

What you see on the screens above me... is Raphael's painting... "the Transfiguration." ... I have been told that the famous artist literally worked himself to death on this painting... as he dramatized the contrast between Jesus' transfiguration... (which we studied in last week's passage)... and the passage that we have before us today... (when Jesus and His 3 disciples came down from the mountain... the very next day)...

We know that it was the next day... because our opening verse (Luke 9:37) tell us that. ... So Raphael... in this painting... united the two scenes (the scene that we studied last week)... and the scene that happened immediately afterward. ... Both are on the same canvas – together... although we know that the two scenes actually happened several miles apart from each other.

But in bringing the two scenes together... Raphael rendered a real service for us. ... What he did on canvas... the Gospel writers also capture ...and stress in their writing. ... (What I am saying is...) there was a tremendous CONTRAST between the glory above (represented by the upper half of Raphael's masterpiece) and the shame and confusion below (depicted on the lower half of this painting). ... Above is the light... below are the shadows.

Now... before we move forward... let me say a word about what we have in the four gospel's of our New Testament. ... John indicated... in his Gospel... (John 20:30)... that he and the other Gospel writers had to select which information to convey - out of a vast pool of material. ... So... instead of a written transcript of the Lord's earthly ministry or uninterrupted hours of film footage... the information about His life comes to us in small... select segments... like snapshots in a photo album. ... Matthew... Mark... Luke...

and John have assembled four distinct picture portfolios... of their renditions about Jesus' ministry on earth. Sometimes they selected the same scenes... other times different scenes. ... Each Gospel writer had edited and highlighted certain details... while omitting others... all to convey a particular perspective... to a different (original) audiences. Each Gospel presents the truth without error... yet no single writer records the **whole** story.

So... with *that* being said... I want to begin today... by reading the same event that our passage in Luke describes... but from a *different* Gospel writer. ... We are going to start with *Mark's* rendition. This will help you understand why I will say some things (later on) about this event. Hopefully no one will want to say to me: *"That is not at all what Luke wrote! ... Please don't add to Scripture... Pastor."* ... So here (first) is how Mark tells it... giving us some of the details that Luke omitted.

### **Mark 9:9-13**

What a conversation the three disciples must have had as they bounced down the slopes. It was likely all theology—questions about the relationship of Elijah and Messiah, the sequence of events, the Resurrection. They did not understand it all, but Peter and “the Sons of Thunder” were exhilarated. But their reverie was quickly shattered when they arrived at ground level and came face to face with demonic powers.

In the Gospel that we are studying... Luke does not mention any of this. Dr. Luke... theologian and historian... wanted us to see a contrast here — they had seen Christ's glory **above**... but would now also see his glory **below**... in the dark world. ... So Luke edited Mark's extended account...

to emphasize this contrast... cutting it down to less than half the size of the other Gospel writer's reports. He trimmed off Mark's recording of Jesus' words about the coming of Elijah (for example)... in order to tighten the connection between what happened on the mountain... and what happened below.

This appears to be Luke's reason (as well)... for not including many details that Mark does include... concerning the event that happened right after the transfiguration... and the walk down the mountain. ... But let's read on with Mark's account... because it will help us understand some of the things that Luke **DOES** write about.

### **Mark 9:14-29**

I want to re-read verse 29... because it will explain some of the comments that I will be making later. It is not found in our passage over in Luke... but (now) you will know where I got it.

### **Mark 9:29**

Keeping the majesty connection in mind... we will now examine Luke's "slimmed down" and edited version.

### **Luke 9:37-45**

A big reason for me saying that Luke wanted to emphasize the contrast between what happened on the mountain... and what happened in the valley... is verse 43. ... Look at it (again) with me.

### **Luke 9:43**

Down in the valley... they were all struck with awe at “the majesty of God.” ... Peter... James... and John saw Jesus’ Transfiguration... and called it “his **majesty**.” ... (And then) the crowds saw Jesus cast a demon out of a boy... and were struck with “the **majesty** of God.” ... Luke wants us to consider the majesty **above**... and the majesty **below** (where it was dark and confusing)... because both belonged to Christ. ... What was visible only to the chosen three on the mountain... is here visible to a greater number. Raphael (the painter) must have seen this... as well.

It was the day after the transfiguration. ... Jesus... accompanied by Peter... James... and John... has completed the descent from the mountain. ... The four are met by a large crowd. ... In fact... so eager were the people when they saw Jesus... that they came **running** up to him to welcome him (Mark 9:15). ... Mark also revealed that there were scribes who were **arguing** with the nine disciples... who had been left behind when Jesus and the three ascended the mountain.

