

### Mark 9:2-9 (New Revised Standard Version)

Six days later, Jesus took with him Simon Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

### 2 Peter 1:1-2, 16-19 (New Revised Standard Version)

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Family and church had faithfully nurtured a young woman's faith.

She enjoyed participating in church activities and programs,  
she was quite active and even a leader in the youth group,  
and she loved the new Bible presented to her  
which she kept in a special place on a shelf.

After graduating from high school, she moved on to college.

There, away from home, church and her youth group friends,  
her Christian beliefs, faith and confidence were challenged.

The college environment was hostile toward religion and faith

and mocked trust in the Bible as hopelessly naïve & uninformed,

**for how could anyone be sure about something written so long ago?**

Academics and social life at college strained her Christian values.

The challenge of ideas so antagonistically against her faith  
was a stretch and beyond the faith-resources of her youth.

She found herself ill-equipped to deal with her doubt,  
or to work through difficult questions raised by skeptics...

**... and that rarely-read Bible on her shelf wasn't much help.**

After being away at collage, then busy with career and friendships,  
her Christian faith had weakened and was faltering a bit,  
and she wasn't quite sure what she really believed anymore.

**That young woman, her faith challenged & weakening, was not  
the first Christian to struggle with doubt and uncertainty.**

In fact, the letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter was addressed to Christians  
struggling with doubt & difficult questions raised by skeptics.

The book of Second Peter was a late addition to the New Testament.

The church by then was mostly 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> generation Christians,  
surprised and disappointed that Jesus hadn't returned yet,  
struggling under the harsh persecution of Emperor Nero,  
and most of those who had known and walked with Jesus  
had already died of old age or as Christian martyrs.

Skeptics and false teachers were

questioning the Gospel teachings as *cleverly devised myths*, (vs. 16)  
and claiming that clearly the disciples must have  
gotten the story and teachings about Jesus wrong.

It was in answer to these same concerns that 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter was written,

**how do we know that the Gospel message is right and true?**

2<sup>nd</sup> Peter starts out in typical letter-format of those times, vs. 2

May grace and peace be yours in abundance in **the knowledge of God** and of Jesus our Lord.

But there is something more here than just a word of greeting.

Notice that the grace and peace they received in abundance  
have come as the result of, or because of **knowledge of God**.

**“knowledge of God”** is not simply knowing facts and doctrine about God,  
but refers to having **an authentic relationship with God**.

**Knowledge of God** is having received God's saving-healing grace,  
knowing-recognizing ourselves as the beloved children of God,  
which enables and empowers us to live and worship in truth,  
as we're fully equipped to live out a faithful Christian life.

As finite and mortal creatures, obviously,  
understanding fully **an infinite God** is not a possibility  
but we can **know enough** to live a life of faith and grace.

For me that means I don't have to figure out all the answers about God,  
I do however, personally know about God's grace and compassion,  
and that God seeks lost sinners, turns broken lives around,  
because I've seen it, **because I've experienced it**,  
and it's on that foundation that **my faith stands**.

A friend much younger than me was explaining what he believed  
based on what someone had told him, a distorted understanding.  
I explained that I witnessed what happened and I knew he had it wrong,  
because I was there & experienced it, I remember when it took place.

False teachers & skeptics were denying the Gospel message about Jesus  
as “cleverly devised myths”, a denial that Peter would not stand for,  
because he was there – he was an eye-witness and saw it happen,  
he'd experienced the life, ministry & resurrection of Jesus.

So then he points to the transfiguration as proof and evidence,  
when God himself testified to the divinity of Christ, vs. 16-18

For we did not follow **cleverly devised myths** when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been **eyewitnesses** of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the *Majestic Glory*, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." **We ourselves** heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

Peter's point --- don't try to pass this off as cleverly devised myth.

This is my eyewitness and truthful testimony, which I know  
because I was there on the mountain of transfiguration with Christ.

That's the heart and point of this passage, in full agreement with  
**the eyewitness testimony we read earlier from the Gospel of Mark,**  
the Son of Man and the Son of God **sent to show us God's grace,**  
to heal and save us from the deadly consequences of our sin.

The transfiguration story about Jesus on the mountaintop,  
divides the Gospel of Mark into two sections like a hinge,  
with the first part explaining the true identity of Jesus,  
and the second part leading toward events of the Passion.

Transfiguration was the final clue and last piece of revelation  
that would explain the mystery of who Jesus is, **the Good News,**  
when his **divinity blazed brightly through his humanity,**  
definitively revealing his divine glory **just before**  
Jesus goes to Jerusalem, to fulfill our salvation.

The heart and point of the transfiguration event  
is that Jesus is far more than just a teacher and miracle-worker,  
but rather through his obedient suffering and sacrifice, our sin is forgiven and our  
lives are healed and redeemed.

The details of Mark's telling of the transfiguration story,  
are also intended to connect with the Old Testament writings  
about who Jesus truly is and all that he came to accomplish.

Listen to Mark's description again, vs. 2-4,

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

### **So why is the setting on a high mountain - ?**

Perhaps to connect to other mountaintop experiences,  
such as when Moses received the Ten Commandments, the Law  
or where the prophet Elijah defeated the priests of Baal.

