

Transfiguration

OLD TESTAMENT – Exodus 34:29-35

29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. **30** Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. **31** But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them. **32** Afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. **33** And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. **34** Whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, **35** the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

34:29 *face shone.* He who had asked to see God's glory (33:18) now, quite unawares, reflects the divine glory. The Hebrew for "was radiant" is related to the Hebrew noun for "horn." The meaning of the phrase was therefore misunderstood by the Vulgate (the Latin translation), and thus European medieval art often showed horns sprouting from Moses' head. (CSB)

Moses' face was literally radiant, reflecting the glory of the Lord. (TLSB)

The reflection of the glory of the Lord upon the face of Moses was to serve as a sign to the people that the covenant had been reinstated. The glory of the Lord was again present among his people through Moses. (PBC)

34:30 *afraid.* Even a reflection of the divine glory was too much for sinful people to bear. This is beyond all human experience. (TLSB)

Moses, however, was not even aware that his face was shining. But Aaron and the Israelites were afraid to go near Moses because of the brightness of his face. (PBC)

34:31 *leaders of the congregation.* (TLSB)

34:32 *commanded.* Moses proclaimed the things that God had revealed and told the people to follow them. (TLSB)

34:33 *he put a veil over his face.* So that the Israelites would not see the fading away of the radiance but would continue to honor Moses as the one who represented God. For a NT reflection on Moses' action. (CSB)

Term is different from the veil (wrapping or shawl) used by a woman in Gn 38:19. Since Moses' appearance frightened the people, he covered his face. (TLSB)

34:34 *remove the veil.* Moses would not conceal his face from God. Likewise, when he was speaking God's Word to the people, he would remove the veil. This reminded the people that Moses had seen God face-to-face. (TLSB)

Moses' face reflected the glory of the Sinaitic law. That glory, as Paul calls our attention in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, was a fading glory. "In Christ it is taken away," Paul declares. The glory of our NT ministry, Paul emphasizes with this comparison, is greater than that of Moses. The NT ministry, centered in Christ

who fulfilled the law, is a ministry of the Spirit that will never fade away. It is a ministry which reflects the glory of the gospel, which has no conditions or limitations, and which endures forever. (PBC)

34:35 Moses does not mention whether his face ever ceased to be radiant. (TLSB)

34:29–35 Moses veils himself because the Israelites, in their sinfulness, are terrified to see a manifestation of God’s glory. Today, our sin also separates us from God’s glory and presence, but St Paul reminds us that “when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed ... and we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image” (2Co 3:16, 18). Because of Christ, we see the Lord and live in His glorious grace. • O Lord my God, let me see You in Christ under the veil of the incarnation. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 2 Corinthians 3:12-13, 4:1-6

12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 13 not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

3:12-4:12 Paul is in the midst of speaking of the glory of the new covenant as compared to the old one. The comparison is from the lesser to the greater. “If the ministry that condemns men (the Old Covenant Law) is glorious (as shown by Moses’ face, upon which the Israelites could not look), how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness (Paul’s ministry of the Gospel)!...And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!” As Paul defends the new covenant, he is also defending his own ministry of that new covenant, which appears to be rather inglorious (cf. 3:1-3; 4:7-12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

3:12-4:2 Note the large number of times the pronoun “we” occurs. Paul is reminding us that the transformation experience is no longer limited to Moses as recorded in Exodus, nor to Moses and Elijah along with Peter, James and John in the transfiguration (Matt 17:1–9; Mark 9:2–9; Luke 9:28–36), nor to Paul and the other apostles. It is something that every believer experiences as he or she is transformed into the glory of God through the continuation of this same glorious ministry that Paul and the apostles were privileged to perform. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The preceding passage 2 Cor 3:7–11 sharply contrasts the former glory of the law which brought death with the new glory of the ministry that brings righteousness. This is the basis for the word *therefore* in v 12. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

3:12 *have such a hope* – This is the lasting glory that we have in the Gospel. – It stresses that this hope is a present reality; we have it now. Hope affects what we do and how we live at the present time. As Heb. 11:1 says, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

The present participle *echontes*, “having,” in v 12 stresses that this hope is a present reality; we have it now. Hope affects what we do and how we live at the present time. As Heb 11:1 says, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

we are – Means “let us make use of”; thus “let us use great boldness.” Our sure hope in the Gospel gives us great courage and freedom to carry out our mission and calling as Christians. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

bold – This literally means “speaking openly” and here means “boldness, courage, great freedom.”
– We make use of much confidence. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

