

## Transfiguration / February 14, 2021

### Mark 9:7

**“And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud,  
‘This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.’”**

When Jesus spoke about John the Baptizer and his ministry in the wilderness, He said, “What did you go out to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in king’s houses. What then did you go out to see? A prophet?” People went to see a prophet and John looked the part. He wore a camel’s hair cloak, bound by a leather belt and ate locusts and wild honey. He spoke in a prophetic voice, saying, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” He did the work of a prophet. He prophesied the coming of the Messiah saying, “He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” John didn’t disappoint! He looked and sounded like a prophet.

John identified Jesus as the Messiah, but Jesus didn’t meet people’s messianic expectations. The people in the synagogue at Nazareth, dismissed Him as the carpenter’s son and ran Him out of town. His own mother and brothers came to take him into protective custody, thinking He was out of His mind. Later John the Baptizer seems to have had his own doubts. He sent disciples to ask Him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” God thought differently. At His baptism, the divine voice identified Him as the Messiah, saying, “You are my Son whom I love, with you I am well pleased.” The divine voice identified Jesus as God’s Son, but Jesus didn’t look like God’s Son. There was nothing about His appearance that identified Him as God’s Son. People often misunderstood the nature of His kingship, or just plain dismissed Him.

Jesus didn’t look like God’s Son, until He led Peter and James and John up a high mountain and “He was transfigured before them.” In that moment they caught a glimpse of His divinity as His glory shone through the veil of His humanity. They saw Him in a different light. Previously they listened to Him as their rabbi, their great teacher. Now they listened to Him as God’s son. The divine voice again identified Him as His Son, this time adding an exclamation point saying, “Listen to Him!” We listen to Him. “He is the image of the invisible God.” We listen to Him. He is the way and the truth and life and we come to the Father through Him alone. We listen to Him. He brings us to the Father through His blood shed on the cross to atone for our sin. We listen to Him. He speaks words of life. He is the Word of life.

As they travelled through the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked the disciples what people were saying about Him. He said, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others one of the prophets.” He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter correctly identified Him as “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” When they saw His appearance transformed in brilliant light, they realized what it meant to say He was “the Son of the living God.” Later in life John would have a similar experience. While praying on the island of Patmos, John was suddenly in the Spirit and He saw the glorified Christ. He said, “The hairs of His head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire...and His face was like the sun shining in full strength.” What He saw knocked him off his feet!

Which is why Jesus covered His divine glory with the veil of His humanity during His earthly ministry. If He hadn’t, people would have fled from Him in terror, instead of coming to Him for healing, mercy and peace. Instead of sitting at His feet to listen to His teaching, they would have begged someone else to speak, even as Israel begged Moses to speak to them at Mount Sinai and not the Lord. In the transfiguration Jesus reveals Himself as more than the greatest of the prophets. He shows He is the Son of God from eternity. As Paul said in the letter to the Colossians, “He is the image of the invisible God...In Him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, making peace by the blood of His cross.’ He is God’s Son, who came to do what only God could do; reconcile us to Himself through the blood of His cross.

The disciples were in awe of Jesus. His words captivated, confused and enthralled them. He called and they immediately left everything and followed Him. They called Him Rabbi, which means “My great one.” It was a term of respect that students gave to their teachers, acknowledging the greatness of their religious knowledge in comparison to theirs. Jesus was their Rabbi, but they didn’t realize how great He was until they saw divine light radiate from His body, saw Moses and Elijah standing with Him and heard the divine voice say: “This is my beloved Son; listen to Him!” The same voice that identified Him at His baptism spoke directly to the three disciples so they would see that more than a prophet, more than their rabbi that Jesus is the Son of God; and that

He had a purpose to fulfill, not the redemption of Israel from Roman rule as they imagined, but the redemption of humanity from sin, death and the devil through the blood of His cross.

The Father's voice and the presence of the two great prophetic figures of the Old Testament affirmed, both Jesus' identity and the salvation He had come to accomplish. In the letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is contrasted to Moses and the prophets. In their time they were faithful in God's house, as servants. Jesus is faithful in God's house eternally, as His Son. Moses and the prophets had important roles to play in God's plan of salvation: Moses, in the creation of Israel as the people through whom God would make Himself known to the nations. The prophets, in proclaiming the coming Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Jesus had a greater role as the one who would accomplish God's plan and bring salvation to the world, through His sinless life and sacrificial death. God made Himself known to Israel as their only God and Saviour through the ministry of Moses, Elijah and the prophets. Jesus became Israel and the world's Saviour through the blood He shed on the cross. We listen to Him. He is our God and Saviour!

There was nothing the people of Israel valued more than the words of Moses and the Prophets. The scrolls that contained their words were treated with the utmost respect. To this day in the synagogues, the Jewish people carefully wrap and unwrap the scrolls. They wear gloves when they handle them. They never touch the paper with their bare hands. When the scriptures are worn with time, they give them an honourable burial. The rabbis, from before the time of Jesus to this day, study the words of Moses and the prophets. They comment on their contents and debate their meaning. These words are what held them together through exile, captivity and conquest. Jesus said these words bear witness to Him. Moses and Elijah stood with Jesus at His transfiguration to bear witness that their words testify to Jesus. As the angel told John in Revelation, "Testimony to Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The vision on the mount of transfiguration shows we need to listen to Him as our God and Saviour.

The letter to the Hebrews begins, "Long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God." Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God. He reveals God's glory most fully in the sacrifice of His cross, by which He paid the debt of our sin. He reveals God's glory in words of repentance, forgiveness, healing and peace. He calls us to faith in Him as Saviour through His word. One day He will call us to share in His resurrection. Then we too will see His face shine in divine glory. Until then, we listen to Him. In Him the words of Moses and the prophets are fulfilled. We listen to Him. He is the atoning sacrifice for human sin, our sin. We listen to Him. His words give forgiveness and bring eternal life. In Jesus' Name. Amen