

## “Transfiguration Realization”

Scripture: Mark 9:2-9

Graphics: transformers, mountain, Jesus, shining

Big Truth: The people of the Panama UMC are called to come to the transfiguration realization that Jesus is more than a rabbi or good guy. He is the Son of God, powerful in heaven and on earth. And we are to live our lives as transfigured disciples healing from our mistakes and sin, shining with Jesus wherever we go, and ready to come down the mountain with hope, despite the world around us.

Focus Phrase: My transfiguration realization transforms every part of me.

### 1. Introduction

- A. Way back when I was a wee lad, the hottest toys were Transformers by Hasbro. At the time, those Transformers were small metal toys about the size of Matchbox cars that you could fit in your pocket.
- B. Now, I think they're plastic, larger, and probably can't hurt you quite like the original metal ones could.
- C. Eventually, the Transformers toys sparked movies and comics and a whole industry of other toys. I think we're on like Transformers 6 movie, right?
- D. For those new to Transformers, the Autobots (good guys) are led by their heroic leader - Optimus Prime, while the Decepticons (bad guys) are led by their supreme evil leader - Megatron.
- E. Every Transformer toy (both the Autobots and the Decepticons) starts off as one thing - a car, a van, a boat...some kind of vehicle or machine - and can transform into a large person or animal - a robot on steroids. And each one has some unique power or mechanism.
- F. There are lots of theories as to why these movies and toys are such a hit with moviegoers today. Maybe it's the nostalgia factor. The boys and girls who went crazy for Transformer toys are now moms and dads eager to show their sons and daughters how cool it can be when a rusty tractor-trailer morphs into a talking, flying superhero.
- G. There's also the fact that they're just plain fun to watch. Amazing special effects, non-stop action and beautiful people diving for cover - that's good entertainment any way you slice it.
- H. But what intrigues us most about Transformers is the transforming itself. There's wonder and allure to the idea of something so basic and familiar becoming something so powerful, so mysterious and so downright COOL. It makes us see the world around us, just for a second, filled with new and exciting potential.
- I. What if my car wasn't just a car? What if my desk wasn't just a desk? What if my toaster wasn't just a toaster? Wow!

- J. What if everything is always something more...something hidden at first, but revealed with the right flick of the wrist.
- K. That brings us to today. Today is Transfiguration Sunday. Of all the narratives in the bible about Jesus, THIS ONE has an element of incredible, other-worldly, transformation. But, it's also one that we rarely talk about, preach about, or spend time studying in our Bible studies or Sunday School classes.
- L. I think the reason for that is three-fold: we're not prepared for it, we don't know what to do with it, and we aren't sure how to let it change us.
- M. Hopefully, today's message will help us with that...as we too, are confronted with the Transfiguration of Jesus and then let that transfigure US, transforming us in the process.
- N. You may even go home today with renewed hope that you aren't JUST a disciples of Jesus...but that you're a glory-bound, healed and motivated, hope-filled shining light for Jesus in your life and our world.
- O. Let's pray and head up the mountain...
- P. PRAY!**
- Q. Our gospel reading this morning comes from Mark 9, starting in verse 2. Get that Bible open and let's walk up a mountain with Peter, James, and John - Jesus' inner-circle of disciples...

## 2. Scripture

### A. READ Mark 9:2-9

- B. You may think it's a stretch, but can't a line be drawn between the Transformers movies and the transfiguration of Jesus?
- C. Think about it. The tagline for the toys is, "More than meets the eye."
- D. Isn't that true for Jesus?
- E. The Transfiguration was the moment when the disciples got a glimpse of who Jesus really was, when they saw for certain that he was more than just a man.
- F. Jesus stood before his disciples, on the top of Mount Hermon, and right before their eyes, **he changed**. He changed from a rabbi with a keen connection to God into a God-man, even God-in-the-flesh, who was greater than Moses and Elijah put together.
- G. This glimpse of who Jesus would become - of who Jesus really was - left the disciples stunned...mouths dropping open with nothing much to say.
- H. The world suddenly had new and exciting potential. "What if my rabbi isn't just a rabbi?!"
- I. See the connection?