Although the apostle did not actually describe the consummation of all Christian hope, but showed only the manner of its accomplishment, yet the final bliss was implied. And therefore he continues: Having therefore such hope, we make use of much boldness of speech. The hope which the ministers of the New Testament have extends forward to the future glorification of Christ and the believers in the mansions of heaven, when the spiritual gifts of the Gospel, righteousness and life, will be revealed before the whole world. And therefore the servants of the Word make use of great openness, much boldness of speech. Because Paul had before his mind’s eye the definite fulfillment of the certain promises of the Gospel, he could speak with all frank and unreserved confidence. There was nothing to conceal, nothing to suppress, with the utmost plainness he could preach the message of Christ and of the fullness of salvation contained in Him. Just as he did not hesitate to let the thunder of Sinai roll over the head of the unrepentant sinner, so he withheld not a syllable of the saving truth to the poor sinner, whose self-righteousness and pride had been taken away by such frank preaching. (Kretzmann)

3:13 *Moses, who would put a veil over his face.* See Ex 34:33–35. The purpose of the veil was to prevent the Israelites from seeing the fading of the glory. (CSB)

Moses saw God’s glory (Ex 33:18) and reflected that glory in his face to the Israelites. He veiled his face to prevent the Israelites from sensing the transient nature of that reflection, calling them to continually trust in his leadership before God and before them. The glory of the old covenant was fleeting compared to Jesus. (TLSB)

The veil (*kalumma*, which occurs 4 times in this section) refers to the headcovering Moses wore because of the supernatural radiance of the skin of his face (Exod 34:33–35). He took off this mask only when he stood before Yahweh or spoke to his people.¹ Paul uses the account of Moses to illustrate the superiority of the apostolic proclamation over that of the OT. While the original purpose of the veil was to prevent the people from seeing Moses’ face fade, Paul also uses it metaphorically to refer to the blindness of the Jewish people who fail to see the Christological message of the OT. The veil is on their hearts. Yet this changes when they are converted; the veil is removed. The removal of the veil is the hope that Paul speaks about. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The passage immediately following our text describes the dreadful consequence of not having this veil lifted: “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:3, 4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Ex. 34:29-35 records Moses’ descent from Mount Sinai after his 40-day visit with God. The text says that his skin shone because he had been talking with God, and though this frightened the people, he addressed them nevertheless, placing a veil over his face after he delivered God’s message to them. Furthermore, whenever Moses spoke with God, he would remove the veil and his face would shine. Paul puts a unique interpretation upon this event, saying that the veil was there so that the people might not witness the radiance fading, as it was doomed to do, because the old covenant was a fading dispensation. From the moment the Sinai law was given, it was doomed to be replaced by something greater, Paul argued (2 Cor 3:7-11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

In this respect he and the other teachers differed from Moses, who, although vested with the full official authority of a servant of God, yet placed a veil upon his face, and this for the purpose that the children of Israel should not look steadily on the end of that which was passing away. It was not only that the

sight of the divine radiance on the face of Moses was withheld from the children of Israel because their previous conduct had made them unworthy of such a favor and rendered them unable to endure the splendor of such sinless reflection, but that the glory on the face of Moses, was fading away even while he was speaking with the people. Moses was aware of this transitoriness of the phenomenon; he realized that this fact symbolized the preparatory nature of the Old Testament ministry, and his action was in agreement with the will of God. A continued enjoyment of the divine reflection was denied the children of Israel on account of their refusal to accept the words of the prophet. In this way Moses was handicapped in his work and could not bring out the Gospel-news as it is now proclaimed by the ministers of the New Testament. (Kretzmann)

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice[h] cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

4:1-6 The first six verses of chapter four serve as somewhat of a bridge between the previous section (that began with 2:14), in which Paul emphasized that the new covenant is superior to the old, and the one that follows (4:7-5:10), in which Paul turns his attention to the fragile nature of those who serve as ministers of the new covenant. (PBC)

4:1 *therefore* – The chapter starts with the word “therefore, a word that tells us a conclusion is being reaching on the basis of something that has come before. (PBC)

this ministry. The apostolic ministry (4:1) has enduring glory which is able to change us from glory to glory (3:18). While Moses’ face reflected a fading glory, we who reflect the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ are transformed with ever-increasing glory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Paul explains why those engaged in ministry do not let discouragement prevail. God has given them a double blessing: he has shown them mercy and has entrusted the work of ministry to them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The sharing of the new covenant in Jesus (cf. 2:17; 3:3,6) (TLSB)

