



# CANYON HILLS

## COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Mark

September 10, 2017

### **Listen to Him**

**Dr. Steve Walker**

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Well, church, welcome to the new 11:00 service in the history of Canyon Hills. I'm glad to see you here today. Just in case you're wondering what that means, several months ago, we announced that we were needing to add a fourth service on Sunday morning, just due to the growth that is happening around in here in the last year. We're trying to get ahead of that a little bit. We added a fourth service, which is the next service. I just pray that somebody comes to that service besides my wife.

It is good to see you here. I wanted to let you know or remind you, back when we made that announcement, several months back, we also announced that as we continue to grow, we realize we're going to need more longer-term solutions, because we are not going to add a fifth service. I'm just warning you right now. You're going to hear me say this. We will never have a fifth service on Sunday morning.

So, we are making plans now to find a second location on Sunday mornings. I wanted to just give you a little update. We have a strategic planning team that has already begun to meet. They are working on establishing a budget, kind of a cost analysis of what it's going to require of us to launch that new site.

Also, this week and next week they're going to begin interviewing commercial real estate people to start zeroing in on a target location somewhere north of here. We don't have a location, but it will be north. I just wanted to update you on that, that we are still in motion. That's probably, who knows, maybe a year from now. We're not sure yet when that will take place.

It's good to be together with you right now. I do want to make one announcement that I regretfully forgot to make last week. It's regarding our regional biblical counseling training conference that's coming here in two weeks. We do this annually. This is regional. People from four or five of the northwestern states come to attend this. It is an amazing training where we help each other learn how to help those in our lives who are struggling and suffering.

Some of you will say, "Counseling training? Forget that. I'm not a counselor." I would beg to differ. You are a counselor. We are all counselors because God brings people into our lives from time to time who are hurting and suffering, and we want to help them. We want to give them advice or encouragement.

The question is, are we good at it? Can we do that and point people to God's Word confidently and gently? That's what this is all about. We have Track 1 being offered. That's the starting point of learning how to do this. Then we have a brand-new Track 3 with speakers coming in, exciting new speakers from all over the country, as I said. There's a table out in the lobby. You can go check it out, but it's happening in two weeks. Don't miss that. I'm sorry I forgot to tell you about that last Sunday.

All right. Let's move on now. Get your Bibles open to Mark, chapter 9, if they aren't already. We now have kind of passed over the midway point of the gospel of Mark. Even at this point, the disciples are still a little bit confused as to who Jesus is and what he has come to do. For the past two years, they've been walking, talking, watching, and following Jesus, and Jesus has been taking them into impossible situations that were infinitely beyond their own human strength and wisdom.

For more than eight chapters, we've been watching Jesus doing things like healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and commanding demons to leave people alone. Jesus has been calming storms. He has been giving crippled people their legs back. He has been raising dead people to life.

Two Sundays ago, for the first time in over two years, Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do you think I am? Who am I to you?" Of course, we remember Peter speaking up quickly for the Twelve. He declares, "**You are the Christ** [the Messiah]," and he was right, but as soon as Jesus told them, in the next sentences, what the Messiah came to do and why he came to do it, Peter and the disciples took Jesus aside and they rebuked Jesus. They said, "No way. You are not only not going to die on our watch, but you're not going to suffer."

What happens next is Jesus' strongest rebuke of the disciples to this point in their relationship. Jesus looks at Peter and he says, "**Get behind me, Satan!**" You see, they were still thinking too small. They were still thinking too human of Jesus. They wanted a Messiah, but they wanted him on human terms. They wouldn't accept that the pathway for the Messiah required suffering, rejection, a death on a cross, and a resurrection.

Jesus knows if this doesn't change in their hearts, if they don't understand this in their heads, in the future, when they should be restful and at peace they are going to be filled with fear. He knows in the future, when they're going to need to be full of faith in him they're going to live in doubt.

