

## A Sure Glimpse of our Future

Luke 9:27-36

"This is my Son, my Chosen One, listen to Him"

**Introduction:** There is intrigue in previews, especially any one that is voiced by Don LaFontaine (the "In a world out of control, one man would take a stand" guy - seriously, how can you not be a voiceover guy with that voice!). Previews are a way to get an understanding of what a movie is about with the hope that it will wet your palate for the whole thing. Previews give us a glimpse, a feel for the tone, genre, and at least part of the arch of the story. In fact previews can be a big hit like the new Star Wars previews. The second one received just under 67 million views on Youtube over the last 6 months, and the most recent one has over 44 million in the last 4 days (a good chunk of that went on in the Lee's house). There is excitement and anticipation built as millions of people prepare to line up and watch the whole thing in a few weeks.

However there are shortcomings in previews (remember how excited everyone was with the previews for episode 1, am I right). There is no assurance that the tone of the preview will be the same as the movie. Sometimes the preview is tremendous while the movie falls flat, and sometimes vice versa. Previews still leave things left to chance, and can truly only give us a best estimate of what is to come.

We come to a section of Luke's gospel that is pivotal, misunderstood, and often neglected. In fact, this is a part of Jesus' life that always left me questioning what this whole thing was about. You'll notice in your Bible's heading this section headlines as "**The Transfiguration**", which still does not tell us very much. But as we will see, this event left an indelible mark on 3 of Jesus' closest disciples and was given as a preview of things to come, to ultimately give them assurance of who they were and the kingdom coming. This is why He left them with this statement a week before:

*<sup>27</sup> But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."*

Remember, He had just blown the disciples minds. Not only had they confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, but then were told that Jesus was going to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and rise again. This did not fit their paradigm at all, since they fully believed Jesus was ushering in the kingdom in their lifetime and that they would see, experience, and enjoy it. To make matters weightier, Jesus then told them that they would have to **radically deny self, to pick up their cross daily, and follow Jesus into the same life of suffering**. Not only was this a blow to their future thought, but to their present. This meant following Jesus, which had been about **popularity, miracles, and quick acceptance** would instead be one of **dissent, misunderstanding, and opposition**. Knowing that this was hard for them, and knowing that they needed encouragement (Jesus always know when we need it), He told them that some of them would get a glimpse, a preview of the kingdom to come, so that they would be assured, secure, and encouraged. This was the prayer of Epaphras in **Colossians 4:12**:

*"Epaphras who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and **fully assured** in all the will of God."*

Epaphras was aware, as Jesus clearly was, that when we live securely and fully assured, our energy, joy, and focus is much greater. Think about the opposite. Think about when we lose this type of assurance,

which leads to a lack of security, or leads down a path of **insecurity**. What are the marks of an insecure life in Christ:

- Spend our time desperately trying to prove ourselves to others and God - that we are worthy of love and acceptance
- Spend our time trying to please others (man-pleasing) rather than God
- Easily swayed by fads, cultural norms, and any new teaching
- We have no framework to handle pressure, failure, or pain

So we come to the text and see Jesus give a glimpse of **His future glory** in the present, peeling back the veil of humanity to show the true and lasting beauty of the Son.

### The Change

**Luke 9:28-29** Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And as he was **praying**, the appearance of his **face was altered**, and his **clothing** became dazzling white

A week had passed, and we can only imagine what the disciples had been thinking or feeling. Jesus took 3 of them up to a mountain (most likely Mt. Hermon, which is close to Caesarea Philippi, where Jesus had recently been). Luke makes clear that between prayer together and the Transfiguration, the disciples fell asleep. As they slept, the humanity that held the glory of deity gave a primal scream as Jesus' veiled glory began to burst out, like a bottle under pressure. His face became illuminated and altered (the word that Matthew uses was *metamorphoo*, close to the English word "metamorphosis", and His face shone **like the sun**). His clothes became white, gleaming as Jesus' flesh radiated underneath.

What was going on? Why was this happening all of a sudden? What was the point?

Jesus was going to display His true glory to the disciples to give them a glimpse of what they would see and behold in the future. **Whenever the glory of the Lord appeared, it displayed the presence of God Himself.** We see this all through the OT:

- **Pillar of cloud and fire that Israel followed out of Egypt** (Exodus 13:21) - this not only guided the people, but assured them God was leading
- **Moses beholding God's glory after receiving the 10 commandments a second time** - (Exodus 33-34) God showed him the afterglow of His presence, which caused Moses face to radiate, even after 40 days with the LORD (Exodus 34:28-35)
- **God's glory in the Tabernacle** - God's glory inhabited the mobile place of worship in Israel's wanderings, lodged in the heart of the Tabernacle itself (Exodus 40:34-35)
- **God's glory in the Temple** - The temple was established as a permanent place of worship and residence of God's glory (1 Kings 8:10-11)
- **God's glory departs** - Because of continual wickedness, God declared *Ichabod*, the glory departed, leaving Israel without the presence of God in worship or leadership (1 Sam. 4:21)
- **God's glory will return** (Matt. 24:29-31; 25:31) and **will light the new heaven and earth forever with His presence** (Rev. 21:22-23)

Jesus showing His glory **connected Him to the past and announced the future**. It was an announcement that Jesus, in perfect humanity was also God there presently. since only God could make a perfect sacrifice to God for the lives of His people.

### The Witness

.<sup>30</sup> And behold, two men were talking with him, **Moses and Elijah**,<sup>31</sup> who appeared in glory and **spoke of his departure**,<sup>[a]</sup> which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.<sup>32</sup> Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

Jesus was not alone in this event, even as his disciples slept. God sent **Moses and Elijah** to be with Jesus. They were appropriate choices:

- Both men had famous departures from the earth, one in a chariot of fire (which went up in slow motion) and the other was buried by God Himself
- Both were expected to return at the end of the age (1 Kings 1:17; 9:8, 19; Deut. 18:15, 18)
- Both were trusted witnesses that Israel would accept implicitly. Moses received the Law and Elijah guarded it.