God has been merciful to Paul, merciful first in that He had brought him, chief of sinners, to faith and, secondly, in that he had given to him the powerful, effective ministry of the new covenant (cf. 1 Timothy 1:12-15). (PBC)

we do not lose heart. When God through his mercy calls and commissions his servants, he also supplies the strength necessary for them to persevere in the face of hardships and persecutions. (CSB)

Not to give up in the face of trials and temptation. Can also mean not “to give in to evil. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

To be a minister of that office which he has just praised so highly was Paul’s privilege: Therefore, having this ministry, even as we have received mercy, we do not become faint. It was an unmerited act of God’s mercy which made him a minister of the Gospel, Eph. 3, 8. He had received this ministry, not for any

reason for which he might boast, but by a free gift of God. This fact sustained him amidst the difficulties and trials of his official duties and kept him from becoming finally and definitely discouraged. Humble heroism was the key-note of Paul's character; his exalted position did not fill him with pride. The mercy and the grace of God, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, was the inexhaustible fount of his strength and courage. (Kretzmann)

4:2 *we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways* . Paul is referring to the false teachers in Corinth. By contrast, he is able to appeal to the conscience of every one of them and also to his integrity in the sight of God, because his practice was always that of setting forth the truth plainly, i.e., without veiling it or resorting to deception (cf. 1:12, 18–24). (CSB)

The worst type of shame for ministers results from adulterating God's pure Word (v 2). In our ministry we must make sure that we do not change the Word, but that the Word changes us and our hearers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

No. We have disavowed the kind of practices that people hide because they are ashamed of them. We do not sneak around. We do not perform tricks with the Word of God. Instead, be clearly setting forth the truth, we make our case before God to every human being who has a conscience. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

He returning here to the thought expressed at the beginning of this section: “Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit” (2:17). Only one who does not have the gospel or who has no confidence in it will have to resort to manipulative, secret, and shameful ways, ways that are not open and above board, to win a following. (PBC)

cunning – It literally means “a readiness to do anything,” an end justifies the means” philosophy. This does not conflict with what Paul had told the Corinthians in a previous letter: “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor 9:22). A minister of the gospel will try to put himself into another's shoes. He will seek a point of entry, some common meeting ground, which may open the door to an opportunity to bring to the person the saving gospel of Christ. (PBC)

Paul was falsely accused of discrediting the integrity of his ministry with the Corinthians. (TLSB)

But not only has Paul a certain remedy against discouragement and faintness, but also against the evils which he saw in the case of the false teachers: But we have renounced, disclaimed, the hidden things of shame. He wanted openness, candor, frankness to stand out most prominently in all his work. For unless the work of a pastor is at all times carried on in this manner, he will become identified with hidden things, with matters which shun the light of the sun, and which thus produce or bring dishonor upon him and his office. This behavior is almost invariably associated with such false prophets as try to break into organized congregations and steal the hearts of the members. And with reference to the same people Paul writes: Not walking in craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully. He was not found engaged in, not busying himself with, intrigues and schemes by which men without a conscience sought to make a way for themselves and to acquire influence; he did not try to insinuate himself into powerful positions by false ambition. Nor did he adulterate the Word of God for such ends by preaching so as to obtain favor with the people, instead of proclaiming the Law in all its severity and the Gospel in all its beauty, 2 Tim. 4, 3. Rather by the manifestation of the truth he commended himself, literally, to every conscience of men in the sight of God, to every possible variety of the human conscience. In his public and private teaching he brought out the truths of the Gospel plainly, so that no one could be in doubt as to the way of salvation. To every variety of human conscience he thus commended himself; they must needs acknowledge his sincerity, they must give him this testimony, that his motives were above reproach, that his teaching

conformed to the highest ideals of truth and duty. He knew also that all his work was being done in the sight of God, that God was present at all times to hear him. Men recognized the truth and the honesty of his preaching, and before God he had a clear conscience. (Kretzmann)

command...conscience - Paul possessed a clear conscience with regard to his proclamation of the truth of the Word of God. By faithfully transmitting God's Word, he commended himself to the consciences of his hearers (v 2). Paul's conscience would not permit him to adulterate the Word of God. He knew that the Father said to Peter, James, and John, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matt 17:5), and that listening to Christ meant faithfully receiving and passing on his teaching. Luther, too, was bound by his conscience to the Word of God; he could not do otherwise. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Paul's proclamation of Jesus is bold and public. He is vulnerable to judgment by others. (TLSB)

