

Glimpsing the Glory of Christ – Part 2

Belcroft Bible Church

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Thank you, Marty. What a blessing it is to serve with each of our elders and to be blessed and ministered to by them. How thankful I am for each of these godly men. Good morning, church. It is a blessing to be able to open God's Word to you. And I pray that, wherever you are watching from, you are eager and ready to hear from the Lord as I am, as I desperately need it. No doubt you do as well. While it was right and is right for us to not meet in person this week, I am greatly looking forward to, and by God's grace, Lord willing, our public gathering next Lord's Day and I pray you are as well.

Before we turn to Mark 9 this morning, I feel compelled to encourage you regarding the extremely sad events at the Capitol complex this past week. As the community theologian and your personal teaching shepherd, it is my duty and solemn responsibility to make sure we see these matters clearly. I praise the Lord for protecting our dear brother, Steve Waskiewicz, who was on the floor of the House when all the chaos erupted. I thank God publicly for keeping my brother safe and bringing him home safely to his precious family. Some people have asked me if I was going to preach a special sermon this morning in light of the evil that we witnessed. My answer was clear and concise: "No." I responded this way because I have already preached and allowed God's Word to speak clearly and repeatedly about these things. And, as we have seen many times, God's Word is unequivocal that violence at any level, no matter the color of your skin or the political flag that you fly, is always sin and evil, no matter what. All violence, rioting, looting, vandalism, sowing of discord, destruction of property, abuse of individuals, disrespect for authority, and dishonoring of police officers simply doing their job is all wrong, always wrong, and ever wicked in the eyes of Almighty God.

Psalm 11:5 says it so clearly, and I quote, *"The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence."* God looks upon the events of this past week and he is repulsed, and so should we be. We should be saddened by all of it. But we should not, and I repeat, we should not be shocked or surprised by it. I spoke about this kind of malevolent behavior very clearly

many times in the past. I have taught you what God says about it and where it all comes from, as the heart of man apart from Christ is a seedbed of wickedness ready to sprout in evil acts at any moment. Mark 7:21-23 declares that reality emphatically. It should always sadden us when we see sin and sinful men and women running recklessly, creating disorder and dysfunction and disaster. But these realities, for as sad as they are, should never be shocking to us. And yet, for far too many, they are surprising. That should be a wake-up call that you are not thinking biblically about current events. We are people of the truth; and thus, we see clearly through the muck and the confusion of this world so as to know exactly what is going on. God's Word has not been silent about these things nor about the people who are all culpable in these despicable events.

Listen to the clarity of 2 Timothy 3:1-4 and be reminded why these things should not shock any person faithfully saturated in the Scriptures. Second Timothy 3:1-4 says, and I quote, *“But understand this, that in the last days there will be times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”* Sounds like a very clear description of all we just witnessed. And hear me when I say, sounds like a very clear description of the President and the politicians who are both culpable in instigating what we saw, as well as all the evil people who all played a part in actually doing the evil we witnessed. None of this should surprise any of us.

Let there be no mistake; everything we have witnessed this week was really nothing different than what we have been witnessing all summer long, over this past summer. We watched in horror as [. . .] Minneapolis burned. Some 700 buildings were vandalized, destroyed, and burned. Seven hundred! In Kenosha, Wisconsin, we watched as over 100 buildings were burned and destroyed with over 50 million dollars of damage being done to private and public property, all in the name of—wait for it—peaceful protesting. In Portland, Oregon, we watched as a federal courthouse was attacked and assaulted for three months straight. In Seattle, Washington, we watched as six city blocks were confiscated by lawless nihilists, many who were part of the Black Lives Matter movement, as they took over control of this section of the city that they might have complete autonomy from any governmental authority. It literally was Judges 21:25 on full, disastrous,

and yes, deadly display. What about all the countless stores looted and decimated in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Louisville, along with the burning and overtaking of multiple police stations? Nothing we saw this week should surprise any of us, especially when you consider that everything that happened all summer came with little-to-no judicial repercussions. That means laws were broken and vicious crimes committed and hardly anything happened in the realm of justice and punishment.

We are not surprised by these things. We are saddened, without question, very saddened, especially as we understand what the Bible says about Satan being actively involved in sowing discord, disruption, division, and devastation in and through people and governments. We understand very clearly who has massive, but limited, control over this wicked world and every wicked world leader. We understand Satan is very active in spreading lies, deceptive teachings, and—pay attention—the propagation of false hope that leads to reckless anger and self-destruction. The Bible is very clear on what is going on. And so we see very clearly and are not confused by these things. Listen, the more you understand and submit to Scripture, the more clearly you see everything, especially the world around you. We are not surprised by these things. Saddened, yes, but not surprised.

Therefore our hope is not shaken, for our confidence is not in this world but in the one who has complete control over this world. We see clearly, therefore we are not distracted from our mission of growing in Christ and discipling others to follow Christ, while we proactively serve the Lord as we seek to spread the gospel of truth and love and grace to the lost and the depraved world around us. It is only in the gospel that our world can find the hope and the help that lasts and that it desperately needs. Let this be a wake-up call to all of us that the days are evil, just as the Scripture says they are. Let us not stop listening to and learning from and living by the Scriptures, for in them we have the sufficient map that will guide and guard our hearts and our homes through these tumultuous times.

