

Palm Sunday

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[0 : 00] is from Mark chapter 9, reading from verse 2, on page 1012. After six days, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and led them up a high mountain where they were all alone. There he 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 with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, Rabbi, it is good for us to be here.

Let us put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. He did not know what to say. They were so frightened. Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud. This is my son, whom I love. Listen to him. Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what rising from the dead meant.

And they asked him, Why did the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first? Jesus replied, To be sure, Elijah does come first and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him. Amen.

Thanks, Graham. Okay, so we're going to think about that together now. And if you're a child, maybe you want to come to come to the front. You might want to come so you can just see better. You don't have to, but if you're a child, you could come. You could bring a parent if you want to come and sit with you.

But also, I was on holiday last week in Sherwood Forest, and I've lost some bits of my talk, basically. I had these four big sheets that I need, and they're rolled up, and I think one of them's blue, and two of them are green, and one of them's yellow, and they're somewhere around the church.

[2 : 32] Do you think, before you come to the front, do you think you could run around and try and find them for me? There's one. Brilliant. Thank you. Thank you so much, Hannah. Brilliant. Great. Can anyone see a sheet a bit like that to maybe help me? Maybe in the back of the chairs. I don't know. Oh, Matty's got one. Brilliant. Thank you. I'm going to need that. Can you hang on to that for me?

You hang on. You grab a seat. It's all right. Great. I'll need it in a minute. Maybe they're just lost. I don't know. Oh, there's a blue one here. That's a relief. Great. Thank you.

And there could be a yellow one, maybe somewhere over that side. Maybe in the back of a chair. Never mind. It's okay. I didn't need the yellow one. It's fine. It's fine. It's going to be fine. No one's seen a yellow sheet? Well, that was worth drawing. Right. Okay. So, if you want to...

Yes, Hannah. Hannah's got it. Great. Okay. You'll see it. You'll think, was it worth it? Right. So, have a seat. And thank you so much for your help. We're going to need them. Okay. Right. Brilliant.

[3 : 55] So, the yellow one we do actually need now. Okay. And Hannah, maybe you could stand here. Is that okay? And just hold it for us so we can see what it is. What is it? What is it? She doesn't know what it is. Can anyone help? Yeah.

It's a mountain. It's a mountain. Thank you. Great. It's a mountain. It's a mountain, Hannah. Okay. Okay. And Peter, James, and John went up a mountain. Now, that's really important because when God shows up to be with people, so often he does it on a mountain. When God saved Israel, he brought Moses up a mountain to give them the deal with the people. And when Elijah, when Israel had turned away from God, and Elijah didn't know what to do, he went back to the mountain. He went up to the mountain to see God.

And the Garden of Eden was up a mountain. And Solomon's Temple was up a mountain. And now, Peter, James, and John have gone up a mountain. God's going to show up. And it's a high mountain.

Three times higher than a Monroe. That's what I found out this week. This mountain, they went up. Okay. So, the next thing that happens, we've got a big mountain, a big climb, and there are some green sheets. Anyone got the green sheets? Can we have those? Would you mind standing up? Is that okay?

Just to show us. You can get down now if you want. No, you stay there. Stay there. It's good. It's good. You stay there. Okay. Okay. So, these green sheets. Now, this one here. If you hold that for me, Matty, thanks. There we are. Okay. And then this one here. Thanks. There we are. Now, who do you think that is? It looks like Robbie before the wedding with an iPad. But who do you think it actually might be? Anyone know from the reading? Yeah. Moses. Thank you. Brilliant. It's Moses. He's got the Ten Commandments with him. Yeah. It's not an iPad. Yeah. And this is, does anyone know who this is?

[5 : 49] Anyone hear who was there? Elijah. Amazing. Yeah. It's Moses and Elijah. Now, Moses is a picture for us of all God's law because he got given the deal, the law of God. So, God's law is there with Moses.