4:3 *if our gospel is veiled*. See 3:13–18. (CSB)

It is because of unbelief. (TLSB)

If the Good News we preach is covered by a veil, it is in the people who are being lost that it is covered. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

who are perishing – Those who do not believe in God's provision of grace in Jesus and are judged in their trespasses and sins (1 Cor. 1:18). (TLSB)

This fact being established, Paul can once more refer to his words in chap. 1, 15. 16 and 2, 12-18, by saying: But even if our Gospel is veiled, in them that are perishing it is veiled. The Gospel in itself is anything but dark and obscure, chap. 3, 13; it is a light that shines in the dark place of this world, intended to illumine the hearts of all men. But the opposition of men, their refusal to accept its simple statement of grace, places the veil of willful ignorance before the bright beauty of the Gospel, thus preventing its clear rays from entering into their hearts. Thus it is the punishment of their own guilt that they are lost, 1 Cor. 1, 18; they are judged already, John 3, 18. "But it must be so, the Word of God must be the most peculiar thing in heaven and earth; therefore it must do both things at the same time, enlighten and honor in the highest degree those that believe and honor it, and blind and disgrace in the highest degree those that do not believe it. To the former it must be the most certain and best known: to the latter it must be the least known and most hidden. The former laud and praise it in the highest degree; the latter blaspheme and disgrace it in the highest degree, so that its works bear full sway and are not unimportant, but peculiar, terrible works in the hearts of men." (Kretzmann)

4:4 *god of this world*. The devil, who is the archenemy of God and the unseen power behind all unbelief and ungodliness. Those who follow him have in effect made him their god. (CSB)

Satan, the ruler of this passing age (Rv 12:9–12). Irenaeus of Lyons: "Satan, who was designated God to those who believe not" (ANF 1:575). (TLSB)

this world. Used in contrast to the future eternal age when God's creation will be forever purged of all that now mars and defiles it. In Gal 1:4 it is called the "present evil age." (CSB)

blinded the minds of unbelievers. Paul continues to use the imagery of the veil that covers the divine glory so that those who reject the gospel fail to see that glory (3:12–18). (CSB)

the light of the gospel. Satan's work is to "darken" hearts and minds. However, the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins through Jesus, remains a clear and visible light to the whole world, even though some have closed their eyes to it (cf Jn 3:19; Col 1:13; Eph 4:19). (TLSB)

image of God. Christ, who is both the incarnate Son and the Second Person of the Trinity, authentically displays God to us, for he is the very radiance of divine glory (Heb 1:3). He is the image of God in which man was originally created and into which redeemed mankind is being gloriously transformed (3:18), until at last, when Christ comes again at the end of this age, we who believe will be like him (1Jn 3:2). (CSB)

Jesus Christ, who is both God (1Jn 5:20) and man (1Tm 2:5) in the flesh (Heb 2:14), clearly reveals to the world who God is (Jn 14:9). He and the Father are in essence one (Jn 10:30; 17:11, 21). Jesus is also the perfect image of humanity for our sake. In Him is restored the image of man, lost in Gn 3. (TLSB)

The cause for this condition is very distinctly not in the Gospel itself, but in man, due to the machinations of the devil: In whom the god of this world, of this present age, has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. Satan is the god, the prince, of this present age, chap. 2, 11; John 12, 31; 14, 30. He has his work in the children of unbelief, Eph. 2, 2; 5, 6; 1 John 3, 10; they give him willing obedience. But he, in turn, as a fitting wage, has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. Because they were guilty of rejecting the truth, the blinding could make progress in their hearts, could be a judgment upon them; for Satan could not perform this wickedness in the hearts of the believers, of them that are being saved, because to them the Gospel is not veiled. And the purpose of the devil in blinding the hearts of the unbelieving is: That the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth, should not dawn upon them, or that they should not see it clearly, it should remain hidden before them. The sum total, the content, of the Gospel is the brightness of the glory of God in Christ Jesus, the glorious revelation of Jesus as the Savior of the world. But so well is the design of Satan realized in the children of unbelief that this glory of Christ, who also in regard to His work is the perfect image of God, is not seen by them, does not penetrate into their understanding. (Kretzmann)

4:5 *what we proclaim is not ourselves.* As did the false teachers, puffed up with self-importance. Paul does not lord it over their faith (1:24), for there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, and he is the theme of Paul's preaching. (CSB)

your servants for Jesus' sake. Paul, and indeed every apostolic overseer, is a servant to God in his work with God's people, just as Jesus Himself was servant to all (cf Mk 10:45; Jn 13:1–20). Paul contrasts his servanthood with his critics' boasting of themselves. (TLSB)

