



## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Study Guide Full  
Mark 9:1-13  
January 26, 2020

Resuming our Sermon Study Guides in their full format, we come upon one of the most fascinating New Testament texts, in our ongoing study of discipleship that is the Book of Mark—the transfiguration.

“Transfiguration” A Sonnet by Malcolm Guite

*For that one moment, ‘in and out of time’,  
On that one mountain where all moments meet,  
The daily veil that covers the sublime  
In darkling glass fell dazzled at his feet.  
There were no angels full of eyes and wings  
Just living glory full of truth and grace.  
The Love that dances at the heart of things  
Shone out upon us from a human face  
And to that light the light in us leaped up,  
We felt it quicken somewhere deep within,  
A sudden blaze of long-extinguished hope  
Trembled and tingled through the tender skin.  
Nor can this blackened sky, this darkened scar  
Eclipse that glimpse of how things really are.*

*Reflect.* How does Malcolm Guite’s poetic imagery of the transfiguration move you?



**9** *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."*

*2 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, 3 and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 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." 6 For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." 8 And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.*

*9 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. 10 So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. 11 And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" 12 And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."*

### Commentary Notes:

**v. 1.** To what event does the kingdom of God coming in power refer? Scholars debate: the end-times *parousia*, the subsequent transfiguration, Jesus' resurrection, etc. For a scholarly approach to this verse, considering reading K. E. Brower's article "Mark 9:1: Seeing the Kingdom in Power."

## Mark 9:1-13

Notes:

### Discussion Questions:

*Discuss:* How might verse 1 provide a sort of connective tissue between what we saw at the end of Mark 8 and this passage here?

vv. 2-3. The reference to “after six days” seems particularly significant in light of the fact that Mark is rarely so specific with his time references. It seems the six days could have no other referent but the “Who do you say I am” conversation back in Caesarea Philippi, in Mark 8.

So it is that Peter, James, and John—the inner circle of the disciples, who were present when Jairus’s daughter was raised back in Mark 5—follow Jesus up an unidentified “high mountain,” likely the 9,000 foot Mount Hermon. There in the dazzling white radiance of the transfiguration they are privy to what can be no less than a mysterious lifting of the veil separating heaven and earth.

vv. 4-6. Why is it be that Moses and Elijah are the ones to appear? Clearly, they are critical figures in Israel’s identity, having communicated divine revelation in the past. More specifically, however, in some Jewish tradition, Elijah and Moses appear together as a sign of the coming end of the age.

Whatever the topic of their unknown conversation (and however the disciples actually recognize Moses and Elijah), Peter impulsively blurts out from his terrified state that

*Study:* Read the passage of Moses’ ascent up Mount Sinai from Exodus 24? What are some similarities among the two narratives? How does that iconic Old Testament passage resonate here in Mark’s transfiguration?

*Study:* The only other three times that the verb μεταμορφόω (*metamorphoo*), “transfigure,” appears in the New Testament includes: the parallel transfiguration account in Matthew 7, and the epistle examples in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18. Look up the Romans and 2 Corinthians references. Do those verses help inform our Markan passage? Or vice versa: does the Markan passage help inform the epistle passages?

*Reflect:* When has the brilliant radiance of Christ been on display in your life? Encourage one another with your testimonies.

*Discern:* A one of kind event though it may be, how does the transfiguration of Christ—especially recounted in its literary context of the cross-bearing path of discipleship—encourage you this week? Ask the Spirit how the suffering that is part of discipleship might be for glory and transformation in your life.

*Reflect:* That Peter would respond so impulsively for Mark to comment “he did not know what to say” seems to speak to the ironic human tendency to prattle on to cover up our own misunderstandings! In this sense, consider a time when you misunderstood God, and perhaps were “afraid” of the situation. During that experience, in what ways did you find it difficult

they ought to build tents. Why? Commentators speculate: Peter simply wants to prolong their gathering; he is thinking of the Feast of Booths; Mark is pointing to Israel's wilderness experience; Mark is using one of Isaiah's terms for the heavens.

**vv. 7-8.** Consider that the cloud was the vehicle of God's presence and glory in the Old Testament, as in Exodus 16 and Numbers 11. Out of the cloud comes a beautiful refrain echoing the love spoken about Christ at Jesus' baptism in 1:11.

**vv. 9-10.** This command of silence, one that we've seen throughout Mark, is the last such command in Mark, but the first to be qualified with a time reference: tell no one, *until the resurrection of the Son of Man* (Daniel 7 language).

**vv. 11-13.** Note that disciples do not ask regarding their actual point of confusion, in verse 10: as to what "the rising from the dead might mean." Rather, they ask Jesus about Elijah.

Behind the question about Elijah likely sits the Old Testament prophecy that Elijah would come before the Messiah and restore all things (Malachi 4:5-6). If so, why is Jesus treated with such contempt? Jesus alludes to John the Baptist.

to communicate with God? Be bold in sharing: your past may encourage another's present.

**Confess:** Are there times that might you be speaking or acting *before* listening to God? Confess your impulsiveness, receiving his grace.

**Meditate:** How are you currently engaging the practice of actively listening to God? Take some time to quietly consider the question.

**Discern:** To whom of the ones suffering in your community might you be, by the powerful ministry of the Spirit, the presence of God—to overshadow and reassure?

**Meditate:** What does it mean for you personally, in this season of life, that mountain-top glory in Christ cannot be separated from cruciform suffering for Christ? Also, what does the message of the glory of resurrection mean for you personally at this point in your life?

**Meditate:** What are the difficult questions of discipleship, ministry, and life that you might *not* be asking of God or of the church? How might we learn from the disciples here in this regard?

**Pray:** Pray that the Spirit would enliven, sustain, and strengthen you to live out the Son's message of restoration, unto the glory of the Father—through a life of both cross and resurrection. Make this petition both in an individual sense, and in a collective sense.