

“Capturing the Moment”

Transfiguration Sunday -

Mark 9:2-9

Second Corinthians 4:3-6

Second Kings 2:1-12

February 22, 2009

When was that moment when God seemed so near it was like you could reach out and touch Him, hear his voice, be so sure, know that your life had been changed?

Two old men are chatting. One man says, “My friend, you must try this memory pill I’m taking. I remember everything. It’s amazing, this pill.”

The other man says, “Sounds wonderful. What is the name of this pill?” The first man says, “Uh, the name of the pill ... let’s see. Hummm. What is the name of the flower, the one with the thorns. It’s red. You give it on Valentine’s Day.” The 2nd man says, “A rose?”

First man says, “Ya, that’s it.” Then he calls to his wife – “Hey Rose, what’s the name of that pill?”

(Hey, that’s from a column called, “Laugh at these jokes, or we’ll shoot the receptionist”)

Do you notice how we want to remember things? Capture things? We have all kinds of fancy cameras to take pictures and capture the moment. And we have moments we want to capture and remember.

This is a verbal picture that Mark wanted to capture and remember. A couple of thousand years ago, 4 men that we know of (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) began to write down word pictures of the incredible events they had seen and experienced of this one whom they came to know as the Messiah, the promised one from God.

They needed to capture the moments that had been so powerful, and life changing for them, so that they could be remembered and the world would never be able to forget.

The **first point** is that this moment did something precious for the disciples. They had been shattered by Jesus’ statement that He was going to Jerusalem to die. That seemed to them the complete negation and denial of all that they understood of the Messiah. They were still puzzled and bewildered and uncomprehending. Things were happening which not only baffled their minds but which were also breaking their hearts. **What they saw on the mountain that day would give them something to hold on to, even when they could not understand. They would see that He was more than Jesus – he was God’s son. He was the Christ.**

The identity of Jesus as the Christ had a goal. It cannot be contained in a shrine. It cannot be held on a mountaintop. God has a plan.

We need something to hold on to when we cannot understand.

Capture the moment, then let it transform your life.

The **second point** is to be able to bring that glory down from the mountain for the work to be done. Moments later, as they came down the mountain, they were met by a father who brought his epileptic son to Jesus for healing. The glory of the Christ is not contained in a shrine on a mountain, but is turned loose on the world to make broken places whole.

This vision of a glorified Christ was a vision that would help those disciples overcome their fear and uncertainty about who He was. It would help them overcome their fear and uncertainty in just going about life every day. It would help them be strong and stay true. It would enable them to overcome the world, not be overcome by the world.

Wow, just think, before it was over they would sure need this understanding of him, this vision of him, this knowledge of him. **They would need an absolute certainty gained in this mountain top experience about who he was so they would know who they were.**

This moment seems to be to convince them of who Jesus is, so that they may be so thoroughly convinced that they will tell too.

Remembering again to keep focused on what he was focused on - this is not about Him, but about them. We want to also make monuments to him. But what he wants is for us to be about the things he was about. He has just taught us that in the previous passage – if we want to follow him we must be willing to take some things up and give some things up. (I try to remember to tell people that when they are getting married. Maybe that parallel helps us understand his words.) If we try going it our own way we won't succeed.

I liked a cartoon in the paper last Sunday. Hagar the Horrible. The boy says, "Dad, will I be a success in life?" "Of course you will my son. And you will be a big success. I promise you'll very wealthy. And I promise you'll live in a big house. And I promise that you will own a horse, a cow and a big expensive boat. And I promise that you'll be able to buy anything you want." The boy asks, "Will I be happy?" And Hagar says, "That I can't promise."

Here is the long and short of "transfiguration" to me. This is the moment when these followers saw and realized that this Jesus was not just another man, not just another teacher – but this was the son of God. And their lives were transformed in that moment. It was really and truly a mountain top experience. Now when they went back down from the mountain into the valley where life was to be lived out – they would go with this experience and with this knowledge filling them. They would go into the valley with all the strength of God with them. They would go into the rest of their life knowing that God was with them, and they were with God. That makes all the difference in life. They were not alone.

When did you have a moment when God seemed so near, and so real, and so clear? What is that mountain top experience for you? Maybe it was a moment when you were all alone. Maybe a moment in worship. Maybe something you read in a book, or in your bible reading. Maybe when a song struck you deeply. Maybe a moment serving someone else and you just felt God so near and so powerful. Maybe on an Emmaus walk. Maybe in the middle of some crises God came and you felt him so near. What was your moment when everything changed and you knew this was not just another religious philosophy, or some technique your parents used on you to get you to behave, or it was more than just "church." A moment

when it all came together for you and it was all so real. And you can still feed off of that moment today. Maybe there have been several moments when it was like your eyes were opened, when you grew in understanding by leaps and bounds.

Remember that this moment with God is not meant to be kept as a monument, but as the basis for the rest of your life. The basis for your living, for your serving, for your witness.

This week begins the season of the church year known as Lent. The time of 40 week days that looks toward the glorious Easter celebration. As we gather in this beautiful place this morning, at this significant moment, it is important to remember whose we are and what we are about. This curious and perplexing moment described by Mark reminds us once again.