

We are going to Luke 9, starting in verse 28 today.

I think a lot these days about what it would take for our region to come out of this pandemic legitimately changed for the better. What would it take for us to live so differently toward God and our neighbor after this that the whole region is a different place.

What would really motivate change?

And there's a temptation to say that if we as a church had a louder voice in telling people how to live: if we could tell people to do life differently, maybe now they'd listen. But ultimate, laws and rules, no matter how biblical, and no matter how winsome we are in communicating them, don't have the power to change people.

They are needed: we need God's laws and commands as a guide for life. But our problem is greater than not knowing what to do. It is not wanting to do it. It is the lack of a heart-level motivation for change.

And when we change a behavior on the outside, we have only mowed over a dandelion. In a few weeks, I'll be out joyfully mowing my dandelions, but they will be back quickly and outgrow all of the grass, because I haven't gotten them out at the root.

And if our whole goal as a church is to change behavior by telling people to try harder or motivating them emotionally, or trying to tap into the spirit of unity that could emerge from this to motivate some love for neighbor, we will only have temporary results.

There will be a surge of better living and care for one another (which isn't bad, and we can accept that as a gift from God if it comes.) But ultimately it will fade, because nothing has changed at the root.

So our message to the world can't only be, "Be kind to one another," or "Be excellent to one another" (to quote Bill S. Preston, esquire.) There has to be a message that goes deeper.

We need to ask, “Why don’t we love our neighbors?”

And the answer is often something like, “Because we are afraid for our futures and we think selfishness will serve us better,” or “Because we think we’re more important than they are,” or “because we don’t care about their suffering.”

So the answer to that is not, “Keep your heart the same and just try harder to be nice”

It is to retrain our hearts to believe our future is secure, and to see people in need as people just like us, and to see ourselves in the worst of sinners, and to really believe that we have God who is supplying all that we need emotionally, financially, and spiritually to love them well.

And that kind of confidence comes from a heart that has been changed by belief in Jesus. Belief that Jesus has already died to secure our future. Belief that Jesus needed to die for someone like me, and if I’m that bad off without Him, then I can’t see myself as better or more worthy than a neighbor who is in need of Him. And believing that He is that good, that generous, and that powerful over death (and therefore over every other obstacle,) then we can confidently live for Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves.

So that kind of heart and life change comes not from more rules and laws and tips. But from keeping Jesus in front of us as the all satisfying, all loving savior. To have hearts that so content in him that the pleasure of selfishness becomes small compared to knowing Him.

To be so secure in him that the flimsy security hoarding and self-preservation can offer seems like nothing.

So what we need is Jesus. We need a portrait of who he is from the Bible that is so true and compelling that it transforms us at a motivational level. And our community needs Jesus and Bible doctrine.

So I think as a church we’ll come out of this pandemic changed. We are more engaged with serving the community than ever right now, and that should continue. We are doing a better job with member contact and member care and followup, and that should continue. We are doing a better job with the digital side of things and getting the message out online and that will continue.

But ultimately it is only as we use those tools to present Jesus to the community that anyone is changed. It sounds simplistic, but the greatest need of our community is for Jesus.

If you've seen the movie amazing grace, its about William Wilberforce who was the force behind outlawing slavery in England. He believed that the way to get an entire public to change its view on slavery was to instruct them on what he called the "peculiar doctrines of Christianity."

He said, " *If a principle of true Christianity should . . . gain ground, there is no estimating the effects on public morals, and the consequent influence on our political welfare.*"

Changed beliefs lead to change lives. We want to bring Christ to people to change beliefs, which will inevitably change lives.

Christianity is all about Jesus and his Gospel, Pharisaism and religion is all about trying hard to be good to keep yourself good.

Teaching rules produces Pharisees who either keep the rules and get arrogant or break them and get depressed.

Teaching Jesus frees us from sin, allows us to live holy lives, dissolves sin's motivations, but all the while keeps us from becoming arrogant because at the center of our teaching about Jesus is the CROSS – which demonstrates how sinful we were – that Jesus had to go through all that, and that our only hope was a rescue by God.

And so as we look at this next passage that gives a snapshot of the life of Jesus, it will not be a passage with three easy steps you should follow in response. It is a section that just presents Jesus. This is a passage all about Jesus and we want to see Him for who he is here, and He will then be the gas in the engine for heart change and life change, and God-willing, for the change of our region.