He knows if they don't understand why he came to die and why he must suffer... If they don't get that, in those moments when they should be running to him for forgiveness and grace, they're going to be running from him, hiding in their guilt and shame. He knows, in those moments

when they're going to need to persevere and endure hardship, in those moments when they're going to need to turn to his Word for guidance and truth, they're going to turn to the world for false wisdom.

So, it was time now for a come-to-Jesus meeting, literally. Jesus is going to take Peter, James, and John on what's going to feel like this spontaneous little field trip. It would be safe to say that what they see and what they hear next regarding Jesus will ultimately, I believe, change human history forever.

I don't think I'm overstating this. If you think that's an overstatement, I can guarantee what is about to happen in the lives of these three disciples is going to change redemption history forever. With that said, let's go ahead and stand for the reading of God's Word. We're going to pick it up in chapter 9, verse 2.

**"And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.**

**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. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is my beloved Son; listen to him.'**

**And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean."**

Father in heaven, I just pray in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Spirit, would you please teach us exactly what's happening here? What does this mean? God, give us the courage to believe it, to trust it, and to apply it to our own lives. God, we pray that we would have a clearer understanding of your Son, Jesus, because we're here today under the authority, beauty, and power of your life-changing Word.

God, before we're seated, we do ask right now for your mercy on all the people in Florida, all the people still in Texas, all the people suffering in Mexico from the earthquake, and all the surrounding areas. O God, we ask right now that in all of this weather and destruction, ultimately you would have mercy.

We ask, God, that you would spare much life. We ask, God, that in the midst of it all, when people are left with nothing, you would make yourself visible and make it clear that their greatest need and hope is to cling to you. So, God, we pray that you would be glorified. We pray for our friends, family, and loved ones who are in these areas right now, God. May the result be a greater faith and a greater love for you. In the name of Jesus, amen.

I want to deal with this passage a little differently. It doesn't lend itself to the typical sermon structure I prefer. It really forces us to linger a little bit so we can kind of wrap our heads around the seriousness and the weight of what's happening here. So, I want to pull some of the main parts or points out of this scene and help us wrap our hearts around it, and then at the end, I want to conclude with what I think are some really important implications for our faith for those of us who love and follow Jesus. So, let's just pull it apart a little bit.

Let's start with Peter, James, and John. This is where we see the inner circle of Jesus really take shape. We don't know for sure, but these three possibly were showing signs of a little more understanding of who Jesus is. Maybe they're showing signs of a greater influence among the Twelve. Either way, Jesus is mentoring them for after he is gone.

These three (and we know this now because we're on this side of the event) would boldly write, teach, preach, and give leadership to the Twelve long after Jesus has died and risen from the dead. So, I think, just right off the bat, quickly and simply, the point for us in recognizing these three men is...

1. *Genuine faith in Jesus is a continuous journey of growth and maturity.* I think it's really valuable for us to remember that there are ups and downs, hills and valleys when it comes to growing up in our faith, to maturing in Christ. We should be encouraged by these men, especially Peter in the last few weeks.

Peter, who boldly proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah, possibly the very first human being to make that proclamation, boldly and correctly says, "Jesus, I know who you are. You're the Christ," only to, just a few sentences later, have Jesus stare him in the face, call him Satan, and say, "Stand back." That's an up and a down really quick.

What I just want to draw from that is for us to be encouraged. Genuine faith in Jesus is not a one-time event. It is a lifetime of growing, struggling, doubting, and believing, up and down along the way. It's all a part of the journey. You can be encouraged by that. There are going to be those days when you're going to feel on top of the mountain and there are going to be days when you're going to feel like, "Where did all my faith go right now?" Don't lose heart. Some of the greatest Christians who've ever walked the earth model that for us.

Moving on to the main point of this, in verses 2 and 3, we come to the *transfiguration*. That's that big word that describes what we just read. Mark uses words like *transfigured*. He uses words like *radiant* and *intensely white*. The word translated *transfigured* is that same Greek word from which we get our English word *metamorphosis*. Mark is describing here that Jesus, in his whole being, is being changed, including his clothes becoming translucent. They were so pure and so bright. They had never seen anything like it before. They couldn't even describe it.

