

Look to Jesus

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[0:00] Mark chapter 9, I want to challenge you this morning to never miss the message that's in a miracle. Often in scripture we read of unique miraculous events and we get so caught up in that event and how it happened and what it must have been like that we miss the why.

Noah built that big old boat. It's really a message about how God saves. The burning bush, how did that bush burn and not be consumed?

What was that all about? It's really about the calling and the commission of Moses, the one that God used to deliver his people. The plagues that hit Pharaoh, one right after another, were really attacks on the various gods of Egypt.

The parting of the Red Sea was really about the delivery of God's people. Sarah's late age pregnancy in her 90s, miraculous. It's the fulfilling of the covenant of God.

David, just a shepherd boy with a sling, defeated Goliath. That's really about the victory that comes when you give your battles to the Lord.

[1:23] Daniel in the lion's den is about the deliverance of the Lord. The fourth man in the fire is about Christ being in the mist. The sun standing still when Joshua asked God to, gave him that request, tells us that one, God hears us when we pray and God is fighting for us.

The miracles of Christ is the salvation power of Christ. It all pointed to who the man himself was. The resurrection of Christ is the promise of eternal life.

The ascension of Christ is the promise of the return of Christ. All of that. And what we find in Mark chapter 9 is couched late in the life and the ministry of Christ, but before his sacrifice.

And it is a miraculous event. I have tried to wrap my head around it for decades to understand it completely.

It's a rare passage, a rare event, unlike anything else we see in Scripture. Yet the message is powerful.

[2:38] It's not obvious, but it's powerful. Mark chapter 9, beginning in verse 1 it says, And Jesus said to them, And after six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, led them up on 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 they 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 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.

[4:07] 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 did the scribes say that first Elijah must come? And he said to them, Elijah does come first to restore all things.

And how it is 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, and it is written of him.

Now, Matthew tells us that that last verse there, when he talks about Elijah having come, that they realized when he said that, that what he was talking about is an Elijah-like figure had come in John the Baptist.

And look what they had done to him. I spent many years trying to figure out the transfiguration. What in the world was going on here?

[5:15] And through much study, I've come to believe that it's both for the sake of Christ, as well as for the sake of the inner three that he let experience it, and thank God as well for us.

For Christ, it is a midstream affirmation for him about what he's doing. I would say it's a holy, fatherly pat on the back of sorts to Christ, a reminder of the eternal consequences of what was facing.

And you may ask, did Christ need that? And I'll tell you, I mean, you may say he's God, and you're right, he is. He is God. But I don't know if he needed it or not.

I believe because Scripture tells me so that he was really tempted in the desert. It wasn't just a farce. It wasn't just a show. That it was real temptation. I believe, as I spoke of a couple of weeks ago, that he really set his face toward Jerusalem in Luke 9, 51, with a combo of dread as well as anticipation of his last days.

I believe that he really suffered in his prayer in the garden before going to the cross. As much as I don't understand it all and may not do a good job of explaining it, he's not only 100% God, but he's also 100% man while he was on the earth.

[6:48] So I believe this is an eternal pat on the back like no other. However, the greatest message that we need to grasp is the one to those disciples that witnessed it, because that's what it does for us, too.

I believe this message to them is a message to us. So what did they witness? I believe they witnessed a combo of things.

One is I believe they witnessed a taste of his glory. In verse 1 of this passage that I just read, it says, 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. It's interesting how there are several ways people interpret that verse. Some believe that he's speaking of his return. And because he's not yet returned, well, he must be wrong.

Well, I don't believe that, and I don't believe you believe that either. Others believe that he's speaking of his ascension. And it may very well be, because it did happen not many days after this.

[8:00] But when the angel said he will return as he went, they're definitely talking about the kingdom and its power. However, I believe the context, I believe you always have to read verses in context.

I believe the context convinces me that he's speaking of this event. Because verse 2 states that just six days after he said this, the transfiguration happened.

And although he said it to a larger group, he said, Some of you standing here will not taste death until you see the kingdom of God after its coming power.

So that tells me that Mark believed this is the event he was talking about. Matthew 17 deals with it in the same kind of way. I believe Jesus is saying in verse 1, you're going to witness a taste of my glory.

