**Uniquely Jesus** January 22, 2017

Mark 9:2-32

In the first eight chapters of Mark, his focus has been on who Jesus is.

1:1 – the Son of God

1:24 – the Holy One of God

1:32 – a healer of bodies, minds and souls

2:10 – the forgiver of sins

2:27 – the Lord of the Sabbath

3:27 – greater than Beelzebub

4:1-34 – an extraordinary teacher

4:41 – the Lord of the storm

5:35-43 – the Raiser of the dead

6:1-6 – a prophet

6:35-51 – a miracle worker (multiplied bread and fish; walked on water)

8:29 – the Christ

In the last eight chapters, Mark will increasingly focus us on the cross.

Let’s read the passage we will be studying today - Mark 9:2-13. (Matthew and Luke also wrote of this event and so wherever you see a [ ] in the handout, that indicates I’ve pasted in details from Luke and Matthew that Mark didn’t include.

**Coffee/Question**

**Slide: Welcome one another**

Which aspect of this story, (1) surprises you, (2) seems unbelievable, and

(3) raises questions for you.

**Feedback**: put pertinent comments on the flipchart.

**First thing.**

The importance of context.

Mark 8:31-9:1.

The disciples understanding of who the Messiah was and what he would do was being turned inside out and upside down.

**Second thing.**

The transfiguration of Jesus was not a random event; nor was the appearing of Moses and Elijah.

**What happened on that mountain that day was meant to communicate to those three men, and in turn to the others, that what God had begun so long ago when he rescued Abraham’s family from Egypt, was being brought to completion by Jesus.**

Four important parallels.

Exodus 19:2b-3 – Moses climbed up Mt. Sinai to meet with God.

Mark 9:2 - Peter, James and John, along with Jesus, climbed up Mt. Hermon and met with God

Exodus 19:17-19 – the glory of God was revealed

Mark 9:3 – Jesus’ glory was revealed

Exodus 34:29 – Moses face glowed from being with God

Mark 9:3 – Jesus face shone like the sun

Exodus 24:15-16 – God spoke from a cloud to Moses

Mark 9:7 – God spoke from a cloud to Jesus and then to the three disciples

**Jesus had come to fulfil Israel’s destiny.**

**But what was required of him in order to do so, was different than anyone anticipated.**

This was the very issue which had prompted Peter, six days earlier to “rebuke” Jesus.

**Third thing.**

What did the presence of Moses and Elijah signify?

The phrase, **“the Law and the prophets”** was a common expression used by Jewish people to describe their Scriptures.

Jesus in Matthew 5:17 and 7:12 spoke of *“the Law and the prophets.”*

Moses and Elijah represented the Jewish Scriptures.

What did Moses, Elijah and Jesus talk about?

v.4 - *“… his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.”*

For centuries, through “the Law and the prophets,” God’s Spirit had spoken again and again of the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow afterwards.

But Peter had missed or misunderstood the “suffering” parts, and focused only on the passages that spoke of the Messiah’s “glory.”

Peter wanted a conquering King. And he was not alone.

Almost every Jewish person thought the same way.

But the cross and the sufferings of Jesus, had been an integral part of God’s plan, from eternity past. This was how he would undo sin and disarm evil, and make all things new.

**Fourth thing.**

When God’s voice spoke from out of the cloud, what did he say?

On Mt. Sinai God spoke to Moses... and gave him the Law.

On Mt. Hermon, God spoke to Jesus... and affirmed him – *“this is my Son, whom I love; whom I’ve chosen; with whom I am well pleased.”*

Moses and Elijah were held in high regard by all Jewish people.

There was not just the potential; it was a real risk that Jesus might be regarded as being an equal of Elijah and Moses.

The voice of God made it clear that Jesus was far greater, vastly superior, and had no equal – “*this is my Son.”*

God also spoke to Peter, James and John.

*This is my Son…listen to him.”*

Peter had rebuked Jesus when he spoke of the cross.

