Everything from chapter 8 all the way through chapter 16 is going to be about Golgotha. And so from this point on, Jesus focus on His suffering, His focus on His coming death is everything front and center.

We often, I think, fail to properly appreciate the burden that Jesus bore as He was headed toward Jerusalem. The physical suffering, the torture, the execution, all of that. Horrendous, none of that holds a candle to the spiritual suffering of becoming the sin of his people, of experiencing the forsaking of God, of experiencing the full wrath of God.

And so that burden, that weight upon Jesus certainly was heavy. And here's Peter saying, just as Satan said in chapter one, you don't have to go there, Jesus. You don't have to do that. Now, after six days, this six-day preparation period, again, our minds, our thoughts are focused back there. I think that Mark is guiding us to say, what did this mean for the Christ?

What did this mean for Jesus? Because Jesus is now at a point in which the weight of what he will do in less than a year is becoming very heavy for him. Now, one of the things that we often, I think, overlook is the father's role in the son's work. So we think about the work of salvation, and we know that the work of salvation is a Trinitarian work.

It's a Trinitarian work because God the Father, Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3 and 4, God the Father was the one who chose His people, the election, the predestination, the sending forth of His Son for His people. And then we think of the work of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit is the one who convicts of sin.

The one who draws unto Christ, the one who, makes redemption, possible, which gives us the gift of faith. So the Spirit takes what the Son has done and applies it to our heart. And then, of course, the work of the Son on the cross, as He becomes the sin of His people. But then there's another work that the Father does that I think we often overlook.

And it's not just a sending out work. It's not just what the Father did in eternity past. But instead, we also see an active work of the Father, an active thing that the Father is doing while the Son is doing His work of redemption. One of the places that we see this is in Isaiah 42, a passage that is highly messianic, highly important.

in Messianic thought. So look with me in your notes at Isaiah chapter 42 verses 1 through 4. God the Father says this, Behold My servant, speaking of the Son, Behold My servant, Whom I uphold.

You may have never seen that. But that's what the father does the entire time that the son is doing his work is the father is upholding the son in his work. The father is strengthening the son In his work, the father is encouraging the son in his work, my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen in whom my soul delights.

I have put my spirit upon him. Luke's gospel is particularly clear. And showing us how the work of the Son is the work that the Spirit empowered. The Spirit comes upon Jesus. And Jesus, though He is fully divine, equal with God, in power, in might, in majesty, in all ways, Though He is the Son of God, nevertheless, the things that Jesus does, He does by the power of the Spirit.

Luke is clear to show us that. So here the Father says, I'm the one who sends the Spirit to do that. I give my Spirit without measure, so that the Son will do His work. And the whole time that the Son is doing His redemptive work, I am upholding him. I'm strengthening him. I'm encouraging him. I'm enabling him through my upholding of him.

How does the father often do what the father wants to do? Doesn't the father have this army of angelic beings who do the work of the father? And isn't that the description of the angels in the scripture so often is that the angels are these messengers of God that God sends to do His work? And what do these angelic beings often do?

In particular, what do these angelic beings do in relation to the Son, to Jesus the Son? Look with me in Matthew 4 and verse 11. This is speaking of Jesus' trial in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry. Then the devil took Him and afterwards. Angels came and were ministering to Him. Angels came and were ministering to Him.

So these angels, they're doing the work of support and upholding the Son as He is in a weakened condition after the 40 days of fasting and after the 40 days of temptation. And weren't those angels clearly sent by the Father? Psalm 91 and verse 1, you send your angels so that he will not even dash his foot against a stone.

Exodus 23, you will send your angel before them to fight their battle. So the angels are sent at the behest of the Father. And the Father sends the angels to uphold and to minister to. The Son. Likewise, look at Luke chapter 22 and verse 43. This is in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of Jesus' arrest, and there appeared to Him an angel from heaven.

And what's the angel doing? Strengthening Him. So, it might seem like an odd question for us to ask. It might even seem like an odd thought for us to entertain that the Son of God even requires strengthening. I mean, think about that. He is God incarnate. So how are we to understand that the Son of God requires strengthening?

Because He said so Himself, didn't He? Didn't He say Himself? Didn't He take His disciples? Didn't He take Peter, James, and John? And didn't He plead with them? Will you pray? Because this night is particularly hard. Will you pray? And doesn't he also say the spirit is what willing, but the flesh is weak. And that's the key.

That's the key. We must not forget that Jesus Christ is like no other being in that he is dual in his nature. He is fully God and he is fully man. God, the son and his full deity needs no strengthening from anyone. He is the essence of power. He is the embodiment of strength. God, the son, the man Jesus is fully human and his soul experiences every need that humans experience apart from sin.

Jesus experienced no need for deliverance from sin, but every other need that the human experiences, Jesus also experienced because He is fully human. And this is what the Father's doing. The Father in His grace is reaching down to His Son and saying, Son, I will uphold you in this. In this time, just seven days ago, when you were reminded of the suffering that is to come, and you were reminded how no one understands this, and how you were reminded of not just how heavy this burden is, but you're the only one that will bear it.

I will bear it with you. I will come and I will uphold you. This is the gracious work of the Father. So, how is the Father upholding the Son? On the Mount of Transfiguration, three ways that the Father is upholding the Son on the Mount of Transfiguration. Number one, He's upholding Him by granting Him a preview of the glory that will follow His suffering.

He is granting to Jesus a preview of the glory that will follow. Hebrews chapter 12 tells us that for the joy that was set before Him, Jesus endured the cross. So what that says to us is that while Jesus is going to the cross, there's a joy behind it that he's looking to, and that joy that he's looking to is his glory.

