

"Seeing God's Kingdom Come"
Mark 9:1(2-9)
The Transfiguration of Our Lord
Messiah, Boerne
February 11, 2024

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Text: "And [Jesus] said to [His disciples]: 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power'" (Mark 9:1).

Dear Friends in Christ:

The other day I was shopping in a Walmart store in San Antonio, and I was looking for some dog treats that I'd seen in the Walmart in Corpus Christi. I looked and looked but couldn't find what I was looking for. Finally, I asked for some help, and the associate took me right to them. I think there's a saying for that: "If it was any closer, it would have bit me."

Well, we *all* suffer at times from being unable to see what's right in front of us, like the disciples in our text today, and like most people in the world today. They are unable to see God's kingdom come in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Why? Because

they have been bitten by that ancient serpent, the devil, are corrupted by the poison of sin, and are spiritually blind. They do not have the Holy Spirit to reveal the kingdom of God to them. But Christ our Lord has crushed the serpent's head through His suffering and death on the cross and was glorified at His resurrection and ascension to heaven (Gen. 3:15). So, we pray today that the Holy Spirit will open *our* eyes to see God's kingdom come with power at the transfiguration of our Lord, in the Holy Scriptures, and through His Church, so that our faith is strengthened for our Lenten journey and life everlasting. Amen.

In our text today, we hear Jesus say that some of the people standing with him in Caesarea Philippi would not "taste death," that is, die, until "they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power" (v 1). Now, the term "the kingdom of God" can mean different things. For example, there's the kingdom of God's *power* by which He exercises control over the world and

the creatures in it. There's the kingdom of God's *grace*, in which we live as baptized Christians, and through which we have citizenship by grace for Christ's sake through faith. And there's the kingdom of God's *glory*, for which we wait as baptized Christians, the glorious kingdom of heaven. It is this kingdom of which Jesus speaks, the kingdom of glory, which God reveals by His gracious power to Jesus' chosen disciples in our text today.

Peter had just confessed that Jesus was the Christ, that is, the Messiah, the promised King of Israel (8:29). Most people did not believe that. Rather, they thought Jesus was perhaps a prophet sent by God. Most of the religious leaders of the Jews saw Jesus as a threat to their positions of power in Judaism. Their opposition to Jesus would increase and climax at His crucifixion, death, and burial on Good Friday. But God the Father revealed the truth that Jesus was the Messiah to Peter by the Holy Spirit, and now Jesus

would reveal to His inner circle of disciples a glimpse of what this meant.

So, six days after Peter's confession, Jesus took His inner circle—Peter, James, and John—to the top of the Mount of Transfiguration and revealed to them His divine glory. Our text says that "he was transfigured before them," that is, his appearance changed to heavenly glory (v 2). Matthew writes that "his face shone like the sun" (17:2b), and our text says that "his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them" (v 3). The prophets Elijah and Moses also appeared with Jesus, and were talking with Him about His departure, literally, His "exodus," from earth to heaven (v 4; Lk 9:31). Thus, Jesus appears to Peter, James, and John—the "some" spoken of in our text—and they saw God's kingdom of glory come with power (v 1).

Our text says that when Peter saw Jesus appear in heavenly glory on the mountain top with Moses and Elijah (v 5), he didn't fully understand what was

happening, being terrified, and "did not know what to say" (v 6). Moses and Elijah were Old Testament prophets who represented two major sections of the Holy Scriptures, the Torah (or Law) and the Prophets. Both also had unusual endings to their earthly lives. After Moses died, *the LORD* buried him somewhere in the valley of Moab, but no one knows the exact place of his burial (Dt 34:5-6), and Elijah was never buried on earth, but *the LORD* took him up in a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). By their appearance with Jesus at His transfiguration, Moses and Elijah identify Him as the fulfillment of the Holy Scriptures and the way to heaven. Peter would understand this more fully after he received the Holy Spirit from Jesus after His resurrection (Jn. 20:21-23; Acts 2; Jn. 15, 16).

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Peter gave his eyewitness account of Jesus' transfiguration in his Second Letter. He says:

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. 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," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the mountain top." (1:16-18)

Thus, by Peter's testimony of Jesus' transfiguration, we also "see" God's kingdom come in power and glory, thereby gaining a preview of Jesus' coming at the end of time.

But while seeing the heavenly vision in good, the Holy Spirit makes our salvation even *more* sure by revealing the way of salvation to us through Jesus Christ in *the Holy Scriptures*. As St. Peter says:

And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, 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, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 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. (2 Pet 1:19-21)

So, while the heavenly vision is good, the Holy Spirit makes our salvation surer by revealing the way of salvation through Jesus Christ in the Holy Scriptures.

Finally, *the Church* shows God's kingdom to us as she lives out God's will according to His word. As Peter says to the Lord Jesus in our text, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here" (v 5a), and we agree! Through God's Word and Sacraments, as well as through "the consolation of the brethren" (SA 3), the Good News of the Kingdom of God is revealed and seen by those to whom the Holy Spirit reveals it—by you and me—through the Church. We hear Jesus call us to repent of our sins, and we confess that we are sinful by nature and by our behavior. But we also believe the Good News of the forgiveness of our sins "in Christ," that is, in union by faith with Jesus Christ, and are assured of a place in God's kingdom through the Gospel.

As Jesus came down the mountain with his inner circle of disciples, "he charged them to tell no one what they had seen" until He had risen from the dead (v 9). While they had to wait awhile, they obeyed the Lord's command after His resurrection by telling people what they had seen through their holy writings—Peter,

through the Gospel of Mark and his Second Letter, and John, through the book of Revelation. Now is the time for us to tell people the Good News about Jesus, too, before He comes again in glory to judge the world and to take all believers to live with Him in His glorious kingdom forever.

Dear Friends in Christ, you and I have been blessed by God to have had someone—perhaps our parents or another family member or a friend—bring us to the Lord Jesus, like Philip, who said to his friend, Nathanael, “Come and see” (Jn. 1:46). Then God revealed to us our Savior Jesus Christ and His kingdom through His Word and in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, giving us new birth from above (Jn. 3:3; Acts 2:38-39). As we leave church today and go down to the plain of our daily lives, invite people you know to “come and see” Jesus with you. Invite them to join you for worship and Bible study this coming Lenten season. God promises that He will be at work here through the Holy Spirit, and by His grace, they will see God’s Kingdom come 1)

in the Holy Scriptures, 2) in the messages, 3) in the congregation, and 4) in you! Amen.