

Conversations on
Mark 9:2–9

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Listen to “The Mountain” by Steven Curtis Chapman or watch one or more YouTube videos of the song. How does the song’s image of life on God’s mountain compare with Mark 9:2–9? How does what the singer experiences on the mountain prepare him for life in the valley?

WHAT is important to know?

Mark recounts the transfiguration as an event that is for the disciples and is told through their eyes: Jesus leads Peter, James, and John up the mountain and is transfigured “before them”; Elijah and Moses “appear to them”; Mark describes their reactions and emotions; the cloud “overshadows them”; the voice from the cloud addresses them; and the end of the vision is described in terms of what they see when they look around. The whole scene, in other words, is addressed to any disciple struggling to see, hear, comprehend, and believe the gospel reality. (*Stanley P. Saunders*)

- ✪ Where do you see gospel truth trying to break through in our time and place?
- ✪ What is “clouding” us from seeing the vision God is providing?

WHERE is God in these words?

However wonderful and challenging, human cultures and social systems must be recontextualized within a much wider, really Real frame. Jesus’ glory on the mount of transfiguration shows up merely human social constructions as paper tigers, wineskins too brittle and inelastic to contain the bubbling creativity of the really, really Real (Mark 2:22). The threat of Jesus’ glory is not just that this or that individual will come to an end, but that the whole framework in which we have lived and moved and had our being is insubstantial. Jesus recognizes as disciples those who have the courage to march open-eyed into the unknown of Jesus’ glory. (*Marilyn McCord Adams*)

- ✪ How is this love sustained?
- ✪ What difference does it make?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

Christians are not called to exhibit a passive love that simply tries to be good and avoid evil. Nor is the way of the cross a private bearing of personal woes for the sake of Jesus. It is rather a vigorous, assertive pursuit of social and personal righteousness through a love that refuses to play the world’s power game of domination, exploitation, greed, and deception. The transfiguration story is a call to affirm the ultimate truth of this contrary claim of God and God’s way of salvation, and to begin living it with all our heart, soul, and strength in the confidence that Jesus’ nonviolent way is truly the way of salvation, healing, and eternal life. (*Rodney J. Hunter*)

- ✪ What “mountaintop” experiences have transformed you?
- ✪ How have you integrated this transformation into your daily living?
- ✪ When have you witnessed God’s “love [refusing] to play the world’s power game of domination, exploitation, greed, and deception”?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

Sometimes we react just like Peter and are speechless from fear. Other times we do not think anyone will believe our story, even if we feel safe to share it. The thought that our experiences in life are linked with God’s story unfolding in the world can be reassuring, but it can also be terrifying! The point is this: faith communities can become safe places for both members and seekers to explore the various ways that the identity of Jesus is being revealed. (*Donald Booz*)

- ✪ Why are we sometimes speechless from fear in the presence of God?
- ✪ Why are we sometimes afraid to proclaim Christ?
- ✪ Why are faith communities such as congregations and youth groups safe places to explore the revelation of Jesus’ identity?
- ✪ How can you proclaim Christ in the valley moments you experience? In the valley moments your friends experience?

Thank God for the abiding presence of Christ on the mountaintops and in the valleys of life.