The whole scene, really, if you think about it, should remind us a little bit of what the psalmist wrote about God in Psalm 104. You'll recall when the psalmist wrote these words: **"O LORD my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself**

**with light as with a garment..."** That's exactly what we see here happening to Jesus in this scene, and we should say to ourselves, "That's exactly what God does."

If we have seen Jesus, we have seen God. Surely this is the whole point of this moment, isn't it? The implication is that their eyes were allowed to see what their hearts were struggling to understand. God was making it possible for them to see that Jesus is the exact radiance of the glory of God's perfect purity and holiness. What's amazing about this word *transfigured* is it's only used four times in the New Testament. One of those times, it's used to describe you and me as followers of Jesus. That word is used to describe what's taking place in our hearts right now.

In 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, Paul writes, **"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed [transfigured] into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."** In other words, Paul is writing, "We too are being transfigured into the very image of Jesus, little by little, day by day, and this happens as we behold his glory, as we have a clearer view of who Jesus is and what he came to do."

We behold his glory in his Word, where Jesus Christ is revealed to us, and in our worship. It's in those moments along this journey of genuine faith that we are being transformed, transfigured into the likeness of Christ himself. I think the point for us, the application, is...

*2. His glory must convince us that he is worthy of 100 percent of our faith, hope, and love.* This view of Jesus as God in human form must captivate our hearts or our faith in him will not last. It just won't. It won't work, and it certainly won't matter, especially when life and the world look like they're just coming apart at the seams. I think the question we ought to ask ourselves right now in a good way is...are we convinced yet? Do we have such a view of Jesus Christ that we believe he is worthy of 100 percent of all of our hope, faith, and love?

Next on the scene, Elijah and Moses show up, talking with Jesus. This is really amazing. Possibly two of the greatest people in the Old Testament are alive. They're walking and talking with Jesus on this mountain Jesus takes these guys up.

I was thinking this week, if this scene were a little more recent in human history, I have no doubt that Jesus, Elijah, and Moses would be sipping on a Starbucks, just like half of you are right now. No doubt. You have to know that, right? I just briefly started thinking, "What would they order? What would they be drinking if they were drinking Starbucks?" See, this is what you pay me to do. While you're hard at work all week, this is what I do for you. You're welcome, by the way.

So, I figured it out. I know Moses, being old school...straight black coffee, straight up, no froufrou, right? Wouldn't you agree? Just pour it in there, hot, right? I'm a little worried about Elijah. I'm not sure. He's a little more adventuresome. After all, he did call down fire from heaven, and so I'm thinking he's not too out there, but a little bit. So, I zeroed Elijah down. Pumpkin spice latte, all the way, all day. Not too much, not too over the top, but you know. A little life there.

The hard one, though, was Jesus. What in the world would Jesus order at Starbucks. Have you ever thought about that? I hope not, but I have, because that's what I do. That's what you pay me to do, right? Anyway, I have it figured out. I can guarantee you I know Jesus. After all, he was a Millennial at this point in his life, right?

So, I know. I can tell you right now. Write this down. He orders a tall extra hot hazelnut mocha, no whip, to save on the calories. That's it right there. That's exact. Tall extra hot hazelnut mocha. I know that because that's what I order. I hope you wrote that down. The next time you think of me, drop one off. I'd be glad to take it from you.

Serious though, now. Sorry. I just wasted three minutes of our time. I apologize for that, but seriously though, I have wondered and I hope someone in this room has also wondered, "Why Elijah and Moses on this scene? Why those two? Why not Abraham, the father of our faith? Why not Noah, whom God chose to rescue the whole human race from extinction? Why not David, the mighty warrior king? Why not Joshua, who took the people of God into the Promised Land?"

Here are some things to think about Elijah. I believe he represents all of the Old Testament prophets and prophecies, which, in some way, all point to Jesus, who would come to save God's people from the incurable disease of sin and the terminal curse of physical and spiritual death that sin brings upon the human race.