Dear church, you have heard me say this before so I repeat it now for emphasis: prepare yourself for all that God already has prepared for you. Every Lord's Day, every Lord's Day, is really a day of preparation as God, through his perfect Word, prepares us for all that is coming whether that be good or evil. And trust me—you know this to be true—I take every Lord's Day very serious to be faithful in bringing

us the Word that will always sufficiently do its work of getting us ready. However, all I can do is bring the Word. It is your job to listen. It is your job to learn. It is your job to live out the Word. May God, in his undeserved mercy and grace, do his perfect work through his perfect Word, that we might see clearly and live rightly in this world that undeniably has gone all wrong.

Now, as you turn to Mark chapter 9, verses 1-8, we return to this second part of this amazing story regarding the Lord's Transfiguration. I pray your heart will be encouraged and strengthened as we consider once again the cosmic glory of our conquering King. Listen, dear loved ones, the antidote to the chaos of our world is Christ and only Christ. The comfort and calm you long for amidst the disorder and mayhem of this world will be found in Christ and Christ alone. The persevering grace and divine help you desperately need can only be discovered, delivered, and enjoyed through Christ and Christ alone. May the Lord remind us, yet again, of the great glory of Christ and our great need and blessing to live in light of his glory, every moment of every day, whether they be good or evil days.

Our text this morning, Mark 9:1-8. Hopefully, you're there by now. Please follow along silently as I read aloud. Hear the Word of the Lord:

And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." 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, 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 of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son, listen to him." And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

Amen. What a blessing.

Last week, we began our journey through this amazing episode where Peter, James, and John were given the awesome privilege of seeing the unveiled glory of

Jesus Christ. On this mountain, these men were given a divine preview of the transcendent power and royal splendor of the conquering Christ. The Transfiguration proves that the looming murder of the Messiah will not remove his majestic authority but will actually serve to highlight it, as he conquers sin, death, and the grave through his cross. This passage overflows with deep encouragement for all who have taken up their cross to follow Christ. The Transfiguration is divine confirmation to these three men and all of us that, in following Jesus, you are ultimately following the conquering King and not simply a murdered Messiah. Concerned about the call of Christ to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him? Confused about following a crucified Christ? Well, this event before us shatters all those concerns by giving us a glimpse of the conquering glory of the risen Christ, which is also a preview for how he will return in cosmic authority.

Last week, I explained how this passage can be broken down into four sections that progressively display the glory of Christ. Remember, when I speak of glory here, I'm referencing the incomparable greatness, the cosmic excellence, and the unequalled brilliance of God Almighty on full display through his divine Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It's exactly what Hebrews 1:1 and 2 and Colossians 1:15-20, which Marty was referencing even during his prayer, speak of. Therefore this passage shows us four facets of the glory of Christ that confirm his conquering mission and his conquering message. And what is the purpose of all of this? It is to encourage abiding faith in following him, the conquering King.

Here are the four words that I gave you last week, and so I remind you now, that help guide us through our text. Number one was promise, promise. Number two was presence. We looked at those last week. And number three was pinnacle. And number four was proclamation. We saw already the promise of glory in verse 1. Then we saw the presence of glory in verses 2 and 3. This morning, we will look to the pinnacle of glory in verses 4 and 6, and then we will hear, listen, and learn from the proclamation of glory in verses 7-8. Now I remind you, last week we saw the promise of Christ's glory in verse 1, in that what Jesus said in chapter 8, verse 38 about coming in the glory of his Father, he now promises to prove by allowing some of them to see that glory before they die. Then, in verses 2 and 3, we considered the presence of Christ's glory. In those verses we saw how, six days after giving that great gospel call to follow him and making that great promise

about coming in glory and how some would see it, Jesus was transfigured before these three men on the mountain.

I remind you that this Transfiguration was not a change in the nature of Christ, but an unveiling of the divine nature of Christ, as Philippians 2:1-11 helps us understand. Thus that which was hidden under his humanity was allowed to come out, or that which was invisible to these men was made visible, as they stood in terrifying awe and watching the divinity of Christ shine forth in holy brilliance, on full display. That is where we left off last week, with these men in shock and awe as they are now confronted by the fact that, though their Messiah will be murdered as he said, he will return in heaven's glory to conquer and rule over all as he promised again, there in Mark 8:38. That is where we left off and that is where we begin this morning, with these men now waking up from their slumber, jaws hanging open, and their eyes being blinded by the glorious splendor of our sovereign Savior. So far then, we have seen the promise and the presence of glory. But now let's consider the pinnacle of glory in verses 4-6.

Verse 4 now continues, *“And there appeared to them Elijah and Moses and they were talking with Jesus.”* Here in verses 4-6, we have the zenith, or the high point, of the glory of Christ displayed in this glimpse. What does that mean? In this verse, we are confronted by the fact that Christ—pay attention now—is the culmination of all that came before in the Old Testament. Thus we can see by the witnesses of these two Old Testament giants of the faith. They speak to the fact that Christ is not simply at all the best of man, but he is the long-awaited prophet of God who has come to bring about the ultimate exodus of Egypt through the redemption of sinners, by the blood of his cross.