These men conversed together regarding Jesus' *Exodus* or departure. We can only speculate about the content of the conversation (did they try to one-up each other, "I went up in a chariot of fire"), but the language is clear that it was not a short conversation. This was a change for Jesus as He was going to fix His gaze on the cross from here on out. In His humanity it had to be a comfort to talk out the scenario with men who had some amount of experience and knew exactly what Jesus was talking about. Even Jesus needed friends to talk to as He faced an overwhelming future.

At some point of the conversation, the disciples woke up and realized what was going on in front of them. This would have been a mixture of awe, fear, excitement, and terror. This led the disciples to offer up a sincere but short-sighted request.

### The Request

<sup>33</sup> And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said.<sup>34</sup> As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud

Peter offered up a suggestion at the end of the conversation between Jesus, Peter offered up the suggestion to make 3 tents so that this glory party could keep rolling. This was a mixture of confidence, cultural recognition, and redemptive ignorance.

- Tents were used to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles, which celebrated **Israel's Exodus from Egypt**, and this feast was being celebrated at this time. If he heard mention of Exodus, it would make sense that to honor them tents should be set up. Peter also knew that Zechariah 14:16-19 stated that this feast would be celebrated in the Kingdom, and it made sense that the time had come (esp. since Malachi 3:1 and 4:5-6 have Elijah associated with the coming Kingdom). The request was not improper, but it was shortsighted.

- The time of the kingdom was NOT at that time. The exodus that they spoke of was not the **past** but one to come. Jesus HAD to go to the cross to fulfill His role as Messiah for His people. Peter had tried to stop Jesus before, and Jesus knew that He could not be stopped this time.
- Ignoring or simply moving forward, Jesus did not answer or respond the suggestion, and instead a **cloud came down and enveloped them**. This immediately filled them with fear (I would say so) and they fell down on the ground terrified because of the glorious presence of God (Matt. 17:6). Just like the cloud that lead Israel or filled the temple separating the priests from entering the holy of holies, what the disciples experienced was the **presence of God**, in a way that no one had before.

### The Voice

.<sup>35</sup> And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One;<sup>[b]</sup> listen to him!"

As He did at Jesus' baptism, God spoke to and about His Son. This was not typical protocol, but under special circumstances God broke through (much like He did to encourage His Son in John 12:28 - reminding Him that He was about to glorify His Son). This was not only encouraging for the Son but instructive for the disciples. They were to listen to the Son, since He was the Chosen One, the one and only of God.

### The Lesson

<sup>36</sup> And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

As dramatically as it began, it was over that quickly. The light, sound, cloud, witnesses all gone like a whisper. They were told to tell no one, not that anyone would have believed them. But as we have already seen, it was not time to communicate these truths to a world and people who had rejected already.

Now, we mentioned before that this event left an indelible mark on these men, and here is what we see from each one later:

**John - (1:14)** - <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and **we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

**Peter - (2 Pet. 1:16-18)** - <sup>16</sup> 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 were eyewitnesses of his majesty.** <sup>17</sup> For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son,<sup>[a]</sup> with whom I am well pleased," <sup>18</sup> we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

Notice that each of these men were changed forever by their encounter with Jesus' glory. They moved from a position of **insecurity to security**, or to say it another way, they were freed up and secured in **their identity in Christ**, knowing His power and coming were sure.

What is different about our lives when we **are secure in our identity in Christ?**

- **Positional realities -**

**We know that we are first and foremost a CHILD OF GOD, and that precedes everything else -**  
When we are secure as children, we are motivated no longer by trying to **earn**, but simply by living to **please**. Security as a son motivates not out of fear but out of love.

**We are a servant second**

**Out of this we act, do, and obey** - this means that we no longer are bound by trying to earn acceptance, love, or standing but are secure as God's child. We are not defined by any particular ministry we are involved in (not a pastor, committee, board member, teacher, evangelist, not by our voice, or our anything else we identify with). We find our identity in something far greater, deeper, and sure: **we are His kids**

- **Sin realities -**

Helps us deal with our brokenness - our anger, fear, pride, and lust - We no longer view life through a selfish lens ("why does this happen to me", "why did God do this to me") but through the lens of a child who knows they are infinitely loved, cared for, and freed from sin. We have been buried with Christ and raised up with Him in newness of life, meaning we no longer have to sin (Rom. 6:1-14)

- **Ministry realities -**

Frees us to love people truly - full of grace and truth (John 1:14)

Able to understand and comprehend the power of the gospel for others since we ourselves have experienced it (2 Pet. 1:16)

Able to count our days and life as loss in light of the glory to come

We are able to find rest and peace

We are able to find simplicity in the midst of complexity

At this point we could ask the question: that's great, but we did not get that experience, we didn't get that preview. I say, true that. However, Peter said something profound after recounting what he experienced:

**2 Peter 1:19-20** - And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

We have Scripture as assurance of these things, that Jesus is who He said He is, He secures us, His power is present, and His future is sure.

**Concluding thoughts and questions:**

- **What are consequences in our life when we face insecurity? What type of insecurity do we deal with? Where does it come from? How do the promises and assurances of Christ change this?**
- **How does assurance as a child change the way we view life, acceptance, and love?**
- **How does assurance change the way we view and kill our sin?**
- **How does assurance change the way we approach others in ministry?**

Read Colossians 4:12-13 - Spend some time praying for each other that you would grow in maturity and assurance.