- J. The word that Mark used for transfigured was μεταμορφωμα (which means transformed or better, “metamorphized”). This word is fairly rare in the NT. It also occurs in Romans 12:2 (when Paul writes, “Do not let your minds be confirmed to this world, but **transformed** (metamorphized) by the renewing of your minds...) and 2 Corinthians 3:18, which reads something like “Shine, Jesus, Shine.”
- K. We probably could call today Metamorphization Sunday, but I think calling it Transformer Sunday sounds WAY more rad. (Wow...I’m dating myself, now).
- L. The disciples were just slack-jawed about this whole thing - terrified really - writes Mark...looking at Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Then Peter (Oh, Peter... everyone say, “Oh Peter...”) Peter opened his mouth and blurted out the only thing that he could think of. “Hey, let’s build some shelters and we can just all stay here...” (my paraphrase)
- M. Now, Jesus nor James nor John ever respond to Peter’s proclamation...it sort of just hung in the air. UNTIL, a cloud descended and the voice of God said, presumably to the three disciples, since Moses and Elijah and Jesus don’t need to hear it, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”
- N. And at that moment, the cloud disappeared, Moses and Elijah were gone...and it was just Jesus and the three. And Jesus had transformed again into the Rabbi with which the disciples walked up the mountain.
- O. In verse 9, we simply read that they walked back down the mountain, and Jesus warned them not to tell anyone what they’d seen, UNTIL He rose from the dead.
- P. Jesus didn’t want them to try to relate this story to anyone because it would’ve been too much to process...you really had to be there to believe it.
- Q. But what it DID do was to convince Peter, James, and John - who would become powerful leaders in the early church - that Jesus IS who God SAYS he is - the Son of God, Messiah, Savior of the World!
- R. D. Gregory Van Dussen, in his book Transfiguration and Hope, writes this, “Clearly, these disciples were privileged to see Jesus more profoundly than ever before, even if they could not understand the meaning of what they saw. But there was still more. They were also seeing what God had in store for the people he had created in his own image, once that image is restored in Christ. They were seeing themselves as they could be under the leadership of Jesus and the transforming power of the Spirit.” (Transfiguration and Hope, xv-xvi)
- S. I have often wrestled - and did again this week - to try to understand what God was and is trying to tell us through this short but powerful section of scripture.

- T. We can see the connection between the Transformers being revealed as more than they appear...and Jesus who Peter, James, and John came to see as more than just a Rabbi and good guy.
- U. But there's more. Just as many people might respond to the idea of another Transformers movie with a sigh, there are many of us who hear about Transfiguration Sunday and let out the same disinterested sigh.
- V. You might hear, "It makes sense for us to circle back to Christmas and Easter. Those are the biggies. But why circle back to this story? After all, hasn't it become clear that Jesus is God? Haven't we established the fact that he's not just a man but divine? Seriously, we just saw this movie. Why do we find ourselves here again?" I've been there...
- W. But let us assume that, in the words of a well-intentioned and awestruck Peter, "... it is good for us to be here" (v. 5). Let's assume that the reason we tread this familiar ground of Jesus' transfiguration is because it's actually good for us **as his disciples**.
- X. Why? Well, here's at least one good reason: You and I spend a great deal of energy trying to transform Jesus. The world spends a lot of effort trying to change who Jesus is. We try to morph and manipulate him into something he's not, something that fits OUR agenda.
- Y. And it's good for us to be confronted with the truth that Jesus is not who we've made him out to be. Not even close.
  - i. He's greater than we've assumed;
  - ii. He's holier than we give him credit for; and,
  - iii. He's better than we've imagined.

### 3. Application

- A. We need the transfiguration because it breaks our idolatrous, self-serving ideas of Jesus and brings us back to the jaw-dropping, breathtaking truth of Jesus.
- B. Like a child of the 80s, pulling and twisting a tiny action figure that's promised to become something exciting if we manipulate it in just the right way, we're all guilty of trying to transform Jesus, whether we know it or not.
- C. Over the last few months, maybe you've been tempted to twist Jesus into a political figure on social media so that the argument can be won or shut down.
- D. Perhaps you've seen Jesus portrayed as the "genie for the faithful." You know how this Jesus works. If you pray enough, believe enough, or just plain try hard enough, Jesus will grant your wish for whatever you want.
- E. Maybe you've recently greeted your daughter or son home after the first full semester in college only to find that the Intro to Philosophy class has turned

- him/her into an enlightened know-it-all, and the professor has helped her transform Jesus into the likeness of a simple, first-century guru. Nothing more.
- F. I'm here today to say that Jesus is none of those things. And not only is Jesus none of those things, but we need to repent of even considering it. It's amazing what happens IN us when we realize Jesus was transfigured!
  - G. Jesus is gloriously SO MUCH more and better when we have a Transfiguration Realization.
  - H. Transfiguration Realization is the moment, or process, by which you and I stop making Jesus into who WE want him to be, and begin to truly understand Jesus for who he is...and how He wants to, and can, keep transforming our lives.
  - I. The disciples had a transfiguration realization...it became REAL to them...and God is, right now, asking YOU to allow Him to make Jesus - the ACTUAL JESUS - real to you in a way you may not have considered or thought about for a long time.
  - J. When you stop and yield to the God who was on that mountain with Moses and Elijah, and the disciples, and yet who is greater than, then you're open to a Transfiguration Realization.
  - K. Dr. Van Dussen went on in his book to write, "As we witness [the disciples'] experience through Scripture, we can begin to see ourselves transformed as well. In the end, it is as much about their transfiguration as it is about Jesus' transformation." (xvi)
  - L. As your pastor, you know that it's my heart's desire for every single person who can hear my voice to be a sold-out, passionate follower of Jesus Christ.
  - M. If the God who was on that mountain that day said that Jesus is His Son and we should listen to Him, then why do we sometimes not? Why do I sometimes not listen? Why do I keep Jesus in a box, or at arms length, when all He wants to do is take over every part of my lives? Of your life?
  - N. The human condition - your human condition - is filled with hurts that are deep down inside. The human condition is filled with things that we do that are compartmentalized from Jesus' influence, or so we think. The human condition is marked by seasons of despair, hopelessness, and lack of passionate vision.
  - O. I'm here today to tell you that the Transfiguration of Jesus is the answer to every single desperate need in the human condition. The transfiguration is the answer to the human condition itself because as Jesus IS, so SHALL WE BE!
  - P. And the road to transformation is marked with milestones of our transfiguration realization.
  - Q. Stare into the light of Jesus' transfiguration...stare into the light of his face and clothes and eyes. Stare at Moses and Elijah. Make a decision, right now, that