Let's look at this now a little bit closer. As if this episode was not shocking enough for Peter, James, and John, these three men now are awakened by the radiant brilliance of the glory of Christ shining forth as we already saw in verse 3. But now, here in verse 4, these three men see two other men standing and talking with Jesus. How shocking this would have been? Now, how does Peter know it is Moses and Elijah? I do not know. But obviously, they're listening, as the text says, to the conversation that these two men, Moses and Elijah, are having with Christ. So obviously they're listening in on the conversation and no doubt Christ would have used their names or could have easily introduced Moses and Elijah to the

three men that were there or could have easily told them later who they were. I don't know, but obviously it's not hard to figure that out.

How do these men appear, in what seems to be glorified bodies, before their time of glorification? It's another mystery that I cannot answer. But for God, anything is [possible]. So I have no worries about trying to unravel these mysteries for, in many ways, they're trivial matters because that's not the point of the passage. Everything we are witnessing here is progressing with intensity and clarity as the glory of Christ is shockingly displayed that the message and mission of Christ might be submissively followed. The glory of Christ, as the divine deliverer of sinful man and the sovereign ruler of the world, is the pinnacle to which the whole of Scripture has been pointing to from Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, all the way forward. You understand that. All the Old Testament points in one direction and it is Christ.

Thus why these two men, and not David and Abraham, or a myriad of other faithful men of Old Testament times? Interestingly, guess who are the last two men mentioned in the Old Testament, as anticipation and preparation was building for the coming of Christ. If you guessed Moses and Elijah, you're right. If you go over later to Malachi 4:4-6, guess who's mentioned there. And guess who we are told to listen to. Yes, Moses and Elijah. But, more importantly, why these two men? Well, simply put, these two men encapsulate the entirety of the whole Old Testament. Moses clearly is the giver of the Law, by which the whole of Scripture really rests upon (John 1:17). However, the whole Law finds its ultimate fulfillment in who? Christ (Romans 10:4). The Law ultimately pointed to who? Christ (Galatians 3:24). The Law really anticipated who? Christ (as I've already said, Genesis 3:15, but more specifically, Deuteronomy 18:15-19). Especially when you go over and you start looking at all the different aspects of the Law, you're mesmerized and encouraged as you see it all pointed to Christ. The burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, yes, it all pointed to and all anticipated the perfect offering of Christ. The Law constantly illustrated who? Yes, Christ (Leviticus 16:20-22). The Day of Atonement was all about what? Illustrating, anticipating, and demonstrating the need for Christ (Isaiah 53, 2 Corinthians 5:21). The Law points to Christ.

Now consider how Elijah clearly represents not the Law, but the prophets who preached about the coming of who? Christ (Isaiah 53). You know that passage

well. Who's it all about? Written by a prophet, proclaimed by a prophet, all about Christ. Isaiah also spoke about the divine child that would be born, who would also be what? The Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6 and 7). Daniel, that great prophet, spoke of the coming of the Son of Man who came from the Ancient of Days, that is God the Father, that he might be given an everlasting dominion and glory and be the sovereign ruler of all (Daniel 7:13-14). Micah, that prophet, spoke about the First Coming and where the Christ would be born (Micah 5:2). And Zechariah spoke about what? His Second Coming in victorious judgment in Zechariah 14. Jeremiah called God's people to prepare for the Messiah who would deliver them from sin and wickedness through receiving a new heart by God's spirit (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

All of this is clarified in Acts 10:43, when the Word of God says all the prophets bear witness to Christ. The law and the prophets is a summation of the whole Old Testament (in Matthew 22:40) and they all, in some form or fashion, pointed in the direction of the coming of Christ. Thus Christ is the pinnacle of the glory of God on display, especially as he is the fulfillment of all the law and the prophets declared and expected. And that is exactly what Jesus Christ himself says in Matthew 5:17. Now you start to see the pinnacle. [That] is everything in time and history is all pointing to this specific event and, more specifically, this glorious, sovereign person.

Notice further this pinnacle of glory and how it is directly tethered to the cross of Christ. The text says, "*they were talking with Jesus.*" Notice that. Now, what were they talking about? I'm glad you asked. That is an excellent exegetical question. Luke 9:31 gives us the answer. It says they were talking about—pay attention—Christ's departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. What does that mean? They are discussing the priority and eternal plan of the cross which, in so many ways, is the pinnacle of the glory of Christ. The Greek word used in Luke 9:31 translated as "departure" is the word—watch it—*exodus*, which speaks of Christ delivering his people through his death. Pay attention now; their whole discussion was about the one thing that Peter wanted to stop, and that was the death of Christ. Yet, without Christ's death and resurrection, there would be no coming in future glory. The cross of Christ would be the doorway that would open the pinnacle of conquering glory. There was no better way to encourage these men than to have Moses and Elijah serving as verbal witnesses and validation to

the priority of Christ's coming and conquering passion. The cross of Christ is the point of his First Coming that propels the pinnacle of Christ's glory at his second coming.