And Elijah is a picture for us on the mountain of the prophets. He's the ultimate prophet. The prophets were there to pull God's people back to God. So, the law and the prophets are there and they're there to show us a very special thing that everything they said was pointing to this man, Jesus. It was all pointing to him. And God speaks to us in the law and he speaks to us in the prophets. But now he speaks to us in a special way through this man, Jesus, who's in front of them up the mountain. Amazing.

This is amazing. Great. Okay. Another thing that happens. Another thing. There's a blue sheet. David, have you got that? David, just back from Australia, already helping out. It's brilliant. Okay. Let's open this up. Do you know what that is? A cloud. Thanks so much, David. It is a cloud, indeed. So, hold that. And it's not just an ordinary cloud. It's the Shekinah cloud. The Shekinah cloud, which is a special cloud. When the presence of God comes to be with people, there's a cloud. So, when Solomon prayed and the temple was opened in Jerusalem, it got full of cloud because the glory of God was coming. And when Moses had the tent of meeting to meet with God, the cloud filled the tent so that Moses couldn't get in. Because the glory of God, when God shows up, there's a cloud. And now there's a cloud on a mountain. And Moses and Elijah are there. Okay. Brilliant. Now, do you guys want to grab a seat with those things? That's been so helpful. You see, it's all giving us a picture, isn't it? And then the most astonishing thing happens, which is that Jesus changes in front of them. Now, I'm going to help us think about that with this light. But it's a very bright light. So, don't look directly at the light.

Right. Okay. But this is what it would have been like. It would have been like this. So, we're just going to, I'm going to shine the light, but let's not look at the light. Don't look at the light. Maybe if you've got a little one who might look at the light, we're going to just, yeah, shield their eyes. So, look. So, we're there with Jesus and there's this bright, shining light. Let me read what Mark says. He says, there he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white. Whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. Isn't that amazing? Okay. So, he became amazingly, dazzlingly white. Now, why does he look like that? Well, the reason is because this is how God looks. This is how Jesus looked before he came into the world.

When Daniel, the prophet Daniel, had a vision of the throne room of heaven, he described God as the Ancient of Days like this. He said, as I looked, thrones were set in place and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow. The hair of his head was white like wool.

[8 : 57] His throne was flaming with fire and its wheels were all ablaze. Do you hear all that brightness in the throne room of heaven? Then he saw Jesus, the Son of Man, going into the throne. So, when Peter, James and John see Jesus looking like this, it's like the curtain's being pulled back. We've had a tiny picture of that today, haven't we? Because there's people here today seeing each other without masks for the first time. And Gordon's been walking around saying, so that's what you look like after all this time. I've only seen you with a mask on.

Well, when Jesus was on the mountain and they saw him, it's like the curtain got pulled back. And this is what he really looks like when it's not all being hidden. And what word would you use to describe him? How would you describe Jesus? I was thinking we might say, explosive, glorious,

brilliant, blazing. He's all those things with purity and power and magnificence and majesty. Just imagine you were there with Peter, James and John. How would you feel if you saw him like that? Yeah, he's a light, isn't he? He's ablaze. The whole of Mark's gospel has been waiting for this moment. You see, in Mark chapter 1, we heard that Jesus teaches like no one's ever taught before. And people were bringing their sick to him to heal them. And then in Mark chapter 2, a paralyzed man got brought through the roof. And Jesus said, your sins are forgiven. And you think, who is this? He can even forgive sins. And then in Mark chapter 3, he explained that he's stronger than the devil. And he can free people from the devil's grip and get evil spirits out of people. And then in chapter 4, he calmed a storm just by speaking. And his disciples were afraid of him and said, who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him. And then in chapter 5, there was a 12-year-old girl and she died. And Jesus raised her from death. And then in chapter 6, he fed 5,000 people to show that he is the one who is like a great rescuer, better than Moses, and a great shepherd, better than David. And then in Mark chapter 7, he crossed borders to do miracles to show that he's not just the savior of Israel. He's the savior of the whole world. And in chapter 8, he opened the eyes of a blind man to say, if you can't see me, come to me and I'll help you see who I am. And now we see who he is. He's none other than God himself. And then another thing. We're up the mountain. We can feel the Shekinah cloud in front of us. We can see the light, the blinding, dazzling light. Moses and Elijah are there. But then we hear something. We hear a voice. A voice from the cloud. Wow. The voice of God. And what does he say?

