

Jesus, Moses, and Elijah — Rev. Denise Stone

Text: Mark 9:2-9

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BIG FLATS NY, 02-14-2021

The last few weeks we have followed Jesus to Capernaum where he called four of his disciples and he healed a number of people from illnesses and cast out demons.

Listen closely to the Second Scripture Reading for today from the Mark, Chapter 9, verses 2-9:

² Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” ⁸ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. ⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.ⁱ

The Word of the Lord, **Thanks Be to God**

Today, I want you to really ***experience*** the Scripture. I want you to ***encounter and experience*** Jesus and God the Father/Creator through our text.

Often in my preaching part of my goal is to help us learn greater insights about the text, learn more about the culture in which Jesus lived and how scripture would have been heard by the original audiences. Today though, the primary goal is to ***experience*** the scripture. To ***encounter and experience*** Jesus through the text.

Before we get to that, I do want to give you some background on the passages leading up to today's text. To help you understand what the disciples were possibly thinking and feeling.

In Mark 8, starting with verse 27, we find Jesus and his disciples in the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way, Jesus asked his disciples who people say that he is.

And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." ³⁰ And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

From this, a high point for Peter and the disciples, Jesus begins to explain to them that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer and be killed, and after 3 days, rise again.

Peter is beyond unhappy with this. The text says that Peter **rebukes** Jesus.

You see, the Messiah, in Peter's mind, should not suffer, much less die. Plus, Peter seems to miss the whole "rise again" part. This picture of the Messiah is not what he had been taught.

Jesus then "...rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'"

Jesus equates Peter and his rebuke of Jesus to something like Satan tempting him in the desert earlier in Mark. This is a powerful and emotional scene.

After this encounter with Peter, in verses 8:34-9:1, Jesus goes on to explain what being **HIS** disciple means.

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their

life? ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

9 ¹ And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.”

Jesus is the Messiah. The Messiah will suffer, will die and ... will *rise again*. The followers of the Messiah can expect to be treated just like the Messiah.

Jesus will suffer, die and rise again. The disciples of Jesus can expect to suffer and, in many cases, will even die.

That brings us to today’s text.

In verse 2, we are told the events of our Scripture passage take place 6 days after Jesus’ rebuke of Peter and his description of being **HIS** disciples.

The disciples have had 6 days to wonder about all that Jesus told them. To wonder how Jesus, their Messiah, could be subjected to suffering, could be subjected to death. 6 days to wonder what all that they had seen and heard meant.

We can understand that the disciples were confused about Jesus' true identity at this point.

In today's scripture, though, a handful of disciples are called into an experience where they have glimpses of who Jesus truly is.

Jesus then "took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves."

Today, I want us to have this same opportunity to open our eyes to who Jesus really is. Just like the disciples, it is ok to bring your own confusion, your own uncertainties, about who Jesus is in your life. To help us more fully experience this text let me share a

...guided meditation on the Transfiguration from *Touching Jesus* by Patty McCulloch.

"During this reflection **you** will be going up to the mountaintop **with Jesus**.

You will witness something truly amazing. So . . .

Relax.

Allow all the distractions to go out of your head.

Just still yourself.

Breathe in.
Hold.
Breathe out.
Breathe in.
Hold.
Breathe out.

Be still.
Relax.
Let all your worries fly away.

Breathe in.
Hold.
Breathe out.
Breathe in.

Hold.
Breathe out.

[Close your eyes if you wish.]

Imagine . . .

Jesus asks you to go with him to the top of the mountain.

You go with Peter, James, and John, friends of Jesus.

You are climbing.

It is a beautiful day.

The sky is clear and you can see all around.

Enjoy the sight.

You have reached the summit.

Sit and look all around.

Something catches your eye.

Something is happening where Jesus is.

He is wrapped in light; his clothes are dazzlingly white.

There is Elijah from the scriptures!

Moses is there, too.

Jesus is talking with Moses and Elijah.

Watch this sight for a while.

What do you make of it?

Peter interrupts this vision.

You can tell that he has seen it too.

He says, "It is great that we are here. Let's build some tents and stay for a while."

Then you heard a loud voice,

"This is my beloved Son, listen to him."

What do these words mean?

Repeat them over and over in your mind.

"This is my beloved Son, listen to him."

"This is my beloved Son, listen to him."

As you repeat those words, only Jesus stands before you.

Go up to Jesus.

Ask him to sit.

Sit next to him.

Ask him what the words of the loud voice mean?

He looks at you and asks,
“Do you listen to me?”

Answer him.

Be with him for a while.

Listen to him.

It is time to re-enter ***this*** space.

Say good-bye for now.

Ask Jesus to lead your way into the rest of the day.

Say thank you.

Come back gently.

If you closed them, you may open your eyes.

And Remember.ⁱⁱ

What do these words mean?

“This is my beloved Son, listen to him.”

Jesus looks at you and asks, “Do you listen to me?”

Answer him.

AMEN.

ⁱ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.avemariapress.com/engagingfaith/guided-meditation-transfiguration>.