God the Father emphasized that day “listen to him.”

There are many competing voices that would tell us how to live.

When God audibly spoke to Peter, James and John on top of Mt. Hermon, he told them of “the one voice” they were to listen to; “the one voice” they could trust - Jesus.

He is the way and the truth and the life.

**Fifth thing.**

Tim Keller writes, *“Moses had reflected the glory of God as the moon reflects the light of the sun. But Jesus produced the unsurpassable glory of God; it emanated from him. Jesus did not point to the glory of God, as Elijah, Moses and every other prophet had done; Jesus is the glory of God in human form. The author of the book of Hebrews (1:3) puts it like this: ‘The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being...’”* King’s Cross, p.113

In Exodus 33, Moses had asked God, *“Show me your glory.”* v.18.

God answered, *“I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence.”* v.19

But before he did so, God placed Moses in the cleft of a rock, and covered him with his hand. God explained the reason why: *“You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”* v.20

What happened with Peter, James and John?

They were not placed in a cleft of a rock.

The hand of God did not cover them.

They experienced what no human, since Adam and Eve, had ever experienced - they saw Jesus in his glory... and they did not die.

Those men never forgot that day. John wrote in his gospel, 1:14: *“We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son.”*

Peter wrote: “*… we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.****17****He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”****18****We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.”* 1 Peter 1:16-18

Peter, James and John were terrified and overwhelmed with fear, as they saw Jesus’ appearance change, and his face shine like the sun and his clothes become as bright as a flash of lightning - but they didn’t die.

**Sixth thing.**

As all of this happened, Peter didn’t know what to do or say.

But of one thing he was certain – *“it is good for us to be here.”*

Don’t let this phrase slip away on you.

How is being terrified and overwhelmed with fear a good thing?

The experience of my first roller coaster ride - the Dragon Slayer.

The experience of my wedding day.

You’ve all heard the story before.

In C.S. Lewis’ book, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the children meet Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, who describe the mighty lion to them.

“Is he a man?” asked Lucy.

“Aslan a man!” said Mr. Beaver sternly. “Certainly not. I tell you he is King of the wood and the son of the great emperor-beyond-the-sea. Don’t you know who is the King of the Beasts? Aslan is a lion – the Lion, the great lion.”

“Ooh!” said Susan, “I’d thought he was a man. Is he – quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.”

“That you will, dearie, and no mistake,” said Mrs. Beaver; “if there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.”

“Then he isn’t safe?” said Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver, “don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? Of course, he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

https://storiesforpreaching.com/is-he-safe/

God is a person who is awesomely terrifying.

And yet, the absence of God in our life leaves every one of us with a longing that cannot be satisfied by anything but God himself.

That is why, when we find him, or better said, he finds us, and we turn our lives to him, it is then we feel that we’ve finally come home.

**Seventh thing.**

The One who created everything, is a community of persons who love one another.

The Father said in the hearing of Peter, James and John: *“This is my Son whom I love.”*

It isn’t just that God chooses to love - he is love.

And God who is love, “loves the world.” John 3:16.



God doesn’t love “the world” like Linus!

1 John 3:1 says, *“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God.”*

The Triune God, who are a community of persons who love one another, invites you and me, through Jesus, to enter into the love relationship they share with each other.

As awesome as it was on the mountaintop, they didn’t stay there.

Jesus who had taken them up the mountain, led them down it.

His work wasn’t done; nor was theirs.

Tim Keller says, *“It’s one thing to know that the glorious Creator God loves you,*

*cares for you, holds you. But it is another thing to sense it, to experience it...*

*You have to see clearly in your mind what he has done and is doing through Jesus.*

*You have to experience foretastes of that embrace God is going to give you someday...Whatever life brings you, you will need those foretastes to nourish and strengthen you.”* King’s Cross, p.118.

Our courage to press on; our resolve to never give up; our commitment to live for Jesus, is strengthened by our times of intimacy with him.

But what happened on Mt. Hermon reminds us that we also experience such times of intimacy… together.