This pinnacle of glory being displayed and discussed by Jesus, Moses, and Elijah is more than these three disciples can bear. Verses 5 and 6 clarify this further when it says and displays how what? This awe-inspiring event terrifies them. This glimpse of the glory, eternal glory, of Christ terrifies these men. They are scared speechless, or they are scared to senseless speech. That's what the text shows us. Impetuous Peter now just can't be silent but he must talk, even when he has no clue of what to say. Verse 5, in some ways, is hilarious when you see it in its context and think about it. Peter talks about building three temporary shelters for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. No doubt, there is a sense that Peter does not want this event, this time, this experience to end for, as Luke 9:33 says, Peter makes his remarks here as Moses and Elijah are leaving. No doubt Peter is thinking, "Let's make this last. Let's make this a permanent part of our ministry, Lord." Many scholars have tried to tie Peter's desire for making booths with the Feast of Booths. And there may be some truth to that. But I think verse 6 makes it very clear why Peter says this, for these men were so scared they did not know what to say. They're speaking nonsense. They're scared. They're trying to figure this out. And Peter, in his immaturity, just keeps talking. The one thing we learn about immature and impetuous Peter is that, when he is scared, he starts talking when he should be listening. That is exactly what happened already in chapter 8:32; we saw it. And it will happen even more times before the resurrection, especially the night before Christ is killed.

Please see again what I have told you before; do not miss it. When Christ is seen for who he truly is, it always strikes fear and trepidation in the heart of all. Remember I took us to Revelation 1:12-16 last week. And we saw his eyes like a flaming fire and the two-edged double sword coming out of his mouth. The Lord Christ in all his glory is no joke. This is reverential awe for the holy perfection, the cosmic power, and the sovereign majesty on full display. Listen, dear friends, when you see Christ clearly, you will have the same response of holy fear, as the awe of his glory shocks you to silence or meaningless speech. The awe of his glory in the face of your personal sin, your personal sin declared so clearly in Romans 3:9-17, startles you to humble admission of certain judgment, certain judgment that the Bible makes clear in Acts 17:30-31 is coming upon the whole world. And

who will be the judge? Who is the one that Acts 17 makes crystal clear, that God has already appointed to be the judge of all men? You got it; it's Christ. And when you see him clearly and you understand he's coming back in his holy, righteous judgment, and we are rightfully deserving of eternal judgment and the eternal death that comes with it, it startles. It humbles; it rightfully scares. And that's when you know you're starting to see Christ rightly. I'm not making this up. This is illustrated in many ways. We're looking at it right now as a perfect illustration. I showed you Revelation. And I remind you of Isaiah 6. Isaiah 6, what happened to Isaiah when he saw the Lord, high and lifted up? He was scared in his boots. He recognized that he was a man of unclean lips and dwelt with a people of unclean lips. For his eyes had seen the King of glory, and he knew he deserved nothing but death. And who did he see? John chapter 12, verse 4 makes it clear; Isaiah saw Christ. Same response.

Have you ever had this response? Have you ever seen Christ in all his glory, been humbled by you in all your sin, recognized that he is the coming Judge and you rightfully deserve it? And then, and then and only then, turned and saw him in his grace and mercy, offering himself as the sacrifice for your sin? Have you seen that? Have you humbly accepted it? Those of you who are brothers and sisters in the Lord, have you forgotten it? Because Christ has not changed. He has not changed in his shocking holiness and his coming judgment. He has not changed in his ever-present mercy and grace. I pray that you have not forgotten this reality, for he is the pinnacle of the glory of God, for he is the declaration and the display of the glory of God. And what a glorious truth that is, as we get a glimpse of this, ever so slightly, in this Transfiguration.

We have seen the promise of glory, the presence of glory, and the pinnacle of glory. Now, finally, let's see the divine proclamation of glory. Now, as if this scene was not terrifying enough, God himself brings further revelation that utterly sends these men into a comatose state. You've got to put yourself on the mountain. These guys are shaking in their boots. They're in awe and wonder, trying to figure out who this is before them and who is talking with Christ. They're in awe and wonder and then, all of a sudden, it even gets more terrifying, more shocking, more revealing. Just as they are trying to figure out what is going on with Moses and Elijah, God Almighty, Yahweh himself, now let's these men know that he is there as well. God does this by revealing himself in two specific ways.

First in the glory cloud that comes. This overshadowing cloud was how God often manifested himself in the Old Testament to his people. And these men would have been very familiar with that. Exodus 13:21, God manifested his presence in the cloud by day. Exodus 34:5, it says that God descended onto Mount Sinai in a cloud, a cloud, and talked with Moses. In Exodus 40:34, it was the same cloud that covered the Tabernacle and filled it with God's glory. The same reality is seen in Numbers 9:15. Thus God is making it clear that he is watching and he is about to bring his confirmation and his divine validation to all that Christ has said and all that Christ will do through his death and resurrection. If the blazing presence of Christ's own glory on display was not enough, if Moses and Elijah further confirming the centrality of Christ and his cross was not enough, then God the Father will seal the deal for these disciples. There is no mistaken identity here on who is about to speak and what this cloud all reveals because it all points to Almighty God.