To justify his calling the Gospel which he preached the proclamation of the divine glory, the apostle now writes: For not ourselves preach we, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for the sake of Jesus. If Paul had been preaching himself, his own wisdom, if he had been seeking honor and glory for himself, it would have been wicked presumption on his part to condemn those that refused to accept his teaching as being on the way to perdition. But his one thought, his one object, was to set forth Christ Jesus before his hearers as the Lord, to whom they owed the obedience of faith by reason of His redemption. And far from asserting any authority, power, or lordship over them, he stated, on the contrary, that he considered himself and his fellow-teachers the servants of the congregations, not absolute slaves bound to do their will as they dictated, but servants for the sake of Jesus, ministers of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God. And in this sense also every true preacher of the Lord Jesus Christ is a servant of the congregation entrusted to him, as he becomes all things to all men in order to gain souls for Christ, 1 Cor. 9, 19. (Kretzmann)

4:6 *Let light shine out of darkness.* God said this at the creation (Ge 1:2–4), and God says it again in the new creation or new birth (see 5:17; Jn 3:3, 7; 1Pe 1:3) as the darkness of sin is dispelled by the light of the gospel. (CSB)

Paul alludes to the power of God in creation, when His Word literally brought light into existence. (TLSB)

shone in our hearts. That miraculous Word of creation is at work through the Gospel, which alone can enlighten hearts that are dark with sin. (TLSB)

the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. The light that now shines in Paul’s heart (qualifying him to be a proclaimer of Christ) is the knowledge of the glory of God as it was displayed in the face of Christ—who has come, not just from an earthly tabernacle, but from the glorious presence of God in heaven itself (see Jn 1:14). (CSB)

There is another reason also which causes Paul to be so fearless and frank in his ministry: For it is God that said, Out of darkness light shall shine, who has shined in our hearts for the enlightenment of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It was in the beginning of the world that the creative power of God’s word caused the light to shine out of darkness, Gen. 1, 3. And the same God who thus created the physical light is the Author of the true spiritual light. It was not merely that he blew a dying ember into flame, as Luther remarks, but that he brought forth light out of darkness. There was darkness in the heart of Paul, as in that of all men by nature, spiritual darkness and death. But God created spiritual life and light in his heart in his conversion; and this reflection of the glory of God is now used to illuminate others; God has given to the preachers of the Gospel the ability to give to others the light of the knowledge of God through Christ, as manifested in Christ. Note: This function of the converted people is not confined to the pastors, but every believer that has experienced the illuminating power of God in his own heart will, in turn, act as a light tower to lead others to know Christ as their Lord and be saved. Mark also the contrast in the entire passage: The god of this world, the devil, blinds; the ministry of the Gospel gives light. Without the Gospel and its illuminating power the heart of man will remain forever in spiritual darkness; but if that power removes the darkness, there is a fullness of light and glory. (Kretzmann)

face of Jesus Christ. The righteousness, love, and grace of God (indeed God’s very heart) are seen in Jesus (cf Jn 14:6; Rm 5:6–8). (TLSB)

4:1–6 The essence of Paul’s ministry was “mercy” through the Lord Jesus alone. Such mercy compelled him to be straightforward, authentic, and transparent as a servant to God’s people. Merciful ministry exposes and binds us to the people we serve. We must never give in to the temptation to think that merciful ministry can be done from afar, as a master and not as a servant. The same Lord who made “light shine out of darkness” will strengthen our hearts to be courageously transparent servants. • Thanks be to God, who is generously merciful to us. May He prepare us and bind us to those who need such mercy. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 9:2-9

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, 3 and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 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.” 6 For he did not

know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." 8 And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. 9 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.

