

Lake Cities Community Church  
June 14, 2009  
Series: On Your Mark  
Pastor Craig Schill

**“True Colors”**  
Mark 9:2-13

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**But I see your true colors  
shining through  
I see your true colors  
and that's why I love you  
so don't be afraid to let them show  
your true colors  
true colors are beautiful  
like a rainbow**

Does anyone know the artist who wrote this song? That's right – Cindy Lauper. a #1 hit song written in 1986. It is a sweet song, a beautiful song, a poetic and sentimental song and an *utterly ridiculous* song! True-colors shining through? Are you kidding me? Trust me – you don't want to see my true colors; at least not in this setting! Maybe in counseling or my accountability group – but not here! The Bible tells us that our “true colors” are unpleasant colors because we are corrupt and sinful and selfish by nature.

For example, our true colors are “green” with envy! We struggle with being discontent and desiring more than we have. We envy other people. Our true color is yellow because we are cowards we live in fear of the past, fear of the present, fear of the future.

We are afraid. Our true color is red – because when we are hot-headed. When we don't get our way or someone disagrees with us, we get angry. Our true color is purple because we think we deserve to be treated like royalty. We strut as prideful peacocks, thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think.

When our true colors come shining through it is not a pretty picture. When you see a person's true colors, you are likely to say, "How disappointing, I thought I knew that person. I thought they were so good and godly, and now I see they are just like....me."

And that is true of every person in this room, except for one. There is one person with us whose true colors are glorious colors! His colors are a bright, dazzling, holy white – and I am, of course, talking about Jesus Christ. His true colors were revealed at an event called the transfiguration, which we are going to study today.

Turn with me to Mark chapter 9; this morning we are in verses 2 through 13. We read our text during the responsive reading, so we already have the story in mind. As we explore *Christ's true colors* we will take out our painter's brush and paint three pictures. The first is the Old Testament picture as there are many connections to the OT to examine. Second is the theological picture and what this teaches us about God, and third, is "your picture" – how this applies to each of our lives.

### **Brush Stroke #1 - Old Testament Picture**

Let's begin by looking at how the Old Testament is at play in our story. As we read earlier, Jesus ascended a mountain (probably Mt. Hermon outside of Caesarea Philippi, a sizeable mountain of over 9,000 feet). He hiked the mountain with Peter, James and John

and “He was transfigured before them.” (9:2b). The Greek word for transfigured is μεταμορφώ from which we get “metamorphosis” the process of change – like a butterfly from a caterpillar or a frog from a tadpole. “He was transfigured before them and his garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.” (Mk 9:2b-3). The point is this last statement is that this is a supernatural event where the very glory of God is being revealed. Then the Old Testament connection begins; Mark 9:4 And Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. Out of the glory of God, suddenly Moses and Elijah are invited to the party. I want to look at each of these characters in some detail.

**MOSES:** The appearance of Moses imports several strong images from the Old Testament, such as his role in the great Exodus. God used Moses to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt. In other words, Moses was a deliverer. His presence, therefore, could point to Jesus as The Deliverer – the Messiah who will lead all people out of slavery of sin. Moses even prophesied this day would come. Deut. 18:15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. Moses was a deliverer. Jesus is THE deliverer.

Second, Moses was known for bringing the 10 commandments down from Mt. Sinai. In that sense Moses’ may point to Jesus now bringing a new law, a new covenant. This conclusion is hard to escape because of the significant parallels between the delivering of the law and the transfiguration. For example - the transfiguration occurs “six days later” after Peter’s confession and Jesus’ promise that some would see the Kingdom come in power (9:1-2). Also Moses waits “for six day” (Ex 24:16) on Mt. Sinai before the Lord

speaks to him. Second, Jesus brings three individuals with him as witnesses “Peter, James and John” (Mk 9:2). Moses also brings three key individuals Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Ex 24:1). Both settings occur on a mountain which is where God reveals himself; Jesus on Mt. Hermon and Moses on Mt. Sinai (ex 24:13). Fourth, both incidents included the formation of a cloud which covers the top of the mountain. Fifth, the voice of God comes from the cloud. Sixth God’s glory results in shining radiant light on Jesus’ garments in the transfiguration, and on the skin of Moses in the 10 commandments (ex 34:30). And finally, seventh, the encounter with God’s glory leaves the disciples terrified and the same thing happens to the Israelites (ex 34:30) when they see that Moses has met with God.

The connections between Moses and the Transfiguration are intentional because God wanted to send a clear message. Moses’ presence points to Jesus as the Messiah – The Savior but also to Him as bringing a new law – a new administration and Kingdom.

Now let’s consider Elijah. The reason for the presence of Elijah goes in the opposite direction. He symbolizes Jesus’ suffering and rejection. After the transfiguration Elijah becomes the topic of conversation; verse 11, [Mark 9:11](#) They (the disciples) asked Him, saying, “*Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?*” This is a set-up question. The disciples know the answer (we looked at it last week). Malachi (4:5-6) says that when Elijah comes he is going to restore all things, heal relationships and bring in the reign of the Messiah. Let the good times roll. Jesus affirms this, at least partially; [Mark 9:12](#) And He said to them, “*Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt?*” Jesus affirms that Elijah will come and restore all things – but that is not the full story. If it was the full story – how

could it be that Jesus will face suffering and rejection? [Mark 9:13](#) “But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.” We know from Matthew’s account Jesus is referring to John the Baptist who was horribly murdered. Elijah will restore all things – but first *he will suffer*, just as Jesus will suffer. James Edwards writes: “Elijah, too must suffer...this statement surely sent a shock wave to Jesus’ hearers for they were as unprepared for the suffering of Elijah as for the suffering of the Son of Man” (Edwards 275). So Elijah’s presence on the mountain is a reminder of Jesus’ coming suffering. Here is one way to sum up this Old Testament picture: Moses represents the glory of Jesus – his power and authority – bringing a new kingdom. Elijah represents the inevitable suffering of Jesus.