So let's just look into his face and see him for who He is...

Luke 9 28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.

So Jesus grabs Peter, James, and John and goes up to a mountain to pray. These three

were the inner-circle of his disciples, they seemed to be the core of the core followers of Christ. And Jesus took them up on a mountain to pray.

There is nothing magical about mountains, but it was often on a mountain that God showed up in the Old Testament. If you remember our walk through Exodus, it was up on the mountain that God appeared to Moses in a cloud and fire, it was on the mountain that God gave his commandments. Mountains seemed to be a place of God's revelation.

And Jesus and the 3 are up on this mountain to pray.

And in Luke especially, times of prayer preceded God doing big things. From the beginning of Luke - in chapter 1, a crowd of people are praying outside the temple, and inside an angel shows up to Zechariah to announce the birth of John and Jesus. In Luke 3 Jesus prays and heavens are opened and God speaks. Prayer sets the stage for big works of God.

Which, by the way, is one encouraging thing about this season we are in as a church. We've been praying together as a church body in our zoom prayer meetings, with hundreds of people showing up to pray. (If you aren't a member here and haven't been getting the links, email info@graceroadchurch.org and we can get you one.) So maybe this is God setting the stage for a great season for our church when we emerge from all of this - I don't know - but I do know that when God works in big ways He often works first by moving His people to pray in big ways.

So they go up to the mountain, and they're praying.

29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. 30 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

So Jesus is praying. And we'll see in the next verse that that disciples were dozing off. So they've been praying for awhile, and the disciples fall asleep. So if you're looking for encouragement for your struggling prayer life, this core of the core of Christ-followers are praying with Jesus in the flesh, and still they fall asleep. And this isn't the only time, this happens again in Gethsemane. Christians are always called to pray, and we've always struggled to pray.

So these guys fall asleep.

And you snooze, you loose, these guys miss the beginning of this incident where Jesus's face is altered, He is glowing, his clothes are so white that Mark says nobody could bleach them to make them look like that (Mark 9:3).

Not only is Jesus glowing and transfigured, but suddenly Elijah and Moses, the two biggest heros in the bible so far, show up to talk with Jesus.

So Moses, the ultimate lawgiver, the star of the Exodus, and Elijah, the ultimate prophet both show up on the mountain. When Moses went up on the mountain he got the law from God, when Elijah went up on the mountain fire came down from God to consume and altar. So when these guys go up on a mountain, stuff goes down.

And they are having a conversation with Jesus about something important: **his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. (v.31)**

But in the original greek here, it isn't his departure that He is about to accomplish. It's the greek word "Exodon" - it's literally His Exodus.

So, Moses, the star of the Exodus is there to talk with Jesus about His upcoming Exodus that He would accomplish at Jerusalem.

This is a place to just pause and look at Jesus and who He is and what this means.

Just as Moses led the way through the sea at the first Exodus, Jesus was about to lead the way out in the second and greater Exodus. What he was about to do at Jerusalem in dying on the cross and rising again would be the ultimate Exodus - it would be the rescue from sin and death and hell.

So the fact that Jesus is going to lead an Exodus means He is going to be the one that God had long predicted to come be a better Moses to rescue his people.

Listen to what God promised back in Deuteronomy 18. This is Moses speakingL

Deuteronomy 18:15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— 16 just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' 17 And the LORD said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. 18 I will raise up

for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

Moses said, “God is going to raise up another prophet like me - and verse 15 will be important - **“it is to him you shall listen”** Listen to Him!

So Jesus is going to be a true and better Moses. Which tells us a ton about who Jesus is and what He accomplished.

He is going to be a Rescuer. When Moses talks to Jesus on the mountain, they’re not talking about new laws that would be given, but a new Exodus that would be accomplished by Jesus at Jerusalem.

The Exodus was when God used Moses to rescue his people, and here they’re talking about the exodus that Jesus will accomplish. The focus of their conversation is that Jesus would be setting his people free and leading them out of captivity to Satan, sin, and death at Jerusalem. His big mission when he came down off the mountain would not be to hand out more laws and rules first, but to save.

This is an important order of operations with God - God gives gospel before commands, grace before law.