In other words, you're going to see a preview of the greatest event that this world will ever know outside the cross itself. That it's a preview of the second coming of Christ.

[9:04] Matthew 16, verse 27, in the same context says this, For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he's done.

In other words, Jesus is going to come literally, actually, visibly, bodily. He'll come to earth, back to earth to receive us unto himself, that where he is we may be also, John 14, 3.

This is a taste, an anticipating foretaste of the glory of God that is to come.

They got to witness that. Not only that, but they also witnessed a view into eternity. It had to be something. I mean, along those same lines, this is a glimpse of the reality of eternity.

And you know what? The day is coming. The odds are clear. One out of one die. It's coming, you know.

[10:09] Unless the Lord returns in our lifetime, we'll all die. And that death may be shocking. I saw on social media this morning, somebody was killed.

Car accident right here in Cleveland, South Carolina, Highway 11. Motorcycle accident, actually. And his friends were tore up about the shock.

How in the world? And then I spent the latter part of the week around the beds of people who are facing unexpected and natural death in the coming days or hours.

Either way, it's coming, folks. And then eternity is forever. And I believe that when we speak of getting a taste of his glory, we must also realize that we're getting a view to remind us of eternity. That this life will end and all of eternity will be ushered in. And upon your death, it is immediate. Second Corinthians 5.8 says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

[11:23] That's for the Christian. To witness such an event, as they described in Mark chapter 9, I believe you have to swallow hard and think about eternity.

People look at their impending deaths or the imminent return of the Lord differently. They look at it differently. It reminds me of a story I heard about a man. A man, years ago, who was sleeping in a chariot in Switzerland.

And he was awakened in the early morning hours by a loud, roaring, rumbling, and cracking. And it frightened him. And for a few minutes, he thought, this is it.

It's in the world. After the sun rose, he told his host what he heard. And it scared him. And he asked him what it was. And he said that was just the sun hitting the ice slopes.

And the ice was cracking and melting as the sun came up in the morning. So what you thought was the end of the world was really just the dawn of a new day.

[12:31] My friend, that's what the return of the Lord is. It's the dawn of a new day. And what some people think of as the end will really be the dawn of a new day.

I believe they witnessed a view into eternity. Not only that, but I also believe they witnessed a touch of his word. I want you to notice who met Christ on the mountain.

One was Moses. What was the role of Moses? God used Moses to bring the law to the people.

First five books of the Old Testament. Pentateuch written by Moses. And then the other one there is Elijah.

Elijah is the prophet of prophets. A key representative of the prophets who God used before the word was complete.

[13:43] And so when we see Jesus with Moses and Elijah, you're looking at the law and the prophets.

Do you know what the Old Testament was called by the New Testament believers? And by Christ himself? The law and the prophets.

The word of God. Standing before Christ was the word of God. Christ fulfilled the law and all of his requirements. He kept it perfectly and provided the sacrifice for all the law looked to for fulfillment. Christ fulfilled it. And will fulfill every prophecy. Remember what John 1 says. The word was with God. The word was God. The fulfillment of a redemptive salvation as written in God's word is proclaimed in this meeting.

They got a touch of his word. But they also witnessed an understanding of the eternal. There's a couple other messages that I believe are being proclaimed here that I want you to consider.

[15:07] I want you to think about something. Moses, when he lived his long life, he died. Moses died. Deuteronomy chapter 34, verse 5 and 6 tells us about his death.

It said, The other one that was there is Elijah.

And Elijah did not die. I want you to see this. This had to be something. 2 Kings chapter 2, verse 9 says this.

When they crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you.

And Elisha said, Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.

And he said, You've asked a hard thing. Yet if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you. But if you do not see me, it shall not be so.

[16:29] And as they still went on and talked, Behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

And Elisha saw it. And he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and his horsemen. And he saw him no more.

Hello. He never died. He was caught up in a whirlwind in a chariot of fire.

Moses died and was buried. Elijah never died, yet both are on the mount with Jesus.

This is a preview of the second coming of Christ when we'll meet the Lord in the air.

[17:34] 1 Corinthians 15, 51 and 52 says, Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In the moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the

trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

Those like Elijah are caught up, alive, they'll be changed.

Those that are like Moses who have died, he'll come for them. Those who are alive when he returns, like Elijah, they'll be caught up and changed. I know people who want to live until Christ returns.