### **So why the dazzling white clothes - ?**

Probably as a reflection of God's glory and righteousness,  
and reminder that Jesus is far more than just a mortal man.

### **So why are Moses and Elijah there talking with Jesus - ?**

Perhaps to represent the Law and Prophets of the Old Testament,  
and show their connection to God's purpose and grace in Jesus.

### **So why do Moses and Elijah disappear and only Jesus remains - ?**

It's an important theological sign and metaphor  
that the Old Testament demands of the Law disappear  
when we receive Jesus who remains present with us,  
**the bringer and giver of God's grace and mercy.**

On that mountain there's a wealth of theological symbols and truth,  
that are all intended to point toward Jesus and his mission,

### **but Peter was overwhelmed and didn't know what to make of it... vs.4-6**

Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

In the text, Peter was about to miss the point, but mercifully  
God put a stop to his rather foolish building program, vs. 7

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the

Beloved; listen to him!"

"Peter, stop doing, so that you can listen and receive,  
for sometimes, it's not so much of what God wants us **to do**,  
as it is of who God wants us **to be**, and **to become** ...  
**... who Jesus is and what he came to do for us.**

Our God of mystery and mercy, is sometimes,  
**most visible** in moments of deepest darkness and shadow,  
**most easily heard** in the quiet stillness of solitude,  
**most comforting** when we are in most desperate need,  
**most present** at times when we feel we're all alone.

**Sometimes in the glitz and razzle-dazzle of this world,**  
we don't recognize in the quiet and simple, and unadorned,  
that which is truly meaningful, blessed and significant...

... sometimes we can get so caught up, busy, rushed and occupied  
that we miss when God is speaking we miss the true meaning,  
**where & when God mightily and compassionately comes to us**  
**and through which we see the truth, grace & glory of God...**  
**... a sacramental moment and opportunity.**

**It's a sacramental moment, when God's presence speaks to your heart,**  
**when God's blessings touch your particular hunger and need,**  
**a moment filled with God's enduring love and amazing grace,**  
**that serves to prepare us for the dark valleys we'll face.**

The disciples aren't prepared nor had they any comprehension  
of the terrible events and suffering just ahead in Jerusalem.  
So Jesus took them up the mountain to experience something amazing,  
and with their own eyes to catch a glimpse of his true glory,  
before descending into the valley of the shadow of death.

The transfiguration is less about disciples going up the mountain  
then about who Jesus is, the One who came down into our world,  
and who will go down toward Jerusalem to suffer, die and save.

When we are aware and accept grace as God's promise & truth **for us**,  
that truth of God's unrelenting love and desire to heal & bless us,  
**that same grace has the power to grow and transform us**  
**toward living better, more joyful & meaningful lives.**

The season of Lent can be such a sacramental time and space –  
an opportunity to do some spiritual Spring-cleaning,  
to commit ourselves to renewal in preparation for Easter,  
a season for careful reflection, a time for listening to God,  
for seeking God's fresh word of revelation to us in this time.

The season of Lent begins this week with Ash Wednesday,  
where we will pause for Scripture, reflection and prayer,  
remembering that we are mortal and that God is not,  
that we are dust, and to dust we shall surely return,  
and that we are loved, precious and forgiven by God.

I urge you, don't waste this season of **spiritual opportunity**  
don't let it pass you by, don't fail to get in on it,  
but seek & receive the full blessings God has for you.

I don't mean to suggest that we can cause, create or manipulate  
in order to force God's revelation by our own volition & efforts,  
**but we can be still and silent, patient and attentive.**

I want to be more capable of receiving a meaningful Easter this year  
a more significant Easter than just a new hat or outfit,  
or a basket of chocolate bunnies and colorful dyed eggs...

**... so to that end, let me suggest some ideas for Lent that might help:**

1<sup>st</sup> Read through the Gospel of Mark, and pause to think and listen.  
There's time to read through the whole Gospel before Holy Week.

2<sup>nd</sup> Each day after I wake up and before my feet touch the floor,  
I'll thank God for the day and for the blessing it contains  
thank God for being alive to live and love for another day,  
and ask God to open my eyes to truly see life  
for the awesome and glorious gift that it is.

3<sup>rd</sup> Read my Bible each day along with the Lenten booklet this year,  
even if it requires me to get out of bed a few minutes earlier.  
If needed, put a post-it note as a reminder on my mirror  
or put a rubber band around my toothbrush or hairbrush,  
whatever it takes, so that I can do a little each day.

4<sup>th</sup> Find some quiet space for silence and wonder in my life.  
During Lent try driving with the radio and music off,  
and instead to take in the glory of God's creation.

**God speaks where I pause in silence and awe, to wait and listen,  
and then God uses those open spaces to write grace upon my heart.**

5<sup>th</sup> I find it helps me focus when I write on paper or on my laptop,  
so during Lent I plan to write some letters to the Lord God,  
perhaps thanking Jesus for all the blessing of my life,  
or for the people in my life and what they mean to me.

During Lent, remember, know and trust that God does love you  
that God is preparing something extraordinary & good for you --

**-- so don't let it slip away, don't let it pass you by,**

**for if we listen, we will surely hear in Jesus**

**how incredibly much God truly loves each of us.**

As the Apostle John wrote in his first letter,

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes,  
what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning **the word of life—**