In the Exodus there was grace and rescue before law was given. They are rescued out of Egypt, they pass through the sea, they are made the people of God, and then they get to Mt. Sinai where God gives commands and says here’s how you live accordingly.

In fact, at the beginning of the 10 commandments, God first reminded His people of the Exodus:

Exodus 20:1-3 “And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. “You shall have no other gods before me.”

God said “I rescued you, I gave you the Exodus, now I give you the law.”

First it was the Gospel: I rescued you. Then it was the commandments. You obey in response to the grace you’ve received, not to earn the grace. God had made these people His people before He commanded them.

And Jesus likewise would lead an Exodus. His cross and resurrection provide us with our Exodus story. What He would do on calvary would be the grace we need and the rescue we need, and all of the laws that He would give would be because of that rescue, and we obey in response to that rescue.

Jesus is a Savior first and a lawgiver second.

Perhaps your view of Jesus is that He came to tell us how to live. That is true - He told us and showed us how to live. But first and foremost He came to save.

In Luke 19:10, Jesus will describe his mission like this:

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

He is the greatest teacher, the greatest lawgiver, and because of who He is we need to hear Him and obey Him. But don't miss the fact that his primary mission was not to teach, but to rescue. To save. To redeem.

And all of the things we are called to do in the New Testament are in response to the exodus that Jesus led by dying and rising for us.

In the Old Testament, God rescued them and right before commanding them said, “Because of this Exodus event, obey.” Our Exodus event is calvary, and because of that, we obey as well.

Everything we are called to do or not do in the NT is connected to the cross - that was our Exodus event. This is how Jesus changes us, by our first believing the Gospel and receiving and recognizing what He has done for us.

Example:

Philippians 2:3-8 “3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

There's a command - Christians should be humble and look to serve others first. Because of our rescue:

Philippians 2:5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,[a] 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,[b] 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,[c] being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Because of the cross, we are changed. Because of the rescue we have in Jesus, because of all He did in dying and rising for us, we are called to be humble.

It's the message of the cross that changes the heart and changes our paradigm for living, and in response to that we are changed.

Luke 9: 32 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. 33 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.

So the other guys wake up. And they see the glory of God shining from Jesus, they see Moses and Elijah and overhear the conversation.

And Peter, never one to keep His mouth shut, feels he needs to add something to this moment. He is the disciple who would typically put his foot in his mouth and speak before thinking. (He later became a pastor - he possessed the core aptitudes.)

He says, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let’s build some tents for you guys.”

That's a funny statement. Jesus, I'm looking around, and I see you, and Moses, and Elijah – and it makes total sense that I'm here too! Well yeah, Moses, Elijah, and Peter the fisherman.

You put together the dream team up here Jesus. So it makes total sense that you invited me.

And then he says, “I got an idea.” Because transfigured, glowing, glorified Jesus looks like he could use some suggestions.

He says let's build three tents, literally three tabernacles, one for you, one for Elijah, and

one for Moses.

As long as the glory of God is here, put it in some tabernacles kind of like they did in the past. It had been 600 years since the glory of God showed up like this. It used to be in the tabernacle, and then in the temple, and then it left. And since it left, God's people lost their power and their prominence in the world.

So now that's coming back. So Peter suggests that they build a few tabernacles - thinking it'll protect everybody from the glory, and it will restore the prominence of the people.

Maybe that's what Peter was thinking. But ultimately, God tells us why Peter said it

not knowing what he said. - 33.

God says, "Peter really didn't know what he was talking about. He didn't know what he was saying. But good old Peter, that didn't stop him from saying it."

But that didn't stop God from responding...

34 As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" 36 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.

And God says, "Hear Jesus."

And doesn't this sound like

Deuteronomy 18:15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—

Jesus is the one to hear.

Not even Moses and Elijah. They're all up there, and God says, "hear Jesus."

Look at his preeminence, His priority. The greatest heroes in Jewish history are there, and when the voice from heaven speaks, it's all about Jesus. Jesus is the son, Jesus is the

one to listen to.

They've been listening to Moses - their whole life was built on the words of Moses. And Moses is right there, but God shines the spotlight on Jesus and says "He's the one to hear."

Moses' words are true and good and we listen to them. But there is none like Jesus.

So a question for us is, "Do we hear him?" Hearing is not just absorbing the words, it is heeding.

In light of who Christ is, and in light of what He has accomplished in conquering death, and in light of the gift he gave us by dying for our sins - do we listen to him?

