

Mark 9:1-13
March 28, 2010
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

This is Palm Sunday, the day we celebrate the Triumphal Entry of our Lord Jesus into Jerusalem. That entry is somewhat ironic as this day also marks the beginning of Holy Week, the countdown to the crucifixion, burial and resurrection. We all understand the triumph in Resurrection but we often fail to see the triumph in the cross.

But the failure to see Jesus as He is and to embrace the Lord's mission as our mission is the pre-eminent problem. The disciples struggle with this very thing. They rejoiced at the Triumphal Entry because they thought it was going to be the beginning of God's Kingdom on Earth and that the Lord Jesus would reign on David's royal throne from that time onward. How ugly of a turn things took in just a few short days.

As I have mentioned before, the irony was doubled up in this story. The Pharisees no doubt laughed at Christ knowing what they had in store for Him. But Jesus was laughing at the Pharisees laughing at Him because He knew the power of the cross.

As it says in the second Psalm, ² **The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,** ³ **Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.** ⁴ **He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.**

So, the Lord is being laughed at by the rulers but He Himself laughs at attempts to thwart His will. They do not understand what the Lord is doing.

But it appears that His own disciples also do not understand. Although they are against the Pharisees in their wickedness towards Jesus, their understanding of what is going to transpire is exactly the same as the Pharisees. The Pharisees are trying to prevent Jesus getting too much power and being able to lead a rebellion. The disciples are hoping that is exactly what happens. Both misunderstand who Jesus is and the way that His Kingdom is implemented.

Both the Pharisees and the true disciples are thinking in terms of Earthly power and might. But there is something stronger than might and

wrath. It is love and submission. Jesus announces His Kingship and then He establishes it in the most curious way, by dying.

Today, we come to the Transfiguration. This pre-dates the Triumphal Entry but what is going on is similar. Jesus is being exalted and glorified by the Father, even though the people and even His own disciples do not understand what is going on.

Jesus is being prepared and is preparing for His death but the disciples do not get this. It is about time that we learned that the way to advance God's kingdom is through death and resurrection.

EXEGESIS

Mark 9 ¹And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

²And after six days Jesus taketh *with him* Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

The disciples themselves need transfigured but it has not happened yet. Only when they are transformed will they see Christ as He is.

And these are not simply disciples of Jesus but the main three, the closest associates of Jesus. They have seen great things. Now, they see Jesus transformed on a mountain. This should remind us of when Moses was transfigured before the Lord on Mount Sinai.

³And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

Moses's face shone and the people of God were unable to look at him. So, he put a veil over his face. But now Jesus is transfigured and the people of God are able to look upon Him. Something greater than Moses is here but now the people of God have access to that glory.

Although many pictures of ancient times have them walking around in pure white robes, this was not common. In a comparatively dirty world, white did not make much sense. This would have made Jesus stand out in brilliance. White as snow is white.

⁴And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

Below in verse 11 they ask Jesus, Why do the scribes say the Elias must come first? It is from this passage in Malachi. A bit obscure but they did get it right and Elias and Moses are here on the scene.

Elijah is that great prophet, representing all of the prophets. Moses is the great lawgiver, representing the law of God. Jesus is the promised One in whom all the law and the prophets is fulfilled.

Mal. 4:5- Elijah was to come. He came in John the Baptist but now he is here in flesh and blood. Remember how Elijah left the Earth. He ascended in a chariot of fire.

No one knew where Moses had gone but he shows up, too.

Jesus is like Elijah and Moses. He will ascend into the heavens and no one will know where He is.

⁵And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

Mathew Henry quote- “Peter talked of making three distinct tabernacles for Moses, Elias, and Christ, which was not well-contrived; for such a perfect harmony there is between the law, the prophets, and the gospel, that one tabernacle will hold them all; they dwell together in unity.”

Why would Elijah and Moses be talking with Jesus? Perhaps to remind Him that the fulfillment of all the law and the prophets was coming to pass in Himself. We are told that Jesus learned obedience from the things that He suffered. We know that Jesus learned. Here he is learning from Elijah and Moses.

Peter’s suggestion here is somewhat rebuffed by the voice from heaven. God apparently did not want tabernacles erected for the three here on the mountain. It is not apparent in the text what these tabernacles were to be. No doubt, Peter had in mind the tabernacle from the wilderness, where Moses entered to speak with God. Peter wanted to build something similar for Elijah and Moses and Jesus.