I believe Elijah is there because he represents the 353 references to the 61 prophecies in the Old Testament of Jesus, his birth, life, death, and resurrection, all written and spoken by different prophets in different centuries and different places of the world, somewhere between 500 and 1,000 years before Jesus was ever born. Just so you know, you can be confident that there was no opportunity for the prophets of the Old Testament to collude on this, as the skeptics like to try to convince us. There's no collusion. Impossible.

We know that according to Hebrew requirements, a fulfilled prophecy had to have a 100 percent rate of accuracy. The true Messiah of Israel, then, must fulfill all 61 prophecies or else he's not the Messiah. So, what do we know about Jesus? Here's what we know. He perfectly fulfills all 61 prophecies made about him before he was born.

In case that doesn't impress you enough, Peter Stoner, the former professor and chair of the Mathematics department at Pasadena City College, several decades ago, gave his math students a probability problem to determine the odds of just one person fulfilling just eight specific prophecies about their life before they were born. Their conclusion was that the odds are astronomical: 10 to the twenty-first power. That's 10 with 21 zeros after it. I don't even know what that number is. I wasn't even going to try to pronounce it, if you could.

Just so you know... Wrap your head around this. This is the best part of their research. That's equivalent to covering the entire land mass of the entire earth with silver dollars 120 feet deep. That's seven times higher than the room you're sitting in right now.

Then, taking one of those silver dollars and randomly marking it with a red X, roaming the earth for however long you want, randomly burying it somewhere on the earth, and then asking one person to roam the face of the earth as long as they want and to randomly pick up that silver dollar with the red X on their first try, while blindfolded. You see, I think Elijah represents all the prophets and all the prophecies that confirm the supernatural and divine proof of Jesus, who fulfills every promise of God for being the Messiah, his Son.

What I'm about to say next, I want to say with respect, but with force. There is nobody who has ever lived who even remotely comes close to fulfilling one prophecy of their life before they were born. Not Muhammad, not Buddha, not Confucius, not Gandhi, not Krishna, not Joseph Smith, not Charles Russell, not any of the popes, not any of the 330 million Hindu gods, and certainly not Oprah, just in case you were wondering. Some people might think...

So, if Elijah represents all of the prophets and their prophecies of Jesus, what about Moses? I think it's clear. Moses represents the law of God, given to his people through the Ten Commandments. If you recall, there were two main purposes to the Ten Commandments and all the laws attached to them that God delivered to his people through Moses.

First, they were *to reveal the perfect holiness of God*. If you love to take notes, here it is. The purpose of the Ten Commandments is to reveal the holiness of God. God told Moses, "No one has ever seen me and lived," because God is so holy, we could never come near him. He can't even look at sin, let alone let sin come into his presence.

Every commandment and every law represents the divine standard of God's perfect righteousness and holiness, so the law, with all of its requirements, was meant to restore a rightful fear and awe of a holy God that was destroyed in our hearts by sin. That's the first purpose of the Ten Commandments.

Secondly, the law was meant *to establish the seriousness of our sin and the sacrifice required to forgive it*. The law was meant to show us how far short we fall and how separated from God we are. The law and the Ten Commandments are meant to prove to us how sinful our hearts are.

**"You shall have no other gods before me."** There are millions of gods in the world today. If you want to just talk about Western culture, probably the number one god is money. The number two god is sex. We have lots of gods we worship in our culture. **"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain."** We use the name of God and the name of Jesus as filthy curse words.

**"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."** For most Sundays, it's just a calendar convenience or inconvenience. **"Honor your father and mother..."** That one went out the door a long time ago. **"You shall not commit adultery."** Jesus said if you lust in your heart, you commit adultery in your heart. **"You shall not murder."** Jesus said if you hate a person, it's equivalent to just wanting them dead. **"You shall not steal."** **"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."** **"You shall not covet..."**

Every one of us has broken every single one of God's laws and commandments, so for us to have fellowship with God requires that we have all of our sin removed, and God determined that no sin will ever be forgiven without the shedding of blood. The question always rises, "Why blood? Why did God require the shedding of blood?" I want to answer that for you. It's because blood represents life. There is life in the blood. Sin represents death.

