

**Sermon:**           **The Leftovers**  
**Text:**               **Mark 9:2-9 NLT**  
**God's Word:**   **2 Kings 2:1-12 NLT**  
**Date:**               **Sunday, July 7, 2024**  
**Preacher:**       **Rev. Becky Stephens**

***Mark 9:2-9 NLT***

*<sup>2</sup> Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them. <sup>4</sup> Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Peter exclaimed, "Rabbi, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> He said this because he didn't really know what else to say, for they were all terrified. <sup>7</sup> Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him." <sup>8</sup> Suddenly, when they looked around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them. <sup>9</sup> As they went back down the mountain, he told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.*

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In our Gospel Lesson for this morning, we see that Jesus led Peter, James and John up a high mountain...and this was the place where Jesus "was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking to Jesus." And Peter, James and John, who were just mere mortals like you and I...well...they didn't know what to say...they were so frightened!

We have to remember that Elijah and Moses had been mortals as well, but each of these men had had an experience with the Almighty God which had caused them to become immortal!!! They were ordinary people with ordinary problems and insecurities, but God transfigured them and used them in extraordinary ways. And this is what God wants to do with each of our lives. He wants to transfigure us, give us His Holy Spirit which will cause us to never even taste death, and to use our lives as a witness to others.

Moses and Elijah were two of the great "heroes" of the Jewish faith...and for the three disciples to see them speaking to Jesus on that mountaintop was dramatic indeed! It was like having a ring-side seat to heaven.

To help visualize the drama, imagine that your third-grade teacher took you to the top of a mountain where he or she was suddenly joined by George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. This is the kind of drama we're talking about...but Elijah and Moses were even much greater heroes than George Washington and Abraham Lincoln! Both of these heroes had an experience of the magnificence of God's glory that became immensely important to the entire community of faith.

Moses' experience also took place on a mountaintop---on Mount Sinai where God gave him the Ten Commandments. On that mountain the lightening flashed, and the thunder rolled and the whole mountain was covered with the fiery glory of God. And when Moses came down from the mountain, his face glowed brightly because he had been in the direct presence of the glory of God.

And Moses was again on a mountain when God allowed him to see the promised land which he never would be able to enter because of his sin. And soon after that, Moses died.

But in the New Testament Book of Jude, we are told that the archangel Michael had a dispute with the devil over the body of Moses. The devil wanted to lay claim to Moses' body because of his sin...but the archangel said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you!" Moses had passed under the dominion of death, but he was not to remain in the tomb. Moses standing on the mount of Transfiguration represents to us all those who shall come forth from the grave at the resurrection of the dead...at Christ's second coming.

But Jesus wasn't just talking with Moses...He was talking with Elijah as well. As we read in our Old Testament Lesson for this morning, we see that Elijah the prophet was walking along with Elisha who had worked in the shadow of the ministry of Elijah for ten long years. And "As they were walking and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind." Like Enoch before him, Elijah was taken up to heaven bodily without experiencing death. Elijah standing on the Mount of Transfiguration represents to us all those who will still be living on the earth at Christ's second coming...those who will be "changed---in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet." Many people refer to this as the "rapture." However, the term rapture was actually penned by a young teenage girl. It technically is not biblical.

Upon the Mount of Transfiguration the future kingdom of glory is represented to us--in miniature...There is Christ the King, there is Moses--a representative of the risen believers, and Elijah--a representative of those who will still be alive when Christ returns! And Peter, James and John were there to witness this magnificent event! But they couldn't comprehend the scene.

Have you ever been in a group of people where someone told a joke and everyone laughed except you? "I don't get it. I missed the point." Or have you ever been in the middle of a discussion where another person makes some persuasive point and everyone else nods their heads in agreement--except you? "I don't get it. I missed the point."