We are made aware of the fact that Jesus himself has an awareness. He has a consciousness of the glory that was his before the incarnation. He says as much in John chapter 17 in his prayer. He

says, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. It's restated a few verses later.

So Jesus is aware of this glory that he possessed before his incarnation. Furthermore, he expresses a desire that that glory would be returned to him. And the returning of this glory is what the Father wants to use to uphold the Son by showing just a glimpse of the glory that will return to Him. Can you imagine as Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John and He looks to them?

Can you imagine the look on their faces that He saw? The look of a man looking upon glory. And that was strengthening for Jesus. It was strengthening for the man Jesus, for the human Jesus to see that. You know, that's often how God upholds us, isn't it? Think to the pages of Scripture. There's so many places that God does this very same thing.

He upholds us by showing us something of a glimpse of the glory that is to come after the suffering of this life. Things like, Ephesians 1, Ephesians 3. Think about 1 Corinthians 2. No eye has seen, no one has beheld what the Father has in store for those who love Him. Or, in your notes, think of Matthew 19 Everyone who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, suffering tribulation, everyone will receive a hundredfold And we'll inherit eternal life.

Glory. Glory. You see how the Father does the same thing? Let me just tell you something of the glory that is to come. And that will uphold you in the troubles now. So it's something like, you know how we do this in life all the time. We try to envision what that glorious goal might be. The one who goes to the gym.

Five times a week because they want to sculpt their body into some sort of a particular body That that kind of thing or some sort of health and they will envision this this is what we look I want to look like this this physique. This is what I want. That's my goal or We're all into this sort of thing If you go to well go to like a website that sells maybe a furniture or something like that And you can always maybe take a picture of your room And it'll show you what their furniture looks like in your room if you pay them some money Because what they want to see, they want to do is this is what it looks like.

This is what you can be. This is what you can have. The father is doing something similar for the son. Again, the father is not giving to the son something that's not his. He's pulling back the curtain to say, Son, let them just see your glory, just for a moment. And you'll be strengthened by that. So number one, he's granting them him a preview of the glory that will follow.

Number two, he is upholding his son by allowing this brief fellowship with redeemed and understanding souls, redeemed and understanding souls. The key word there is understanding souls because Jesus is surrounded by non-understanding souls, isn't he? He's just been painfully reminded of how non-understanding.

All of his disciples are. In fact, Mark's gospel, his whole gospel could be categorized as the story of disciples who just never got it. And as the story goes along, they get it less and less and less and less. And so think of just what a burden that would be for Jesus. Jesus was just seven days ago, just He just came face to face with their non-understanding.

You are the Christ. That's great. Now let me begin to tell you of why I've come. No, no, no, no, no, no. That's not for us, Jesus. Seven days later, the Father says, Let me uphold you, let me encourage you by allowing this fellowship with those who do understand. Remember the topic of conversation. Elijah and Moses want to talk about precisely What Peter and the disciples did not want to hear.

Why is that? Because Elijah and Moses get it. Why do Elijah and Moses get it? Were they smarter than Peter and James and John and the others? They get it because they have left this sinful life behind. They are not glorified yet, but leaving behind their sin, now being in the presence of God, They have a perception of the mission of God that those who are blinded by their own sin do not perceive.

And so therefore, Moses and Elijah, they are before Jesus and they're saying, Jesus, can we talk about your death? We, we don't want to talk about Mount Carmel and that, that, uh. The sacrifice that happened there. I don't want the Red Sea. I don't want to talk about any of that, the whole plagues. No, no, no. I want to talk about your death.

Jesus, you're going to die for them. You're going to lay down your life for them. Look at them right now, Jesus. Even right now they don't get it. That one Peter, the big ugly one, in just a few minutes he's going to start talking about putting some sticks and some leaves together to make some booths for us.

You see how they don't get it, Jesus? And you're going to die for them. You're going to lay down everything for them. That's what we want to talk about Jesus. He's fellowshiping with those who understand. Do you know something of what it's like to feel a deep purpose that nobody else shares? Do you know something of what that's like?

Maybe some experience in your life in which you sensed a deep and compelling purpose and no one around you saw that same purpose. I've been in that situation and some previous church experiences in which it just seems like there's a deep purpose here and nobody around me seems to get it. That is a heavy weight for one to see deep and eternal purpose and no one else see it.

And it's like the father saying to the son, son, let me just remind you, these ones who are following you now, they don't get it, but they will. Because let me show you, here are two, here are two of your people, here are two of your servants. They see it now. That's number two. He strengthens his son through fellowship with those who understand.

Number three, he strengthens his son through a verbal declaration of fatherly delight and approval. Mark's account is a little bit abbreviated, Matthew's account is fuller of this, of what the Father says. In Matthew 17 and verse 5, Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

Listen to him. Harkens us back to chapter 1, This is my beloved Son, Him, He is the one who pleases me. The pleasure of the Father and the Son. The love of the Father for the Son is what the Father declares this, number one, He is my Son, number two, He pleases me, number three, He is deeply loved. The affirmation of the Father would have been deeply encouraging for the man Jesus to hear because all of us are created with that same need.

God has created all of us with that deep need to feel the approval, not just of parents but particularly the Father. That's a deep human need. Jesus, being fully human, had that need as well. Did Joseph approve of Jesus? We're never told. We would assume so, but his father's in heaven. Joseph's not his father.

His heavenly father is the one who would come and declare to those standing, this is my son. I love him and he has my approval. How encouraging for the son.