The law required that every year, the high priest, on behalf of all of God's people, would sacrifice a lamb. The blood of that spotless, innocent lamb would need to be sprinkled on the mercy seat of God, on the lid of the ark of the covenant, inside the temple, for God's mercy to forgive his people. That blood represented the necessary sacrifice and payment for the sins of God's people. It was to remind them of how serious God takes our sin.

Now, fast-forward thousands of years of animal sacrifices in the temple. Jesus comes along. He walks up to the Jordan River that day and John the Baptist stops what he's doing. He says, "Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the whole world!" Now, he who is perfectly sinless is qualified to make the final payment for our sin. He would keep all of God's commandments perfectly, 100 percent of them, fulfilling all the righteous requirements of the law. He would do that on our behalf because we can't do it ourselves.

This time, the blood of the lamb wouldn't be taken into a man-made temple and sprinkled on a man-made altar. This time, the blood of the Lamb would be taken all the way to heaven by a resurrected Savior and sprinkled on the hearts of those who would believe in him. In his perfect sinlessness, he's the only one qualified to enter into the presence of a holy God on our behalf.

This is the best part. His innocent, sinless, shed blood would, by the miracle of faith, become our blood. Understand this, now. Through our faith in Jesus' death on the cross, God takes the righteousness of Jesus' life and he applies it to our hearts, and so we go from being dead in our sin to being alive in Christ. I think Elijah, Moses, and Jesus are walking around together on the mountaintop that day, talking about *all* of that.

*3. As followers of Jesus, there is no other name in heaven or on earth by which we must be saved.* You see, to replace Jesus with anything or anyone is to think too small and too human about Jesus. We have to understand that Jesus had to die for us. There's no other hope.

If he doesn't die, there's no hope, and our guilt would keep us separated from God forever. Our condemnation and damnation would be sealed forever because we would have no access to God. If we don't get this, if we don't believe this, if we don't have this vision of the glory of Christ, Jesus will never be anything more to us than another religious superhero.

With all this happening, in the next scene, we read in Mark 9, Peter wants to build some tents. Verse 6 tells us they're terrified. Nobody knows what to do or what to say. Have you ever noticed that some people, when they get really, really scared, just get really quiet? Have you ever noticed that? Some people, when they get really, really scared, just start talking incessantly. That's Peter. He doesn't know what to do. He doesn't know what else to say, so he just starts babbling.



Now, think about how silly this is. Did Peter really have tent-making tools and supplies in his pockets? I mean, I know whenever I go on a little spontaneous walk, I take hammers, tent pegs, and canvas just in case I need a tent really quick. No, it kind of makes us love Peter even more, doesn't it? I know it does for me.

I could just see these guys years later, laughing when Peter brings it up. "Do you guys remember that day on the mountain? Oh my gosh. That was so stupid! Remember what I said? 'Can we make you some tents?' Duh!" You know, I could see them all laughing, sipping some Starbucks, and I know what they drink, too. I'll tell you that in another sermon. Anyway, I could see that happening, like, "What was I thinking?"

Now, what's funnier than that to me in that scene, where Peter wants to make tents... Nobody responds! Jesus doesn't respond. Moses and Elijah don't say anything. James and John just leave Peter hanging. They're like, "Dude, you're on your own. That was so dumb. We're embarrassed." Nobody says anything. Just crickets right there!

Here's what I think the principle is for us. You see, through faith in Jesus, we are already in the presence of God forever. The key word is *forever*. It's what we call in theological circles the principle of the *already but not yet*. You see, Peter doesn't want this moment to end. He wants to stay right there in that place in that moment. He doesn't want to leave. I don't blame him.