Well, Peter, James and John missed the point as well. They believed that Elijah had come to announce the Messiah's reign, and that the kingdom of Christ was about to be set up on earth. They still had not understood Jesus. They had missed the point when Christ had talked to them about the death He would have to endure. So Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let's put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

But before the Crown must come the cross! Bearing the weakness of humanity, and burdened with this world's sorrow and sin, Jesus walked alone in the midst of humankind. And as the darkness of His coming trial pressed upon Him, Jesus found Himself in a world that did not know Him. Even His beloved disciples, had not comprehended the mystery of Christ's mission. Jesus had dwelt in the midst of the love and fellowship of heaven; but in the world that He had created, He was in solitude.

And now heaven had sent some messengers to Jesus...and they weren't angels...in a very real sense...they were human beings like you and me! But they had endured suffering and sorrow, and they could sympathize with Jesus Christ in the trial of His earthly life. Moses and Elijah had shared Christ's longing for the salvation of humankind. Moses had pleaded for Israel. Elijah had known what it was like to be lonely. Elijah had stood alone on top of Mount Carmel praying "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God..." and God had answered his prayer as all the people "fell prostrate and cried, 'The Lord--he is God! The Lord--he is God!'"

Then Elijah trained Elisha, who in turn trained the various schools of prophets who then became equipped to teach the people the "word of the Lord." So, these two men, Elijah and Moses were chosen above everybody else around the throne of

God, to come and commune with Jesus about His suffering, and to comfort Him with the assurance of the sympathy of heaven. The hope of the world, the salvation of every human being, was the topic of their conversation.

And Peter, James and John probably felt like mere spare parts in this amazing drama. Do any of us ever feel as if we are spare parts in God's Great Drama? Well, this is certainly not God's desire.

As the disciples huddled and watched Jesus talking with Elijah and Moses...God's attention moved toward the followers of Christ: "Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!'" Wow! This scene was not only for the benefit of the Savior of the world...it was also for the benefit of regular folks like you and me!!!

But it wasn't until the Holy Spirit came upon them that they understood what Jesus had been all about. Yes, at the time of Christ's transfiguration, Peter, James and John must have felt like spare parts in God's great Drama...but the truth is that there are no people who are mere spare parts! Because God's Great Drama is for and about us!

Peter would deny Jesus 3 times after His arrest, but when the Holy Spirit came upon him at Pentecost his life too would be transfigured. He would go on to be the great missionary to the Jews, and suffer a death similar to Christ's. John would go on to record one of the Gospels. And James, the brother of Jesus, would become the first Bishop of the early Church...eventually being martyred himself for the faith.

It wasn't until Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit that Peter and the other disciples got the point. But when they did, the purpose of their lives took on a new dimension. And it is not until we allow the Holy Spirit to take up residence in our lives that we begin to take on a new dimension.

The disciples started doing the things that Jesus did when He was with them--teaching and healing. They even did some of the miracles that He had done. But most important, they became witnesses to this glory of God that had been with them in Jesus. They began telling others about this glorious God whose forgiving love had been made real for them in Jesus Christ who died and then was raised from the dead.

That is our purpose as well. We are not spare parts. We are people who are to be used by God as part of His functioning body on earth right here and right now! As Christians we are called to take part in the Transfiguration of Christ. As a matter of fact, our entire Christian journey should be a metamorphizing experience where we are transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ each day. That is one of the things that makes the Christian life so exciting!!!

The purpose of our faith is not to just have spectacular and dramatic experiences for ourselves...and that's it! The task of our faith is to tell others. And it is the Holy Spirit that moves us to do that. The Holy Spirit calls us to reflect God's glory in our lives. The cross, the empty tomb...have made it possible for faulty human beings to be transfigured into God's beloved children who are pleasing to Him!

Let us pray: Change us too, O God, that we might see Jesus in a whole new light and be different people because of it. And because we have been on this spiritual mountain, now show us the dark valleys of our day and our neighborhoods, that we might go into them bringing the light of Your transfiguration...of Your loving concern. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.