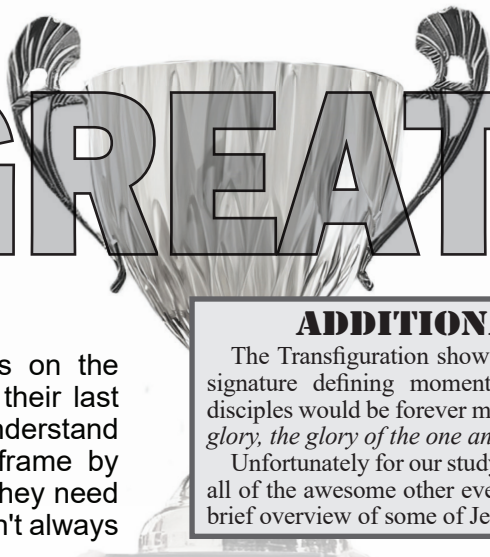


THE GREATEST



EYE IN THE SKY

Watching an NFL game, you'll see QB's on the sideline looking at top-down photos from their last drive. They can see formations. They can understand what went right and what went wrong, frame by frame. They have every bit of information they need to win the next time they go out, but it doesn't always go so well.

In our passage today, a few of Jesus' closest followers got a glimpse of Jesus in his full glory. There's more to the story than we have space to share, but this moment is a literal mountain-top experience, not only for Jesus, but for the three disciples he took with him.

However, Mark is a master-storyteller and uses the story after that magnificent event to show the reader that people still aren't getting it. Like last Week, they see, but still fail to understand.

MARK 9:2-3, 7, 16-26 (SELECTED)

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... ⁷ And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."

¹⁶ ... "What are you arguing about with them?"

¹⁷ And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸ And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able."... ²⁰ And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy...

²¹ And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. ²² And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

²³ And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." ²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" ²⁵ And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

²⁶ And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Transfiguration shows Jesus in his glory. It is one of many signature defining moments of Jesus' ministry on earth. The disciples would be forever marked by that event, "*We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only*" (John 1:14).

Unfortunately for our study, we don't have the space for all of the awesome other events. Scan the QR-code for a brief overview of some of Jesus' highlights.



DISCUSSION

If you had to describe Jesus to an unbelieving friend based on one thing you've learned in this study, what would you say?

ICEBREAKER

1. What in these verses did the three disciples see and hear? (2-3, 7)

OBSERVATION

2. Summarize the unhealed boy's problem. (17-21a)

3. What was the father's response to Jesus' challenge? (24)

4. How does Jesus' response to the "help of unbelief" by raising the boy up from being "dead" paint a picture of the gospel?

INTERPRETATION

5. In what ways does the sin in your life evidence a lack of belief?

APPLICATION

6. What might it look like for you to receive help for your unbelief?

Jesus repeatedly told the disciples, "I will die and raise up." The picture of the boy in today's passage is us if we have faith in Christ. If you have questions, talk to your Coach today!

THE GREATEST



STUDY NOTES

GAPS

In the classic movie, *Rocky*, the Italian Stallion pursues the quiet and shy Adrian. In one scene, Adrian's brother, Paulie, asked Rocky what he sees in his sister. Rocky gave a great answer, "*She's got gaps. I got gaps. Together we fill gaps.*"

He's right, we all have gaps. Sometimes, it's easier to see other people's gaps more than our own.

Last Week Peter confessed Christ with *the* foundational truth of the Church. Then, he immediately stubbed his toe by rebuking Jesus for prophetically declaring what was to come. It's pretty easy to see Peter's gap. Mark 8 ended with an appeal that applies just as much to us today—surrender everything for Jesus.

Our passage today opens with the greatest glimpse of Jesus' true nature, the Transfiguration. As a reader we're liable to think that everyone will catch on now that Jesus has displayed his glory. Wrong! The following story illustrates even more gaps, everyone's lack of faith. However, it's not hopeless. Jesus' compassion shines forth if we're humble enough to ask for it.

JESUS IS GREATER THAN US

Symbolic of their special relationship, *after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.* Jesus then revealed the full breathtaking splendor as *he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.*

Echoing Mark's opening in Mark 1:1, Jesus Christ showed himself as the Son of God. God the Father called down from heaven as *a voice came out of the cloud* saying, "*This is my beloved Son; listen to him.*"

This was a hugely significant moment. It appears in three of the four Gospels. One might think this moment would clear up any uncertainty left from chapter 8. Instead, coming back from the mountaintop experience, Jesus returned to find his disciples and scribes arguing. The crowd ran up to Jesus when they saw him and he asked, "*What are you arguing about with them?*"

Out of *the crowd*, a desperate father emerged saying, "*Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.*" They brought the boy to him. And

when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy.

When asked, the man reported that this kind of thing had been happening "*from childhood.*" The father went on to describe the challenges, "*it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him.*" Humbly, the man asked, "*If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.*"

Who knows if Jesus was actually upset, but I imagine he's like any all-star when someone doubts their abilities, *Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes."*

The father's response has echoed in the hearts and minds of generations of people since they were recorded in Holy Scripture. *Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"* Wow! This father recognized his own gaps—and the One who could fill the gaps. Jesus compassionately *"rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."*

Satan and his evil forces don't want to leave quietly so *after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead."* But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

JESUS IS GREATER THAN OUR FAITH

The Apostle Paul later wrote in 2 Corinthians 9, "[the Lord] said to me, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Our faith doesn't mean perfection. In fact, quite the opposite. Our faith places trust in the Perfect One seen at the Transfiguration to complete the work he started (Philippians 1:6). We bring nothing but filthy rags and one day he will clothe us as we see him in Mark 9.

Imperfection isn't an excuse for more sin. It's simply a reality we all must reconcile. Like the father, we must repent of our sin and humbly ask the Lord, "I believe, but help my unbelief."

The disciples later asked why they were unable to exercise that demon. Jesus said it could only be driven out by prayer. While you're probably not an exorcist, are you a pray-er? If Jesus were to "help your unbelief," what are you giving him to work with in your daily disciplines? It's OK to be weak, but only if you're passionately pursuing the One who is strong.