9:2-9 It may actually be that what precedes the account of the transfiguration is the greatest key to understanding the event. The word from the cloud proclaimed, "Listen to him." As we read Mark's Gospel, what is recounted before the transfiguration is the complete failure of the disciples, Peter serving as their representative, to understand what it means that Jesus is the Christ. After Peter's confession, Jesus begins to tell them what will happen to him because he is the Christ, namely, that he "must suffer many things and be rejected . . . be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mk 8:31). Therefore, it is the theology of the cross, not a theology of glory, that provides the interpretational key to the transfiguration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

The last Sunday after Epiphany is always devoted to the Transfiguration of Jesus. All three Synoptics recorded it. It is very important for several reasons: (Buls)

- a. The Transfiguration is important just before Ash Wednesday because of what is recorded in Mark 8:27-38. There He asked the disciples: "Who do people say that the Son of man is?" (Matthew 16:13). Peter responded: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." (Matthew 16:16). But when Jesus (Mark 8:31) then foretold that the Son of man would suffer, die, and rise again, Peter objected and Jesus criticized him severely. Then Jesus spoke of the lot of the Christian, especially about not being ashamed of the Son of man, the suffering and dying Son of man. Jesus was preparing His disciples for His suffering and death.
- b. The Transfiguration is important also because of what Jesus says in Mark 9:1. Some would live to see the Kingdom of God coming in power. Bengel, Fahling and Franzmann were of the opinion that this included the Transfiguration, the first step in seeing the Kingdom of God coming in power. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: Both events, Peter's confession and the transfiguration of Christ are closely related because the miraculous occurrence on the mountain was proof that Christ was truly the Son of the Living God. There is also confirmed, through the transfiguration, Jesus' announcement of His coming suffering and death, and of His return to glory. (Buls)

9:2 *After six days* – (Mark also says "six days"(Mk 9:2), counting just the days between Peter's confession and the transfiguration, whereas Luke, counting all the days involved, says, "About eight days" (Lk 9:28) (CSB)

"After six days" since the incident recorded at 8:27-9:1. Note the article with each of the four names. All four are uses of the anaphoric, in each case "the well-known." (Buls)

"after six days." That is, six days after Peter's confession and subsequent confusion. This not only provides a chronological mark, but also provides a narrative link between the confession/denial of Peter and the transfiguration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

"After six days." Mark, like the other Synoptic Gospels, sets the transfiguration in the context of Christ's Passion prediction (cf. Mk 8:31–9:1; Mt 16:21–28; Lk 9:22–27). It happens a week after Jesus begins to teach about his suffering, death, and resurrection; rebukes Peter; calls his followers to deny themselves and take up their cross; and promises that some of those with him will see the kingdom of God before death. Mark also records Jesus' warning: "Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous

and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (8:38). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Peter, James and John. these three disciples had an especially close relationship to Jesus. (CSB)

“Peter and James and John” uniquely witness Christ’s ministry. Mark notes that these three also saw the raising of Jairus’s daughter (5:37–42), received instruction about the signs of the end (with Andrew) (13:3–37), and were to stay and watch with Jesus as he prayed in Gethsemane (14:33). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

a high mountain – (Although Mount Tabor is the traditional site of the Mount of Transfiguration, its distance from Caesarea Philippi (the vicinity of the last scene), its height (about 1,800 feet) and its occupation by a fortress make it unlikely. Mount Hermon fits the context much better by being both closer and higher (over 9,000 feet). (CSB)

“A high mountain.” Variant traditions differ on locating the transfiguration on Mount Tabor or on Mount Hermon. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

"Mountain," perhaps one of the high mountains between Hermon and Tabor. These are mentioned in antithesis to the people, 8:34, and in antithesis to the nine remaining disciples. These three were Jesus' special witnesses also at Mark 5:37 and Matthew 26:37. (Buls)

Hendriksen: Jesus took them with him so that after the great event of Easter they might bear witness of what they had seen. (Buls)

This James was not the author of the Epistle of James. We have no extant writings from the Apostle James. But Peter and John speak about this occasion in their writings: 2 Peter 1:16-18 and John 1:14. They were witnesses not only in their time but also in their recorded writings. (Buls)

Fahling: They were to witness the Lord's greatest glory on earth as well as His deepest degradation in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: Both required the fuller faith. (Buls)

transfigured.† His appearance changed. The three disciples saw Jesus in his glorified state (see Jn 17:5; 2Pe 1:17. (CSB)

Jesus shone with the glory of His divine nature, which otherwise had been veiled (cf Php 2:7–8). (TLSB)

“He was transfigured.” Note the passive voice. It is the work of the Father that discloses the identity of Jesus and points forward to the glory that would be his after the death and resurrection he had predicted was accomplished. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

metemorphōthē. Besides the parallel in Matthew (17:2), this verb is used in the Epistle (2 Cor 3:18) and as an imperative in Rom 12:2. It seems wise to use two different English words to distinguish between Jesus’ transfiguration and the transformation of Christians. His transfiguration reveals his divine nature; ours, the new life of Christ at work in us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

