

## **Faith in the Home: Sermon Notes and Applications for the Family**

### **Transfiguration Sunday, Mark 9:2-9, "For They were Terrified."**

Three of Jesus' disciples, Peter, James, and John follow Jesus up a mountain. They were following Jesus, doing what they were asked. In doing so these three men witnessed miraculous sight. They saw the man, Jesus transfigured displaying His divinity as God. As if this divine moment was not enough, they recognized Moses standing with Jesus along with Elijah. Moses is estimated by scholars to have lived around 15 centuries before Jesus' ministry, and Elijah, is estimated to have lived between 7 and 8 centuries before Jesus' ministry, and yet, the disciples saw those historical figures alive talking with Jesus. Can "awesome," or "amazing," fully describe this moment? Yes, surely those words are fitting, but let's not forget that this moment was also terrifying for Peter, James, and John.

And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified." Peter and the disciples were "terrified." This may have been the most amazing thing the disciples witnessed, and yet they were afraid. Even more they still knew that it was "good" to be in that place at that time. Their fear itself wasn't rebuked in this account. What was rebuked by God was Peter's idea to build three shelters for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. We'll get to that later, but first, what place does fear have in faith in Jesus.

The Greek word used in the original text for terrified in this passage was *ekphobos*, which means "out of fear," and also can mean out of "awe," "reverence," or "respect." We may view terror, awe, reverence and respect, as separate things, but they really are all synonymous. What happens throughout the Bible when God directly reveals himself? Often times the first things said, by God or His angel is, "Fear not!" In these glorious moments the divine creator is encountering a member of the fallen creation. This is also a common theme when Jesus performs a miracle in Mark's account.

Why the fear of God? God is beyond our comprehension, and then add the fact that we are sinners unworthy to stand in His presence. There is nothing wrong with this reverent fear and awe of God. If Jesus appeared to me in full His full glory, I would be terrified at first, until He calmed me down. Fear of God is fine. We are commanded to fear, honor, and love God.

Its when we fear things other than God when fear is the problem. Fear of failure, or a bad outcome. The kind of fear that is synonymous to anxiety rather than reverence towards God. Let's face it, sometimes we are terrified of following God's will and publicly confessing what we believe because we are afraid of the earthly consequences. We know the disciples, and especially Peter, would succumb to this fear when Jesus was arrested before being crucified. However, when Peter, James, and John, were properly "terrified" when Jesus was transfigured. What did Peter do wrong though?

When we are terrified sometimes, we freeze, and temporarily don't even want to move. Other times we want to act and take care of the situation. Peter suggested building tents. "He didn't know what to say, for they were terrified." What happened after Peter said this, The Father, enveloped them in a cloud and said to them, "This is my beloved son, listen to Him." Whatever state of fear we have, whether it is being in awe, terror, anxious, or reverence, the answer is the same. Listen to God's Son. Listen and trust Jesus. Is fear driving you into an anxious state? Turn to Jesus. Out of awe of Jesus do you want to do something to glorify Him? Make sure you are listening and trusting Him. He is God over all things and He who died to conquer death for you and is indeed the holy and living God, loves you and is on your side. So, you do not have to be afraid of the world. You are free to honor and trust God, and let Him carry your burdens in this world.

### **Some applications.**

1. The natural type of fear that brings us into a state of "fight or flight," is natural to survival. It's that sense that kicks in and tells you take your foot off the gas pedal when your car begins to hydroplane in a rain storm. It can tell you to slow down to be safe. That kind of fear is a gift God which allows us to survive and thrive in this world.
2. Peter wanted to do something in his moment of terror. We may want to respond and do "something for God," like Peter wanted to do. That's not necessarily a bad thing, however our sinful nature can corrupt that desire, and that thing we want to do to glorify God, may actually be our selfish desire to elevate ourselves. It happens. The key is knowing God's will, which is simpler than we think, yet challenging because we are sinners. What God wants you to do to glorify Him is love Him and your neighbor. He wants you to persevere in faith when things are hard. He wants you go to Him in prayer. He wants you trust in Him when times are hard and to praise Him when moments of joy and bliss. He desires to have a relationship with you. Put that before everything else.
3. We will fall short of trusting, honoring, and holding God's name up in reverence. We will respond sinfully in times of high anxiety and fear. Yet, in Jesus there is grace. Peter led the disciples after Jesus ascended into heaven. Peter boldly followed Jesus to his own crucifixion as well. But before all that, Peter denied Jesus three times before Jesus was crucified. Jesus forgave and used Peter to advance His Church, and spread His good news. Jesus forgives us and uses us for His glory, too.
4. Take time to consider all that Jesus has done for you. Pray prayers of thanksgiving and be in awe of God.