### **Luke 9:38-39**

It was a desperate scene. (First) we have the scenario of the disciples who had attempted an exorcism - but (for some reason) they had failed. The (second) we have the scribes who (no doubt) saw the opportunity... in Jesus’ absence... to ridicule and argue with the nine disciples... because of their disastrous **BOTCHED** exorcism.

We dare **not** stay on the glorious mountaintop... when there are battles to fight in the valley below. ... Here was another “*only child*” (like the widow at Nain whose son had died)... needing the help of the Lord... and even more so because His own disciples had failed.

Then when Jesus arrived... the demon had seized the boy... and threw him to the ground. ... Mark described the scene as the boy foaming at the mouth... grinding his teeth... rigid in his body... and not being able to hear or speak. ... In Matthew 17:15... we read that the demon would often cast the boy into a fire... and therefore he was covered with burns and scars.

So this poor boy lived an aquarium-like existence. He could see what was going on all around his pitiable body... but he could not hear or speak.

How utterly awful! And the disciples had been powerless to do anything about it... despite the father's pathetic begging. ... Why was this so?

The disciples of Jesus had done such feats before. They had the **power** and the **authority** when Jesus had sent all the disciples out (two-by-two) on mission tours... (at the beginning of this chapter in Luke 9). ... They had many victories... but **NOW** they did not have success. ... Why?

I think the answer is found in the verse that I had you re-read – Mark 9:29. Prayer and fasting was absent. But Matthew also gives a reason...

**Matthew 17:19-20 (ESV)**

*<sup>19</sup> Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" <sup>20</sup> He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."*

Matthew tells us because they lacked faith... and mark indicates that they lacked prayer and fasting. ... The nine men had allowed their faith... and their spiritual discipline (specifically... prayer and fasting) to erode.

(LISTEN!) Yours and my faith is like a muscle. It has to be exercised. If we don't... it becomes flabby and not very useful. We need to exercise our

faith with spiritual disciplines like prayer and fasting. Otherwise we too will lose our ability to minister to others the way we should. We need to use our spiritual gifts – if you don't want them turning into useless flab.

This week we held our final Awana club event for the year. We are now on summer break. It was a successful year. I saw that I could do – *what I wasn't sure (at the beginning of the year) I would be able to do.* ... .. But there is a big danger here! (Would you pray for me? Pray for all of us.)

In the Fall... when we start Awana back again... knowing that we did it successfully the year before... I might **not** approach it with the same amount of faith that I did last year... when I had so much uncertainty... and didn't know if I could do it. ... “OK... *I'll just do the same things that I did last year... I can do this...* (My confidence would be – in the fact that I have done it before.) ... I might rely MORE on: “*I can do this again...*” instead of a disciplined faith that says... “*Lord... I need Your enablement... I really don't want (merely) what I can do. I want God-sized results!*”

When the disciples returned from their Galilean ministry tour with many successes “under their belts,” I would imagine that they placed too much confidence in themselves – knowing that they had done this before.

*“Demon! Come out!... I said... Demon... come out! Did you hear ME...?! ... Uh Oh! ... I'm sorry Mister. There is nothing we can do...”*

Has God used you in special ways in the past...? When He calls you to do it again... make sure to approach it with a God-honoring faith... and not simply a confidence because you've done this before. Anyone who is involved in ministry (and by the way) that should include every believer who

is listening to me... do not rely on your past experiences. Each and every time... approach it in faith.

Luke shows us a dramatic contrast between the majestic Glory of Christ on the mountaintop... and the impotence of His disciples at the bottom. And I love what J Vernon McGee has written about this. (You know... it has been quite some time since I have quoted extensively from Dr. McGee. It is probably about time (now) ...don't you think?

*This entire scene is a picture of today. Jesus has passed on into the glory. His disciples are with Him. We are down here in this world at the foot of the mountain where there is confusion, compromise, and impotence. The world today acts like a demon–possessed man, and the church is helpless in the presence of the world's need. When Jesus spoke to the crowd, He rebuked them for their lack of faith concerning this boy, and apparently the disciples and skeptics were included.*

The church today (in many ways) seems powerless before the mocking world. They ridicule us... as we show little - to no impact - on our culture. ... Maybe we are relying too heavily on our successes in the past... or our natural abilities and formulas... instead of an active faith to meet the needs around us right now. ... Jesus' response to His disciples can just as easily be said to the church (as a whole) of our day.