9:3 *intensely white* – Matthew and Luke speak of Jesus' face and garments, whereas Mark speaks only of Jesus' garments. By the way, good commentators point out that the many details in the account of the

Transfiguration indicate that all three Synoptics wrote quite independently of each other. That is the best and soundest view. (Buls)

Neither Matthew nor Luke was an actual witness. Mark gives us the testimony of Peter. "And His clothing became glistening, exceedingly white, such as no launderer on earth is able to whiten them to such a degree." The translations are interesting. By the way, KJV and NKJV add a variant reading which is not even listed in the Nestle Greek text. NKJV reads: "His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them." With or without the variant, the point is: What happened was supernatural. (Buls)

We are being told that the human nature of Christ and even His clothing was completely suffused with the brilliance of the divine nature. These could have been the very clothes which were taken from Him on Calvary. Here so brilliant, there so cheap! Here His person so brilliantly transfigured, there so cursed and helpless! What a contrast! (Buls)

Jesus' divinity shone with brilliance (cf Ex 34:29; Rv 1:16). (TLSB)

bleach – Paste made from clean clay (fuller's earth) in which white cloth was soaked and then stretched out to dry in the sun. Once dry, the clay paste washed away. (TLSB)

9:4 *Elijah and Moses.* † Moses is the representative of the old covenant and the promise of salvation, which was soon to be fulfilled in the death of Jesus. Elijah is the appointed restorer of all things (Mal 4:5–6; Mk 9:11–13). The disciples here witness the confirmation of Jesus' claim (5:17) that he fulfills the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah). Lk 9:31 says that they talked about Christ's death.) – († Moses, the great OT deliverer and lawgiver, and Elijah, the representative of the prophets. Moses' work had been finished by Joshua, Elijah's by Elisha (another form of the name Joshua). They now spoke with Jesus (whose Hebrew name was Joshua) about the "exodus" he was about to accomplish, by which he would deliver his people from the bondage of sin and bring to fulfillment the work of both Moses and Elijah. (CSB)

Literally "and there was seen by them." The word "appeared" is used of the appearance of angels (Luke 1:11), of God (Acts 7:2) and of Jesus (Acts 9:17). Elijah and Moses truly appeared. (Buls)

Fahling: Both of these erstwhile prophets and now residents of heaven, whom they probably recognized by the nature of their conversation, stood before them with glorified (Jude 9; Deuteronomy 34:6; 2 Kings 2:11) bodies and were heard talking with Jesus. As their bodies had been preserved from decay, so the body of Jesus should not see corruption (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27ff). They had been zealous for the Lord and His Law, one as the lawgiver, the other as a fiery reformer; but neither of them had been able to stop the transgression. Now they were talking to Jesus of His decease at Jerusalem and the redemption which He was to accomplish. (Buls)

With their physical eyes the three disciples and Jesus saw these visitors from heaven. At this point Hendriksen makes a curious remark:

We receive the distinct impression that for Elijah and Moses this speaking with an exalted being like Jesus Christ was not something unusual. (Buls)

They were not frightened as were the disciples. They were very much at ease, at ease with the Father in heaven, at ease with the glorified Jesus on the mountain. (Buls)

talking – The last part of verse 4 means: "And they were conversing (speaking informally) with Jesus." Why would saints from heaven speak with the glorified Jesus about His coming suffering, death and resurrection? Like Jesus, both of them had suffered much for the Lord's sake. Obviously, they were strengthening Jesus, somewhat like the angel in the Garden of Gethsemane, in view of His coming ordeal. Did the disciples hear what Moses and Elijah said? Did they hear the conversation among the three? The text says nothing about this but if they were witnesses to what they saw, why not witnesses of what they heard? Jesus in His essential glory, Moses and Elijah in God-given glory, all three speaking victoriously about what was soon to happen. (Buls)

"Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus." Only Luke records what they were talking about, namely, Jesus' "departure [Gk: *tēn exodon*], which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Lk 9:31). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

It was appropriate that Jesus, whose work was inaugurated in the wilderness at his baptism and whose way through the desert was directed by the Spirit, should be accompanied in this moment of high revelation by the eminent prophets of the wilderness who stand by his side to testify to his character and mission. Jesus is the one in whom the promise of the second exodus becomes a reality. Moses appears as the representative of the old covenant and the promise, now shortly to be fulfilled in the death of Jesus, and Elijah as the appointed restorer of all things. The stress on Elijah's presence at the transfiguration indicates that the fulfillment of "all things" has arrived. (Lane)