Let me summarize this point with an illustration. If you remember back to the Presidential campaign last year whenever Obama or McCain gave a televised speech – we learned that the people that who were in the background of the TV shot, we all carefully selected. The candidates wanted to be sure to have both men and women, a variety of ethnicities and some veterans or police officers were always a bonus – because they wanted to communicate that they represented these people. Elijah and Moses’ presence with Jesus at his transfiguration was equally planned by God. They are put into the “camera shot” for the disciples to communicate who Jesus is and what He is going to do.

### **Theological Point**

And so now let’s move to the theological picture – which flows right out of the Old Testament lesson. Theologically there are certainly many lessons we could draw from the transfiguration. The transfiguration is an extremely complex and rich story that you can

study for a lifetime. We are only scratching the surface and only have time for one theological truth which is this: Suffering and glory are not incompatible in God's kingdom. As we have moved into the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the book, which focuses on Jesus' suffering, that is the time His glory is revealed. At the transfiguration we have the glory of Christ in all its splendor – and right next to Him – Elijah - a tangible reminder that death is approaching.

The teaching that suffering and glory are not incompatible is very different thinking. In our culture the glory goes to the strong and successful. We are taught that to have glory, you must be free from suffering. Or if you are suffering – there is no glory in that. But in God's economy they go hand in hand. Paul wrote [2Cor. 12:10](#) **Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.** In our weakness we find God's strength and glory comes after suffering. [Rom. 8:17](#) **We suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.**

A story I read recently reminded me of this theological truth. In 1972, NASA launched an exploratory space probe called Pioneer 10, with the purpose of reaching the planet and photographing the planet Jupiter which it did in November 1973. And then as it came around Jupiter it was flung by its gravitational pull into deep space traveling at 82,000 miles an hour. Pioneer 10 went past Saturn at 1 billion miles from the sun, past Neptune at 3 billion and in 1997 it was traveling past Pluto nearly 4 billion miles from the sun. And all the while it continued to beam radio signals to earth. It was last heard from in 2003, nearly 7 billion miles away. The remarkable thing was that over a 30 year span signals were being sent by an 8-watt transmitter, which radiates about as much power as a

bedroom night-light. From the weakest of sources, NASA had one of its greatest successes; and so it also is in God's economy.

### **Application Point**

Let's turn now to application. What possible difference can the transfiguration make in our lives? Let me suggest three points of application.

1) First the transfiguration encourages us to **look forward to better times**. The transfiguration reminds us that the story ends in glory and power. The transfiguration is like reading the last chapter of the book and seeing there is a happy ending. "*The transfiguration* encourages the disciples to believe and follow Jesus all the way to the cross" - James Edwards, *Mark*, 271. Maybe you could use some encouragement in your faith this morning? Let me remind you that one day you too will see the very same Jesus that Peter, James and John saw. I am 42-years old and I have never seen a dazzling bright light, or heard the voice of God. I have never to my knowledge seen an angel or a demon. But I believe one day I will see Jesus face to face – one day this reality will be turned on its head. And that is a great motivation to keep the faith. Peter encouraged his suffering church in this way. He said. **1 Peter 1:18 - We ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.** Look for better times to come – it all ends well.

The second application is that **life is lived in the valley and not on the mountain-top**. The event of the transfiguration was glorious to be sure, but it was not intended as a vacation spot. Peter said, "**Rabbi, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah**" (9:5). But that was a foolish comment. As great as the mountain top experience is – life is lived in the valley. The

Christian life is designed to be lived while changing diapers, running errands, reading books, eating meals, going to church committee meetings, and riding the DART. That is where our faith must make a difference. Mountain top experiences are good, and are from God. They give us motivation and encouragement, but never forget - the Christian life is lived in the valley. For all you kids going to Christian camps this summer – remember that! Enjoy the camp and the presence of God – but the key is to live the Christian life out in every day situations when you get home.

The final application is **listen to Jesus**. The voice boomed out of the cloud, “**This is my beloved Son, listen to Him**” (9:7). Moses said: “**One will come after me – you shall listen to him**.” If you want to get rid of your green jealousy, your red anger, your purple pride and yellow fear – and take on the bright white righteousness of Jesus – then listen to Jesus and do what He says. The Christian life boils down to obeying Jesus. It is that simple. How do you do that? For sure we must read our Bibles. The Scripture is God’s revelation to us – His words to us. My challenge for you is to take one hour this next week and read the Scripture. I’m going to ask you about it next week. One hour – I know we can all do that. Listen to God speak to you this week through the Scripture.

**Conclusion:** The Transfiguration is full of Old Testament pictures – and we studied some of them – Moses, Elijah and what they bring to the story. We looked at the theological truth that suffering and glory do go together in God’s world, and we have ended with some application. I especially want you to read your Bibles for one-hour this week and thus “listen to Him” as an application from our text.

Well...we started with the lyrics Cindy Lauper's song, True Colors, and I used it to illustrate how our true colors are not all that great. But if you turn the song lyrics around and think about them in term of God's nature – Jesus' true colors – They become almost like a Psalm of Praise. Bow your head and pray with me.

**Dear Jesus today we have seen your true colors**

**shining through**

**We have seen your true colors**

**and that's why we love you.**

**Help us to not be ashamed**

**but to let them show through us**

**Your true colors**

**Your true colors are beautiful**

**more beautiful than even a rainbow**

**Amen.**