We see the cloud; now we hear the voice. God's own voice comes out of the cloud. And that is, now completely, this cloud has completely enveloped the whole place, completely surrounds the disciples and Christ and the whole top of the mountain. They're covered, like in a massive fog. You can't even see through. And that is a grace of God, where he covers even his own glory lest he consume these men. First, God the Father validates the Son's divine identity and mission veracity when he says, "This is my beloved Son. He is from me and I love him." Do not miss the deep love between the Father and the Son. We've seen this already, at the beginning of Mark's gospel account, in Mark 1:11 when God the Father did this early on at the baptism of Christ. How encouraging—don't miss it—how encouraging this must have been for Christ to hear from the Father, as Jesus did all that he did to please his Father (John 8:29, John 6:38). Also, Luke notes that God said, "This is my Son, my chosen One." God has sovereignly chosen Christ for this mission as the Messiah. And he wants these men to get it. Just as Moses and Elijah prove this by their presence, so God himself now declares that Jesus is not Plan B or just another Johnny-come-lately that made it farther than all the others that have tried. Jesus is the one, chosen from before the foundation of the world, for this mission to be the lamb slain. And that is exactly what the Apostle John, who's witnessing this, that is exactly what he himself will later say in Revelation 13:8.

Therefore, with that explanation by God himself, now he gives this clear exhortation that these men must what? Listen to his Son. This is a command, not an option for them. The Greek is emphatic. It literally says, "You must not stop listening to him." God the Father is speaking directly to these men from the cloud. What does he say? What does he mean when he says, "Listen to him; hear him?" He means, when he talks about his death and his coming cross, listen to him. When he talks about denying yourself, listen to him. When he talks about coming and future judgment against all who will not follow him, please listen to him. This is a present active command that carries the idea of keep listening and never stop listening to him. It is as if God himself is saying, "Men, I have shown you his eternal glory. Now go and do what he tells you that you might also declare and display his eternal glory through your own life and ministry." This command to listen to Christ does not simply mean to hear the words, he says, but, more importantly, to heed and follow his word. To listen but not follow is to prove that you are deaf and disobedient. God is making it clear to these men, and to all of us, that it's all about listening to Christ. It's all about following and obeying Christ. Let there be no mistake; all of this was pointing to this moment where God himself would say, "You've seen it. You've been enveloped in it. You've been mesmerized by it. You've been overtaken by the glory of Christ. You cannot deny it. It has shocked you speechless. Now, men, this is the point of all of it: listen to him."

Let there be no mistake; to listen to Christ is to submit to Christ (Ephesians 5:23). To listen to Christ is to trust Christ (John 14:1). To listen to Christ is to serve Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). To listen to Christ is to set your mind upon Christ, as Marty read from Colossians 3:1-4. To listen to Christ is to sing about Christ, which is exactly what Colossians 3:16 and 17 talk about. To listen to Christ is what? To proclaim, worship, and follow Christ alone (Colossians 1:28). To listen to Christ is to love Christ and to keep his word, as Christ himself said, in John 14:15 and John 14:23. Please, please, dear loved ones, this is what it's all about. Here, God the Father as he graciously proves and proclaims God the Son that all might listen to and learn from him that all might live for him. Do not be self-deceived, as I'm afraid so many are, that simply hearing about Jesus, simply talking about Jesus, is the same as listening to Jesus. That is a heinous lie that has deceived many. And that is exactly what James chapter 1:22 says, [that] those who simply hear the word of Christ and so deceive themselves. You must do what it says. Only then are you listening to Christ.

Therefore let me be clear. Let me help you; let me remind you; let me encourage you; let me equip you. To listen to Christ means to cling to Christ in hope, not fear (Matthew 6:25-33). To listen to Christ means to rejoice in Christ with peace (Ephesians 2:14). To listen to Christ means you focus on Christ with patience, not anxiety and worry (1 Peter 2:21-25). To listen to Christ means you wait on Christ with sweet contentment (Philippians 4:11-13). To listen to Christ means you rest on Christ with sure confidence (Philippians 1:21). This is what these men were struggling to do as they heard Christ talk about his looming death. But God the Father is assuring them not to worry about this, but just to trust and obey his Son as he knows what he is doing. Mark makes this clear for, as this whole episode now closes, everyone is gone, as the text shows us. Everyone is gone here in verse 8, except who? Christ. That's all they see. It's all they hear. Because that's all they need. That's what the Father wants. It's all about living for, learning from, listening to, and glorifying the Son, serving the Son, exalting the Son, obeying the Son, that the Father himself might ultimately be glorified in the end. It's all about listening to him. It's all about proclaiming him. It's all about his glory that God might be fully, ultimately honored. This is the lesson. This is what it's all about. This is what these men needed to get. And, dear loved ones, this is exactly what you and I need to be reminded of daily. Sadly, for far too many of us, we listen to ourselves. Far too many of us, we listen to the world. Far too many of us, we listen to the people of the world when we need to be listening and following and submitting to Christ.