### **Luke 9:41**

It is made even more clear (by this)... that the root of the apostles' powerlessness... was their unbelief. ... Their failure was **not** because they did not try. ... They did their very best... (no doubt repeatedly)... probably using previously successful formulas. ... Their problem was... they had subtly moved from trust in God - to faith in the process... which is to say

“faith in themselves.” They had cast out demons before—certainly they could do it again.

Jesus saw the failure of the disciples to cast out this demon as merely one more indication of the stubbornness and faithlessness surrounding Him. The disciples reflected an attitude that was prevalent in their society. ... Jesus would not stay with them forever; one day he would leave and the Spirit would come. ... The Spirit could help soften stubborn hearts. In the meantime... Jesus would battle this unbelief... but He would not leave this young boy in his horrible condition... so Jesus told the father to **bring** his son.

They were all about to experience a fresh revelation of the majesty of God... that would (in turn) produce faith... obedience... and worship in their souls.

### **Luke 9:42**

With apparent ease... the Lord cured the boy of all physical injuries caused by the demon... and returned him to his father. ... How infinite is the competence of Jesus! ... The boy was not **half**-healed but was made completely whole. The Lord restored the boy's mind... hearing... speech... body... boyhood... and hope — and He gave him faith. ... Then... He gave him back to his father. ... Can you hear the people's cheers as they praised God? ... Think how the boy's father felt after (so often) seeing his maimed... scarred son... wallowing in the dirt... mutely staring up through terror-filled eyes – but NOW fully restored!

The glory of God (certainly) was the power that He displayed – but the majestic glory of God was every bit as much - Jesus' awesome **compassion** – as well.

This same majesty of the Lord's compassion is all around us today! ... It is seen in the financially challenged person... who God somehow keeps providing every need for... the thirty-something couple delivered who don't know how much longer they can stay married for... ... It is showcased in an elderly heart patient... whose heart needs surgery... but no doctor will risk it. It is visible in the man marvelously set free from his addiction to pornography... and/or alcohol... but who is once again a loving father and husband.

We all need firsthand observations of his majesty as seen in personal and corporate worship... which can take us to the mount of transfiguration... and where we can see Jesus shine! We all need to REGULARLY behold the majesty of the Lord on high.

But we must not stay on the glorious mountaintop – because there are battles to fight (depending on our faith) in the valley below. ... We need to come down off that mountain... and also witness the glory of the Lord in the valley. Let's not be an unbelieving and faithless people with perverse and crooked hearts... with whom Jesus must merely “put up with” and endure.

There doesn't have to be... (and there shouldn't be) a stark contrast between what we experience on the mountaintop of worship... and the majesty we can experience when we aren't on that mountain. How have you exercised your faith muscle this past week...? Don't let it go flabby...!

We have a majesty on high to be mindful of... we have a majesty below to partake in... and there is a third majesty that Jesus addressed next. It was the majesty into the future.

### **Luke 9:43-45**

The Lord's followers were prevented... (most likely by **God**)... from comprehending Jesus' statement. The Lord's statement was divinely concealed from the disciples so that they would not comprehend all its implications. ... Luke also implies that they were aware they didn't understand fully but were afraid to ask further. ... But why did the Lord say anything at all if they were not to understand fully?

Two reasons. First... He wanted to prepare them for a future that would not play out like they expected or hoped. ... He didn't paint a rosy picture of their expedition to Jerusalem. ... His confrontations with evil in Galilee... reversing the physical effects of sin and casting out demons... were mere skirmishes compared to the darkness He would encounter in Judea.

Second... He wanted to plant an important seed in their memories. When the corrupt courts of the religious leaders condemn Jesus... when the morally bankrupt civil leaders turn a blind eye to justice... when He is condemned to suffer the shameful death of the lowest criminal... when He lies cold in a tomb... the Savior wants His followers to know that none of it had been a mistake. ... He didn't miscalculate and then improvise a victory. When He rose from the dead... He wanted His people to remember what He had said. Everything had gone exactly according to plan.

The Majesty of the Lord that will be played out in yours (and my) future... I think it is safe to say... will be very similar to what Jesus was telling His

disciples. Just like them... we need to prepare for a future that will not play out like we expect. We will face some challenges that will result in His greatest glory and honor – but when they come... we will feel like saying “*No thank you*” to Him. “*This is definitely not what I choose, Lord!*”

The question is... are you willing to trust God’s plan for glory... or will you insist on YOUR plan for glory. ... **His** is going to happen. But know this for certain - that when God’s full glory comes – we will experience FAR MORE than we deserve!

Submit to the Lord... as you observe His majesty on high... down low... and into the future.