David Mathis writes: *“Our delight in Jesus expands as we magnify him together with others. The secret of joy in corporate worship is not only self-forgetfulness — or to put it positively, preoccupation with Jesus and his glory — but also the happy awareness that we are not alone in having our souls satisfied in him.”*

What happened in the church at Corinth (14:25) still happens:

*“God really is among you.”*

Jesus keeps the promise he made in Matthew 18:20: *“Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”*

We may never have an encounter like Peter, James and John had.

But Jesus promised he would satisfy our souls.

This is why we come together week by week – to honor him by worshiping together and in doing so to experience his presence together.

**The Blessing**

Romans 5:2

**Life Group Discussion Questions**

Week of January 22, 2017

What was waiting for them when they came down the mountain?

Look at Mark 9:14-32

- arguing with the teachers of the law

- a demon possessed boy whose life was a horror

- failure of the other disciples to help the boy

What was waiting for them when they came down from the mountain was why Jesus had come to this world: to make right what had gone wrong.

**How important is our worship together?**

Article by David Mathis

Executive Editor, desiringGod.org

Worshiping Jesus together may be the single most important thing we do. It plays an indispensable role in [rekindling our spiritual fire](http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/kindle-the-fire-in-corporate-worship), and keeping it burning. Corporate worship brings together God’s word, prayer, and fellowship, and so makes for the greatest means of God’s ongoing grace in the Christian life.

But thinking of worship as a means can be dangerous. True worship is fundamentally an experience of the heart, and not a means to anything else. So it’s important to distinguish between what benefits might motivate us to be regular in corporate worship, and what focus our minds and hearts should pursue in the moment.

According to Don Whitney, “There’s an element of worship and Christianity that cannot be experienced in private worship or by watching worship. There are some graces and blessings that God gives only in the ‘meeting together’ with other believers” ([Spiritual Disciplines](http://www.amazon.com/Spiritual-Disciplines-Christian-Pilgrimage-Growth/dp/1576830276/?tag=desigod06-20), 92). Surely, many more could be given, but here are five such “graces and benefits” that we experience uniquely in the context of corporate worship.

## 1. Awakening

Often we come into corporate worship feeling a sense of spiritual fog. During the rough and tumble of the week, the hard knocks of real life in the fallen world can disorient us to ultimate reality and what’s truly important. We need to clear our head, recalibrate our spirit, and jumpstart our slow heart. Martin Luther found corporate worship powerful in awakening his spiritual fire: “at home, in my own house, there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through.”

Better than Luther, though, is the experience of the inspired psalmist. In Psalm 73, he begins by despairing over the prosperity of his wicked peers (verses 2–15). But the fog clears as he comes consciously into the presence of God: “When I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end” ([Psalm 73:16–17](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2073.16%E2%80%9317)).

He was embattled. The spiritual haze was thick. But the breakthrough came in the context of worship. Which then leads to this climactic expression of praise: “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” ([Psalm 73:25–26](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2073.25%E2%80%9326)).

How many times have we found this to be true for us as well? Instead of staying away from corporate worship when we sense ourselves to be spiritually lethargic, precisely what we need more than ever is the awakening of worship. When our hearts feel it least is when we need most to remind our souls, “For me it is good to be near God” ([Psalm 73:28](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2073.28)).

## 2. Assurance

A second benefit is the community dynamic — which means not only meeting our good desires for belonging and shared mission ([fellowship](http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/learn-to-fly-in-the-fellowship)), but also providing a catalyst for our assurance.

While we may admire figures like Athanasius and Luther who stood contra mundum, alone against the world, we must remember God has said it is not good for us to be alone ([Genesis 2:18](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen%202.18)). These heroes were the product of dire days, and inevitably their stories have been thinned in the collective memory of distant history. Neither Athanasius or Luther truly stood alone, but were part of faithful communities that fostered and strengthened their otherwise unpopular beliefs.