Now, I do not want you to miss this. If you go over later and you read the parallel account in Matthew 17:6, it is very clear that, when these men heard the voice of God, it says they fell on their faces with great fear. Again, you can see the progressive intensity. They were already in fear and trepidation by seeing the glory of Christ and then recognizing these Old Testament giants who are now, they're talking about the cross of Christ, the exodus, the deliverance that's coming. And now, when they hear the voice of God himself, they fall flat on their face. Man, it's like all of life has been eviscerated from them. They are scared to death. The voice of God brought holy fear to their hearts as it always does and always should.

But notice, I do not want you to miss this; this is so encourag[ing], so glorious. Matthew says Jesus came over and he touches them and he says to them, "Get up and have no fear." He grabs them by the arm and says, "Come on, men. Get up

and have no fear.” There is no fear of judgment in the face of Almighty God when you are standing with, and under the glorious covering of, Christ. Again, another reason that we should listen to him, for he is our only hope against the righteous judgment of a holy God. For there is no condemnation only for those who are in Christ Jesus, as Romans 8:1 says. Or as 1 Timothy 2:5-6 says, there's only one mediator between God and man. There's only one that can stand between my judgment that I deserve and the righteous judgment that God will deliver. There's only one that can stand between there and be the propitiation, can appease God's holy wrath, and bear my unholy life. There's only one. It's not Mary. And it's not you. It's not your good works. It's not the church. It's not anyone or anything other than Christ. This is why we listen to him. He is our only hope. He is not simply the rock of offense, the stumbling block for all who disobey, but he is the rock of refuge for all who will obey. He is our fortress. He is our shelter. He is our redemption, justification, and righteousness, as 1 Corinthians 1:30 says.

Dear loved ones, I hope you see it. I hope you understand. I hope you recognize the glory of Christ. But I want to make it even a little bit clearer. I want to draw out now for us some more application from this. I want us to step back from what we've seen and heard and learned. We've connected with, we've understood the content of this episode. We've looked intently at the promise of glory. We've looked specifically at the presence of the glory of Christ. We've considered how Christ is the pinnacle of all glory. It all points to him, forward from the Old Testament, backward from the New Testament. And we've considered the proclamation of God himself declaring that his Son is what it's all about, that we must follow him, listen to him. I want us to apply this even a little bit further. I've been applying it throughout but I want to go a little bit further. I want to encourage you. I want you to think of these things.

Consider first how encouraging this would have been for these men to see Christ in all his conquering glory, before and during his crucifixion and shame. Part of what's going on here is what I said a minute ago, preparation Sunday, right? God himself, in his grace and mercy, is preparing these men for the pain and anguish they're going to have to deal with when they look at their Messiah in brutality and murder, hanging lifeless and unrecognizable because of the brutality and the scourging and the wickedness that was fostered upon him. As Isaiah 53 says, how would they get through that? How would they hold it together? Well, God had prepared them by looking to the glory, the future glory, the coming glory, seeing

Christ not in the brutality of his death, but seeing him in the brilliance of his glory, his glory that has always been there, will always be there, and will ultimately be displayed in the end.

Think about how encouraging for Christ to hear the accolades of the Father. Think about how encouraging for Christ to be reminded of the future glory that is to be revealed. We often struggle with the Trinity and with the hypostatic union, especially when we're thinking of Christ. We fall on two sides of the fence, or we fall off two sides of the horse. We tend to over-fixate on his humanity or over-fixate on his deity, to the detriment of one side or the other. He's one-hundred-percent God and one-hundred-percent man. And we must wrestle with that and see him as that. Do not miss it, dear loved ones: he was in anguish over the coming cross. He felt the pain. He felt the difficulty of that. Yet he did not waver. You see that in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Lord, is there any other way?" Why do you see that? You see the anguish of his heart coming out in his humanity. And again, God the Father had prepared him by what? "Fixate on your coming glory, Son. I've shown it to you. I've shown it to those around you. This is not the end. This is in many ways the doorway to the beginning."

And you're like, "I don't know, Pastor." Listen, that's exactly what the Scripture teaches. Jesus himself, in John 17, the night before he is to die, he stands there praying that glorious High Priestly Prayer. And how does it begin? It begins with Jesus focusing on his future glory, even asking the Father to bring his future glory, to be glorified with the glory that he's had with the Father from all eternity. What is he thinking about? He's thinking about his future glory. You want to further clarification? You want to make it even clearer? Go over to Hebrews 12:1 and 2, and what does the text say so clearly? That Christ took on the cross, that Christ set his face as a flint to Jerusalem, to the cross, with what on his mind? With the coming of the eternal glory, with the joy of the Lord, with the joy of the coming glory, with being with his Father, with being glorified, as he should be. He goes to the cross with that on his mind. Hebrews 12:1 and 2 speak so clearly, that it is the hope of the future glory that was Christ's ultimate focus when he faced the cross. Future, conquering glory was on the mind and heart of the Lord while traversing this perilous world and the cruelty of the cross that he had to carry.