[11:52] This is my son who I love. Listen to him. The voice of God the Father saying, listen, this is my son and I love him. And that's what we need to hear today. That God said that day on the mountain, you can trust Jesus. He's my son. Listen to him.

And when Peter, who was there, wrote his second letter that's in the Bible, he urges people to make sure they've got their trust in Jesus. And he says, because it's true, we heard the voice of God on the mountain. We weren't following a made-up myth. We heard God's voice on the mountain. So we can have confidence that Jesus knows best and we can follow him. Jesus is the glorious son. So look at him and take courage to trust him. But when we do listen to Jesus, he's about to say something very specific, very important. He's about to set off down the mountain to Jerusalem. And he's teaching us about why. So let's look at what happened next. Peter says, it's in the middle of this picture there, Peter says, it's good for us to be here. Let's put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. And Mark explains, Peter didn't know what to say. He was so frightened.

He's frightened. But why does he want to make a campsite? Why does Peter think it's dangerous camping? Well, then we find out more about what the disciples were thinking. Because on the way down the mountain, Jesus says, don't tell anyone what you've seen till after I rise from the dead. And then the disciples are confused. And we see why. It's because they ask a question. They say, why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first? Now, the reason they asked that question, I know this is going to take a bit of brain power, okay, but we're going to think about it. They asked that question because God had promised that his king would save the world. There was going to be a great day of the Lord when the Lord comes and wins the victory and frees his people and judges his enemies. That day, the day of the Lord was coming. And through the prophet Malachi, God said, I'll send Elijah before the great day of the Lord. And Peter has gone up the mountain, and he's seen Jesus as he really is. And he thinks Jesus really is the rescuer and the king.

And he sees Elijah. So what does Peter think? Peter thinks it's the end of the world. It's the day of the Lord we've been waiting for. And Jesus explains. So let me read what he says. Jesus replied, to be sure, Elijah does come first and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come. And they've done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him. So Peter thinks three things are going to happen.

[15:03] Elijah appears. God shows up, the end of the world. And they're all happening right now. And Jesus pulls apart those things and says, that Elijah who was to come has already come. It was John the Baptist. And he came. And they killed him. But the Elijah has come. And now Jesus has shown up.

But the day of the Lord can't come until Jesus has suffered and died. Now why is that? Because if Jesus had brought the end of the world that day, who would have been saved? Nobody. Jesus had

to die.

He has to go to the cross to suffer so that we can have the joy of being with him forever. He has to be treated as a sinner so that we can be treated as though we've done no sin. And we're still waiting today for Jesus to appear again like he did on that mountain. But he will do. It's just that he hasn't because he's patient. His message is going out to more people today. It goes out every day. And every day, people turn to him. They believe the message. This is my son whom I love. Listen to him. And then they can be ready for Jesus' return. But he is going to come. That's for sure. And the transfiguration, seeing Jesus, that blindingly, explosively bright Jesus, proves that to us. He's the glorious son.

So look at him and take courage. He's the suffering son. Listen to him and follow him. And what Jesus is about to teach his people is that to follow him, we have to serve people like he did. He wants us to serve others because he's come to serve. Maybe we can think of ways we can do that. Think of ways we can serve our church family and the way we welcome new people in our children's groups or at church or have a growth group member around to look after them. Maybe we can think of ways that we can serve Jesus by serving others in our own family. Maybe we can think of ways we can serve Jesus by serving others at work or in our street with our neighbors. So let's remember to look at the sun and listen to the sun. We're going to sing about that together in our next song, and then we're going to talk about it. So why don't we head back to our families, if you're at the front, and we're going to sing. We're going to respond to Jesus.