I can't imagine, as he's standing there, how safe and euphoric it feels when he's realizing, "This is God! This is amazing!" and he just doesn't want to leave there. All of his issues or problems he might have been having at home are all gone in this moment and he never wants to leave this feeling right now, but he's missing it again. He's thinking it's the place or the emotions he's having that make this moment what it is, and the truth is it wasn't any of that. The truth is it's the very presence of Jesus that makes it what it is.

You see, Peter would never have to try to duplicate this scene again, ever, because not too long from now, Jesus is going to tell them he will never abandon them. Even when he ascends to heaven, he's going to send the Holy Spirit to live inside them forever as a guarantee that he will be with them forever. Through faith in Jesus, we're already in the presence of God forever.

Then, God speaks. Just in time, too, because there's no telling what Peter is going to do next. In verse 7, it says God's **"...voice came out of the cloud..."** Now, if I were God, I probably would have started like this. "Peter, be quiet. Stop talking. Jesus isn't just another prophet. He's not just a really good teacher or leader. He's not just a miracle worker. He didn't just randomly come onto the scene and impress you a lot." That's what I would have started with. God didn't. He got straight to the point.

God just speaks from the cloud and he says, "This is my beloved Son. He is the Messiah. He is the sinless, spotless Savior of your soul. He is the one I promised I would send before I created anything else in the universe. This is my Son. If Jesus tells you he must suffer and die, then listen to him."

Listen, church. This is the insistent Word of God for all people for all time. This is the invitation of God every day, including this morning. Listen to Jesus. I think God, in essence, is saying, "This is my Son and in his life, death, and resurrection, and only in those things, is there a door for you to walk through by faith to enter into a relationship with me." You can't get to God without Jesus. You can't even get close.

After all the dust settles, Jesus tells them not to tell anyone. He knows they aren't ready to adequately explain this or describe it, but after the resurrection it'll all make more sense.

So, here's the implication for all of us today for all time. This is what I want us to think about. How do we know if we have the right view of the glory of Jesus? How do we know if we have the right vision of Jesus and who he really is? How do we know if we're getting close to really understanding in our spiritual life and walk that Jesus is this same one who was transfigured before the eyes of Peter, James, and John?

I can tell you how we might know. We might know we're getting closer to understanding who Jesus really is when, in those moments when we should be filled with fear, we will find ourselves unexplainably restful and peaceful, like Joyce, whose memorial service we just had this last Friday, who was on a two-year journey toward her death, and she faced eternity with glorious hope and peace.

We'll know our view of Jesus is getting closer to who he is when, in those moments when we should really be doubting that there's any hope at all left in that circumstance or situation, we find ourselves full of faith. I think of my friend who went, for well over a year, looking for a job at age 56, trying to have a complete reboot in a career late in life, where that is so hard to do. For well over a year, he kept looking, searching, interviewing, and applying, and God rewarded his faith for not giving up.

We'll know our view of the glory of Jesus is getting close when, in those moments of weakness, when our guilt and shame overwhelm us and everything inside us wants to run and hide from Jesus, we find ourselves running to Jesus for more grace and more forgiveness.

We'll know we're getting a pretty close look in understanding of who Jesus is when, in those moments when the world's wisdom is telling us to break our vows, to compromise our sexuality, to hoard all of our money for ourselves, to risk all of our integrity just so we could gain one person's approval, or to medicate our fears, confusion, and anger away with drugs and alcohol, we find ourselves turning back to God's Word. We will find ourselves looking for his truth, strength, hope, wisdom, direction, and joy, because this is where it is.

That's when we start to realize, "Hey, we're getting closer to understanding who Jesus really is and what he came to do." See, when we have a proper view of the glory and majesty of Jesus, we're confident that his substitutionary death on the cross satisfied all of God's anger toward our sin, and we will be unafraid, even though he is glorious and holy. Praise God!

Listen. I think what's happening in Mark, chapter 9, here is Jesus took these guys up on the mountain to show them we need a glorious Savior. We need an all-powerful, all-knowing, miracle-working Savior, but we also need a suffering Savior, because it's in the suffering of Jesus where we draw so close to him because we see his compassion, his love, his sympathy, and our hope that he is the one.