That is so encouraging. But it gets even more encouraging, dear loved ones, when you realize that is the same for us. That is what's so encouraging about this

passage and about this truth. At the same time, think about how the hope of Christ's future glory establishes and anticipates the believer's future glory. That's why I had Marty read Colossians 3:1-4 because that's what it's all about. If you have been raised with Christ, if you have been united with Christ, if you have been immersed with Christ, then worry about these problems? No, then fix your eyes on things above, set your mind on Christ. Christ is mentioned like four times in four verses. And Paul is writing to the believers in Colossae and he's saying, "Don't worry about all this persecution. Don't worry about all these false teachers. Fixate on Christ. Focus on him as you deal with the problems that are coming." This must be our focus as we follow in the footsteps of Christ and we look forward to our future glorification of sinless perfection, as we are made into the image of Christ.

This is exactly—again, the Apostle John who is standing here in this moment—this is exactly what he says in 1 John chapter 3, verses 2 and 3 when he says, "Dear beloved, we are children of God. But be not confused. We are not what we will be." We all know that, right? Every day I get up. I recognize that. I see that and it's frustrating. And if I over-fixate on that, I'm in trouble. But if I do what the Apostle John says, what this passage is provoking me to see and know, and the Apostle John says what? "We are not yet what we will be, but this is true: when he returns, we will be like him because we will see him as he is." And John goes on and says, "He that has this hope in him purifies him, even as he is already perfect." What a glorious truth! This is exactly what Philippians 3:21 says when Paul talks about Christ returning and transforming our lowly bodies into the likeness of Christ. This is the glorious truth of 1 Corinthians 15:42 and 49, where it talks about that which dies because it's perishable, is raised what? Imperishable. And, of course, Romans 8:29 says this is the whole point of salvation. This is the whole point for which salvation is moving, for which you were saved, is that you would be glorified. Thus, we fixate on what is eternal, not on what is temporary and fleeting, as 2 Corinthians 4:16 and 18 exhorts us. We focus on future glory not present suffering. We focus on the crown, not the cross.

Listen, as we look to our believing loved ones—pay attention to me, church, because we got a lot of suffering, a lot of sickness and sadness happening right now. And that's the nature of this wicked world and all that we have to deal with—when you're serving and helping and encouraging your believing loved ones who are suffering, see them in their future glory. First Thessalonians 4:13-

18, that glorious passage that speaks about the reality that our believing loved ones will be raised first with Christ and they'll be transformed and we'll meet them in the air. See them in that. See them wearing their crown of righteousness that Christ will give to all who are eagerly awaiting his appearing as they fight the good fight. That's what Paul is talking about at the end of his life. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, what's he focused on? The eternal glory. His head's about ready to be chopped off, and he's focusing on the crown he's going to wear. Think about the contradiction of that, right? His head's literally going to be laying on the ground and Paul's talking about a crown. Not worried about his death, is he? Why? Because he's fixated on his eternal glorification. See your loved ones not as they are as they suffer through this pain and anguish of fighting the last great battle of death, or fighting the sin that dwells within them. See them, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:43, as being raised in glory, meaning the imperishable, perfect, powerful, glorified body of Christ-likeness. That is their end. And, as Colossians 3 says, that is their life.

As Paul said, the suffering of this present life is not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:17). And that's our problem. We spend way too much time giving the suffering the time it does not deserve. Give your time, your hope, your energy to the glory because that's the end. That's the ultimate. That's the blessing. Listen to me now, Tom and Barbara; focus on the glory of Christ for he is the sure seal, an eternal guarantee of your glorification. That is it. Jeannie and Jim, Amanda and Greg, Bobby, Richard, Morgan and Becca, sweet Jeannie and Lynn, Bill and the whole Itzel family, and everyone of us who are dealing with suffering and pain and loss, and will deal with it at some time, in some fashion with loved ones or even with ourself, listen; focus on the glory of Christ. Dealing with the loss of a believing loved one or walking with a spouse as they fight for life, look to the glory of Christ, for in him is lasting hope that never fades. In him is strength that always satisfies. In him there is energy that always sustains. In Christ you will never be let down. Focus on him. Rejoice in him. Fixate on him. And see him in your suffering loved one because that is who they are if they are a true believer in Christ, that is where they were going, and that is what you will ultimately see and be with for all eternity.

Dear loved ones, we have seen the promise of the glory of Christ. We have seen the cosmic, amazing, terrifying presence of glory in Christ. We have seen the fact that Christ is the pinnacle of all glory as all of Scripture, history, and time points to

him. And we have heard the proclamation of glory from the Father that all should listen, follow, submit, and obey him. What an amazing experience these men had. And you may be thinking right now, "Wow. Yeah, if God would only come and demonstrate that to me. If God would like send the glory cloud." Like so many churches think happened when the gold dust falls from the ceiling because they sprinkled it all over the ductwork up there and people say, "God is with us." "If we only had an experience like this. Man, if I could see Christ in all his blazing brilliance in person like these men. Oh man, if I could see that then I would follow him. I would believe. I would obey. But, until he does that, you know, it's just a crutch." Oh, be not shortsighted and self-deceived from seeing all that God has done in and through Christ as declared and displayed through God's active, living, and all-sufficient Word, the Word of Christ. Remember, Jesus Christ is the eternal Word. What do we have when we have the Scriptures? We have the eternal Word given to us.