My grandfather wanted to be here when Christ returned. He was convinced he'd be here when the Lord returned. He died in 1979.

Didn't make it. I'm telling you, it'll be something else. Charles Spurgeon said it this way. He said, I hope I die before Jesus Christ comes because I want to experience the thrill of the resurrection.

[18:43] Either way, my friend, the Christian has victory in the Lord. This is what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, 53 through 55.

For this perishable body must put on imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? Folks, listen. Those who are in the Elijah crowd, who are alive when he comes and are caught up, they can say, where is your sting, death?

You never got me. And the Moses crowd, who have died in Christ, can say, where is your victory? Death, you did not win. The other thing I understand more about the eternal from this passage is how we will know our loved ones in eternity.

[20:01] Think about this. Have you ever wondered how Peter, James, and John knew that was Moses and Elijah?

Do you think they went and got their children's Bible and looked at the paintings to see if it matched up? They didn't have one. They didn't know Moses looked like Charlton Heston.

They didn't know that. So how in the world do they know? We shall know each other, even if we have never met.

But even more so, we shall know Christ. They witnessed an understanding of the eternal.

And lastly, they also witnessed a sense of the Savior. I hope you get this. Verse 8 says, and I love this scripture. And suddenly looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them, but Jesus only.

[21:19] My friend, listen. When it's all said and done, they saw Jesus and Jesus only. All points to Christ.

All should point to Christ. When you look at creation, it ought to point to Jesus. When you look at the Israelites pursuing the promised land, you ought to see Jesus in the cloud and in the fire. When you read the prophecy, you ought to see Jesus. When you read all of the wisdom literature and the Psalms, Solomon tells us at the end of Ecclesiastes, it all comes back to the Word of God. He is the Word. It's all about Jesus. When you walk through your valley, look to Jesus. When you need salvation, look to Jesus.

When you need direction and guidance and comfort and strength, look to Jesus.

[22:32] When death is encroaching, look to Jesus. When you think of all of eternity, my friend, look to Jesus.

The most profound message of the transfiguration of Christ, a marvelous, miraculous event.

The message was and is, look to Jesus. Look to Jesus. The Father affirmed Him.

We commit our lives to Him. We trust Him. We rest in Him. We live for Him. We change the pattern of our lives for Him.

We look to Jesus. I'm going to tell you something. There's a lot of shiny and there's a lot of flashy in the world in which we're in.

[23:41] There's a lot of There's a lot that can distract us from where we ought to look. Whatever it may be, my friend. Don't be distracted.

Don't be distracted. Look to Jesus. Look to Jesus. That's the message in the miracle.

With every head bowed and every eye closed. I want to ask you today, if you've ever come to the point in your life when you've given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't believe it comes by church affiliation.

I don't believe it comes by familiarization. I believe it comes from a personal commitment to follow Christ. If you've never asked Him to forgive you of your sins and remove those things that are a barrier between you and Him, today I encourage you to commit your life to Christ.

You just come down and let me know. If you've done that, I'll be happy to guide you in that. Greatest joy of my life, leading people to the Lord. Maybe you're here and you've made that decision privately, but you've never made it publicly.

[24 : 56] And I want you to know when you proudly proclaim your faith through a public confession and baptism, how that all points to Christ. It just points people to Christ.

Maybe you're here this morning and God's drawing you to Pickens First Baptist Church. If you've been alongside us for some time, but you feel like the Lord is leading you to be a part of this church. If that's what the Lord is leading you to do, I encourage you to come. And then for the rest of us, what is it?

What is it in your life that is distracting enough to keep your eyes off of Christ? Whatever that is, will you lay that down before the Lord today?

You might want to come to this altar and just lay it down before Him and say, Lord, I don't want anything to come in the way of me looking to you in all things. Let's just look to Jesus and let nothing hinder us.

[26 : 13] Heavenly Father, I love you. And I thank you that you meet us where we are and you give us what we need. And I ask, dear God, today that you'll allow every person here to sense that presence of the Spirit of God.

And, Lord, as you direct, I pray that we'll be obedient to follow you. Nothing more, nothing less than following what the Spirit of God leads us to do. In Jesus' precious name, amen.

If you would.