And so it is with us. We were not made to stand solo with no fellows. Even in times as troubling as Elijah’s, God gave him seven thousand who hadn’t abandoned the truth

([1 Kings 19:18](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Kings%2019.18)). God made us for community — and named her “the church” — and being part of this great local and global community plays an important role in assuring us not only that we are not deceiving ourselves in pretending our profession is credible, but also that we truly know whom we have believed ([2 Timothy 1:12](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim%201.12)).

And worship in the local church points us to the worship of universal church, and that Jesus has a people from many nations, and one day will include every nation ([Revelation 7:9](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%207.9)).

## 3. Advance

Corporate worship also plays an indispensible part in our sanctification — our progressive growth in being conformed to the image of Jesus ([Romans 8:29](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.29)). Corporate worship is for our general “upbuilding and encouragement and consolation”

([1 Corinthians 14:3](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2014.3)), but also in beholding Jesus together, “we all . . . are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” ([2 Corinthians 3:18](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%203.18)).

Christian growth is not just something that we take away as sermon application and then work into our lives that week. As Tim Keller says, sanctification can happen “on the spot” as we sit under gospel preaching and engage in corporate worship. There are times — may God make them many — when the Holy Spirit takes the Scripture read, the prayer spoken, the chorus sung, or the truth preached and presses it right to the point of our need, and not merely informs our Christian walk, but heals us in that moment.

When we join in corporate worship, God loves not only to change our minds, but irrevocably change our hearts “on the spot.”

## 4. Accepting Another’s Leading

One important distinction between public worship and private worship is the place of our initiative. Corporate worship reminds us that our faith is fundamentally reception, not our own initiation. In private devotions, we lead ourselves in some sense. In corporate worship, we’re made to receive the leading of others.

In private worship, we’re in the driver’s seat. We decide what passage to read, when to pray, what to pray, how long to linger in Bible reading and meditation, what songs to listen to or sing, what gospel truths to preach to ourselves, and what applications to consider. But in corporate worship, we respond. Others preach and pray and select the songs and choose how long to linger in each element. We’re positioned to receive.

It is a wonderful thing in our personal devotions to make such choices, but it is also good for us to practice engaging with God when someone other than ourselves is making the calls. Corporate worship demands that we discipline ourselves to respond, and not only pursue God on our own terms. It is an opportunity to embrace being led, and not always taking the lead.

## 5. Accentuated Joy

Last, but not least, is the heightened experience of worship in the corporate context. Our own awe is accentuated, our own adoration increased, our own joy doubled when we worship Jesus together.

As the Swedish proverb says, a shared joy is a double joy. In corporate worship, the “graces and benefits” we uniquely enjoy are not only awakening, assurance, advance, and accepting others’ leadership, but also the accentuated joy of deeper and richer and greater adoration and awe, since our delight in Jesus expands as we magnify him together with others.

The secret of joy in corporate worship is not only self-forgetfulness — or to put it positively, preoccupation with Jesus and his glory — but also the happy awareness that we are not alone in having our souls satisfied in him.

Mark 9:2-13, ( Luke 9:28-36; Matthew 17:1-13)

*After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain [to pray,] where they were all alone. [As he was praying] he was transfigured before them; [the appearance of his face changed and shone like the sun], and*  ***3*** *his clothes became dazzling white [as white as the light] whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them, [as bright as a flash of lightning.]*

***4****And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. [They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.**Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.]*

***5****[As the men were leaving Jesus] Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. [If you wish, I will] put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”****6****(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)*

***7****[While he was still speaking, a bright cloud] appeared and covered them, [and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.] A voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love, [whom I have chosen; with him I am well pleased.] Listen to him!”*

*[When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.”]****8****When they looked up [and around], they saw no one [with them] except Jesus.*

***9****As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus [instructed them, giving] them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.****10****They kept the matter to themselves, [and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen], (though they did discuss) what “rising from the dead” meant.*

***11****And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”* ***12****Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much [at their hands] and be rejected?****13****But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.” [Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.]*