Perhaps they were merely places that the saints could visit to talk to Moses, Elijah or Jesus? We can see that this is akin to praying to the saints. In the case of Jesus, of course, He is God, so praying to Him makes perfect sense. But talking to Elijah or Moses, if they are not there to speak with you,

strikes at the vitals of the faith. These tabernacles would have become stumbling blocks, like Moses's serpent. God calls upon Peter to listen to Jesus and do what He says.

⁶For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

How many times have you said something, anything, when you just did not know what to say. Perhaps in that situation you try to say something impressive, something grand. But having done so, it still falls flat. That is what Peter does here. Trying to impress Jesus and perhaps Elijah and Moses, too, Peter puts forth a great plan. Incidentally, he had no resources to fulfill such a scheme. Maybe he was finally learning from the loaves and the fishes that being with Jesus is enough resource?

⁷And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

The cloud that overshadows them is the glory cloud of God. It is the power of the Holy Spirit, like the glory that shone on Moses's face. A voice spoke then out of the cloud and now the voice speaks again to Jesus.

The Father puts an end to Peter's idea of building tabernacles for Elijah and Moses. In the process, He announces that Jesus is the Son of God. He thus exalts Jesus over both Moses and Elijah.

⁸And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

Elijah and Moses disappear and it is quite apparent that the Father is revealing that all allegiance should be paid to Jesus.

⁹And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. ¹⁰And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

Jesus is still speaking about dying and rising from the dead. In the last chapter, Peter understood Jesus's talk about dying to be literal death. But now, the disciples are confused about rising from the dead.

This is not because they had not heard of rising from the dead. They had just been talking about Jesus being Elijah or Moses. Herod and others thought that Jesus was John the Baptist, raised from the dead. So, it is not that they misunderstood rising from the dead. It was that they could not imagine Jesus dying so that He could rise from the dead.

Jesus spoke in many parables. Perhaps the disciples were trying to allegorize this saying. Maybe they thought that Jesus would be about to lose and then make a great comeback.

Jesus again tells the disciples not to tell anyone about these revelations. His own disciples could not even understand. It was unlikely that the general populace would understand. Perhaps He was most reluctant to officially announce Himself as the Messiah.

¹¹And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? ¹²And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things;

and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.

Isaiah 53, the suffering servant-He is to suffer greatly at the hand of sinners and be delivered to death.

The disciples were fine with Elijah showing up from the dead to preach the coming kingdom. But there was no sense that the suffering servant who dies in Isaiah 53 was also the promised Messiah. This was an oversight on the part of the scribes but it also reveals something about them.

¹³But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

Malachi 4:4-6 ⁴Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, *with* the statutes and judgments. ⁵Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: ⁶And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

They understood Him to mean John the Baptist. Jesus told them this so that they could understand that just as John the Baptist was mistreated and killed, so must He.

EXHORTATION

Jesus has come as has His prophets. They did to them whatever they wanted. Moses was rejected by Pharaoh, repeatedly rejected by His own people. Elijah fled into the wilderness. John the Baptist was resisted and murdered. The Lord Jesus, Himself, was despised by the leaders and forsaken by many in Israel who were looking for the Messiah. The list of great saints in Hebrews 11 is a list of suffering and sorrow, men of whom this world was not worthy, men and women who lived and died in the likeness of Christ. Saints who were looking for the promise.

We now possess what they hoped for. We see the Messiah has come. We know that the Holy Spirit has entered the world with power. We see the Kingdom of God on Earth and it is growing, expanding the will of the Lord in the Earth, so that His will can be done here as it is heaven.

But God's way has not changed. The way of the Kingdom is still the way of death. Yes, there is Resurrection and were it not for that hope perhaps no one would be willing to die. But before Resurrection is death.

How are you dying? Are you giving yourself to others? To your wife, to your children, to your fellow saints? Is this causing the selfish and self-righteous parts of you to suffer little deaths? As these parts of you die, the Lord is faithful to raise you up in these same areas to a new and better body. He provides Resurrection. But if only plan on moving from life to life, then we have not yet understood the way of the cross. The way of the cross is moving from death to life and from death to life, again and again, until there are no more deaths to die.

Jesus is a reigning King. He is our King. And one day we shall see Him as He is for we will be like Him. But we must remember that Jesus is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. As we enter into His sufferings we will be raised to reign with Him forever and ever.