This is why 2 Peter chapter 1, verses 16-21 is the place to end this sermon. I had the elders read it last week in preparation of ending it there, but we saw how that went. So we end it here this morning because that's where we need to end it. And in that passage, it is all about this moment as Peter reminds himself and all his listeners about this event on the holy mountain, where he was there. He was on the holy mountain with Christ. He was a witness of his majesty. And he got to hear the very voice of God. And what does Peter say? "That was amazing! I'm sorry that you guys didn't get that experience. You know, I am the privileged one. I am sorry that, you know, you guys, but you just take my word for it." That wouldn't be very encouraging, would it? That's not what he says. He says, "That was an amazing experience!" But then he tells us something that we don't think about enough, dear loved ones. He says, "Listen, listen, dear loved ones." And he's writing to a suffering, persecuted church, and he says, "You have something better than my personal experience. I saw Christ. I walked with Christ. I heard the voice of God Almighty. And you have something that's even more sure, that's even better than that experience. You have the ever-living, always powerful Word of God." Peter says in verse 18 that God confirmed everything on the mountain in the Transfiguration. But he goes on to say, in verse 19 of 2 Peter chapter 1, that we have something far better in the more sure Word of God.

Listen, dear loved ones, Peter said earlier in that same letter of 2 Peter, in chapter 1, verses 3 and 4, that we have everything we need to live a life of godliness,

pleasing to the Lord, through the precious promises, through these precious promises given to us through his Word. And what do these promises all point to? Christ. Who is the fulfillment, who is the “Yes” and “Amen,” who is everything to us? Christ. What do these promises do for those who will follow them? Peter says, through listening to them and obeying them, you become what? Partakers of the divine nature. What in the world does that mean? I'll tell you concisely. It means you become more and more like Christ, not in deity, but in maturity and sinless perfection in Christ-likeness.

While Peter, James, and John saw the presence of Christ's glory on the mountain, we have the same presence living inside of every true believer through the Spirit that indwells us. Paul said in Colossians 2:9—Marty mentioned it in his prayer—that all the fullness of deity dwells bodily in Christ. And all believers have been filled in him, meaning they are overflowing with abundant grace of being united to Christ. We lack nothing. We have been filled with Christ. Having died with Christ, then buried with Christ, we are raised with Christ and we are even seated with Christ. And one day, as Colossians 3:1-4 says so gloriously, one day, dear loved ones, we will return with Christ in cosmic glory of maturity and Christ-likeness.

Oh, I hope you understand this. This is why Christ is the pinnacle of the glory of God, as these men never saw a greater witness of God's blazing glory than when they saw the Christ transfigured. Yet we have the privilege to go to God's Word and see Christ exalted and lifted high day after day. We get to see him exalted and lifted high on every page of Scripture. We get to see him exalted and lifted high as he comes to rule and reign in cosmic justice and divine authority, where every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. As Hebrews 1 says, *“Long ago, and at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,”* Elijah, Moses, *“but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he also created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”*

Dear loved ones, we just need to see Christ clearly and follow him fully. We need to stop listening to ourselves and start listening to the Lord. Your greatest problem in 2021 will not be COVID or the government. Your greatest problem will

be listening to yourself instead of listening to Christ. You need—listen, let me make this really clear—you need to stop listening to yourself and you need to start talking to yourself. And what do you talk? The words of Christ. Stop listening to that voice. Stop listening to your heart. And start talking back to it. Start talking truth back to the nonsense that flows out of our wicked hearts and that flows into it from our wicked world. Your greatest dilemma this year will be focusing on yourself instead of focusing on Christ. That was exactly why Peter rebuked Jesus. And now God, in his mercy, has shown Peter, and to us how crazy it is to listen to ourselves instead of listening to the holy Son of God—don't miss it—who is the conquering King of glory. Amen? And I heard you; you said “amen” in response. Praise the Lord.

Let me pray. Father God, we are just in awe of this amazing truth. We are in awe of the coming glory of our Christ, our Savior, our Redeemer. We are in awe that he is that, he will be that, he's always been that. But even more in awe are we that we have the hope of that future glorification of being like him in our perfection and Christ-likeness. Lord, help us, encourage us, strengthen us, especially those who are suffering and struggling amidst all the pain and anguish of death and sickness and discouragement now. Encourage them, O Father, with these truths that the glory of Christ would be their food, would be their strength, would be their drink, would be their hope, their help, their nourishment. Cover them in the glory of Christ as they focus on the glory of the Word of Christ and meditate on it day and night and obey it. Encourage them, Holy Spirit, I pray. Strengthen them as only you can through your Word, we ask. Lord, help us in this year ahead. We know not what will come but this we do know: it is our mission and it is our passion to fixate on the glory of Christ and proclaim that glory locally and globally. Help us to do that for the glory of your great name alone, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.