Do we live out the implications of our faith? Do we hear his call to lay down our lives to follow him and hear Him because of our exodus? Is our whole life shaped by and built on the words of Jesus? Knowing his words, learning his words, and heeding them, really hearing them, are different things. And God's voice said: hear the Son.

And notice the flow of the conversation:

Jesus is glowing, the glory of God is there. Peter says let's put this in a tabernacle. And God says, "This is my Son, listen to him."

He is saying that, though in the past the glory of God came down and dwelled in a tent or in a temple, the place where the glory of God is contained is different now.

It's all contained in Jesus. He is the "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Hebrews 1:3)

Hebrews 1: 1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son

He is where the glory of God dwells, he is where the word of God emanates from.

John, who was up there on the mountain, wrote this about Jesus when he wrote his Gospel:

John 1:14 14 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.

Dwelt there is literally “tabernacled.” He tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory.

Jesus is where the glory of God dwells, and He is where God speaks to us.

(1) This is important. We want to see God act in our day. We often want to see him do signs and wonders, we seek the miracles. And I believe he does do miracles and works in mysterious ways. But the clear testimony of the Bible is that God is most gloriously revealed in Jesus, he speaks most clearly to us in Jesus, and did his greatest supernatural work, the greatest of all of his miracles, in Jesus.

What we have in Jesus, and in the Bible that speaks about him, is even more wonderful than a glory cloud or any great wonder that we could ever see God do.

And, because we have much more of the picture on this side of the cross, because we can truly understand the Gospel, we have something that’s even more powerful than Jesus being transfigured in front of us. We have Jesus, and a Bible that tells us who he is.

Seriously, you really think the Bible is better? They had this mountaintop experience - glowing, the voice, the cloud, and you say the Bible is a better way to know Jesus?

And if you don’t believe me, let’s ask one of the guys who was there: Which is better, having the written testimony about Jesus and his gospel, or seeing him transfigured in front of you?

Peter tells us:

2 Peter 1 16 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. 17 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, with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. 19 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, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they

were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

A guy who was there to see the glory of God says the Bible is better.

If you want to know where there's better skiing, at Vail or Breckenridge, I want to ask someone who has been to both. Peter had bible, Peter was there for the transfiguration, and he said Bible is better.

He saw the face of Jesus glowing, but we have here the face of Jesus on every page. We have a sure and awesome thing here.

So it's important to us that Jesus is the tabernacle now - he is the radiance of God's glory - he is the most glorious thing God ever does.

It's also important that Jesus is the tabernacle today, because it tells us that we no longer need a place to hold the glory of God. Jesus is with us, and the glory goes where we go.

So Christians don't have a holy city - not like other religions do where the center of their worship is there. We also don't have buildings that bridge the gap between us and God. While we can have cathedrals and beautiful places for churches to meet, can also meet in warehouses and restaurants and movie theaters. Our buildings are useful tools, but they don't connect us to God.

Acts 17 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands,as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

Great architecture can remind us of what God the great architect is like, but it doesn't make a place more holy than any other place. Jesus is our holy place.

And because of His cross we have access - even now, even when we can't gather together - we have access to the glory of God in Jesus because of the cross. So use these strange months to meet with Him in his word, to pray to Him, to allow him to continue his transforming work on your heart.

Hear the Son

Luke 9:28-36

In this passage, Jesus is transfigured before the disciples and speaks with Moses and Elijah about His exodus that He is going to lead in Jerusalem.

I. A Rescuer

Jesus will be a rescuer like Moses. How is it significant that God's rescue came before His giving of the law in Exodus? How does that apply to us?

When we say that there are no commands in the New Testament that are not connected to a reminder of the cross, how is that significant? What does that tell us about our proper motivation for obedience?

II. A More Sure Word

Peter said that (2 Peter 1:16-21) the word of God in the Bible is more sure than this event on the mountain of transfiguration. How does that apply to our lives?

Why would the Bible be more sure than a miraculous event?

III. A New Tabernacle

Jesus is the new place where the glory of God dwells. If this is true, and we all have access to Jesus, why do we need church gatherings? How is the church vital, but the church building less important for the dwelling of the glory of Jesus?

Why is it important that we distinguish between worship in the temple in the Old Testament and worship in the church today?