this episode in Jesus' ministry is actually the pinnacle before the best part of the story. And make a decision today that you will keep staring into the transfiguration until it becomes a new reality in your life. Here's how:

- R. #1 Let the Transfiguration Realization sink deeply into your soul so that you heal from the hurt and mistakes of your past (transformation)
  - i. You and I are like James, and John, and Peter. We have preconceived notions...about how our lives would be. We make mistakes and have hurts and insecurities and issues with anger and jealousy and disappointment.
  - ii. The reality of Jesus' transfiguration is your reality, if you are his disciples.
  - iii. The disciples eventually were transformed. You can be transformed.
  - iv. Jesus' transfiguration sends a loud and clear signal that the hurts and sin and whatever else is brewing inside you can be forgiven and healed.
  - v. Jesus' transformation is your transformation when you come to a transfiguration realization.
  - vi. You don't have to be broken inside forever...be changed.
- S. #2 Let the Transfiguration Realization awaken the true nature of Jesus in your everyday life (awakening)
  - i. This is all about the next great awakening. By many accounts, the church of Jesus Christ has fallen asleep. A fresh transfiguration realization is an alarm clock starting to go off to wake us up.
  - ii. Being awakened to the reality of your own transfiguration will create problems. You won't just go to work, but you'll view work and all you do with eyes that see Jesus' reality...Jesus' mission...Jesus' commands.
  - iii. When you're on the field or in class, students, your eyes have the potential to see beyond the gossip, beyond the me-first, to a reality that includes the fact that God wants to use YOU to change the world around you for the best.
  - iv. Wherever you are, you'll be shining with dazzling eyes and clothes because Jesus' transfiguration is your reality as well.
  - v. And just like the disciples, you have work to do OUT THERE, wherever you do it. Shine, disciple, shine!
- T. And, lastly, let me just me just laser focus us this morning. Let the Transfiguration Realization bring HOPE in this season of confusing frustration.
  - i. It's becoming the most cliché thing right now to say that this last 11 months has been difficult. We know that. We're living it.
  - ii. But there is some very real, under-the-surface stuff going on in our hearts and in our minds that's destroying our joy and our hope.

- iii. We're afraid. We're isolated. We're sick and tired of COVID and everything that it's taking away from us.
- iv. We grieve for ourselves, our parents, our kids, and this world.
- v. And I don't have some magical words to say to us to bring us hope except for this: **This world is not our home.**
- vi. That's not a dismissal. God did not create us to be HERE forever. He created us to **be with Him** forever.
- vii. If you're feeling confused and hopeless and sad...if you're angry and isolated and numb, we see you. I see you.
- viii. Yet when you spend a few moments staring into the eyes of Jesus on that mountain, and realize that being lit up like the sun was not just a show-off move but was for YOU, then you also realize that YOU ARE DESTINED for TRANSFIGURATION too! You are being prepared for heavenly glory!
- ix. This world, this virus, this body, this depression, this confusion is NOT all there is. In fact, it's not even CLOSE to the invitation to the reality that Jesus gives to you on that mountain.
- x. "This...THIS is my Son. Listen to Him." There IS joy right there. There IS hope right there. Not just for tomorrow, but for TODAY.

#### 4. Conclusion

- A. "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine..." wrote Fanny Crosby in the 19th century hymn.
- B. Jesus is not JUST a 1st century rabbi. Jesus is not JUST the guy who died on the cross and rose from the grave.
- C. Jesus is our Optimus Prime PRIIME! He's our all-in-all and the one in whom we are being transformed. He is our foretaste of glory divine...when we will be with God, in God.
- D. Imagine with me a church filled with transformers - disciples who are not JUST disciples, but healed, hope-filled, joyfully shining brilliant servants who have come to the realization that they TOO will be transfigured...made holy...made godly...made glorious in Jesus.
- E. This week, have a transfiguration realization! It's MORE than meets the eye!
- F. Let's pray and then sing our hearts out!
- G. Pray!