9:5-6 "Let us make three tents." It appears Peter wants to remain on the mount. Though we're not told much, Mark gives the most insight into Peter's suggestion. Luke tells us that Peter said this "not knowing what he said" (Lk 9:33). Mark adds that this was because of fear. Later, Peter would find comfort in what he saw and heard, but mainly in what he heard (2 Pet 1:17–19). Peter took away from this event that the Word of God is a light shining in the darkness for us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

9:5 *Rabbi*. Hebrew word for "(my) teacher." (CSB)

Hebrew rabban, "chief" or "great one." (TLSB)

"Said" means response to the situation. No one had said anything to Peter. Matthew, Mark, Luke have "Teacher, Lord, Master." A plain indication that the Evangelists did not copy from each other, In each instance, high respect. Hendriksen and Lenski explain the differences by saying that each Evangelist translated the original Aramaic with a different, but synonymous, noun. (Buls)

three tents. Peter may have desired to erect new tents of meeting where God could again communicate with his people (see Ex 29:42). Or he may have been thinking of the booths used at the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:42). In any case, he seemed eager to find fulfillment of the promised glory then, prior to the sufferings that Jesus had announced as necessary. (CSB)

Peter hoped to prolong their stay by providing shelter or places of worship. (TLSB)

This Gospel and the glory that day on the Mount stirred Peter to capture the excitement, to enshrine and preserve that celestial conversation and the glory of the moment. Skaps-napse – a *tent* or cloth hut (literally or figuratively):—habitation, tabernacle. (QV)

God communicates to us through his word and we need to take that message to people who need it on the plain. – LSB hymn 414 verse 5 "Tis good, Lord, to be here! Yet we may not remain; But since you bidst us leave the mount, Come with us to the plain."

9:6 *did not know what to say* – Peter did not rightly understand what he was witnessing. Moses and Elijah were preparing Jesus for going to His death (Lk 9:30-31). (TLSB)

for" in each clause. Likely the first is explanatory and the second causal: "You see, he did not know what to say in response (to the situation), because they were so frightened." (Buls)

At this point Luke reads: "He did not know what he was saying." LB gives an interpretational translation: "He said this just to be talking, for he didn't know what else to say and they were all terribly frightened." In this life Christians are often a strange mixture of joy and fear or pleasure and fright. Cf. Luke 2:9 and Matthew 28:8. Moses and Elijah were not afraid. They were in the state of glory. But even believers, who are still sinners, fear in the presence of the supernatural because they are sinners. (Buls)

Jesus was not frightened at Luke 22:43 when an angel appeared to Him. The next verse, 44, tells us that He was in great agony, not because of His own person, but because of our sins. (Buls)

Jesus did not answer Peter. He disregarded what Peter said. (Buls)

The effect of this singular experience was such as to put the disciples into a state of ecstasy; they were almost intoxicated with the glory of the singular appearance. They were incidentally in a condition of half-sleep, overcome by the brightness of their transfigured Master. (Kretzmann)

9:7 *a voice came from the cloud*. The cloud is frequently a symbol of God's presence to protect and guide (e.g., Ex 16:10; 19:9; 24:15–18; 33:9–10). (CSB)

The presence of divine glory was associated with clouds in the wilderness, overshadowing mountains, the tabernacle, and the temple (cf Ex. 13:21; 19:9; 33:9; 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:10-11). (TLSB)

Bengel: The divine majesty is frequently conspicuous in clouds. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: As the God of Israel at the time of the old covenant dwelt in a cloud and assured His people of His gracious presence, so also was the brightness of the cloud a shadow, a carrier of the divine grace and glory. (Buls)

Commentators disagree among themselves as to the antecedent of "them." Was it the disciples or does it refer to all of them? We leave it unanswered. In any case the cloud silently said to the disciples: "The experience is over." (Buls)

"A cloud overshadowed them." The cloud of God's glory showed his presence with Israel. It was particularly associated with Mount Sinai (see Ex 24:15–16: "the cloud covered it six days"); the tabernacle and temple, where the Lord met his people to have mercy on them (Ex 40:34; 1 Ki 8:10–12); the Lord's rule (Ps 97:2); and the Son of Man's dominion (Dan 7:13). In the New Testament, clouds are involved in Jesus' ascension, rule, and return for judgment (Mt 26:64; Acts 1:9; Rev 1:7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

beloved Son – The Father repeated the announcement from Jesus' Baptism for the disciples. A centurion would affirm this truth at Jesus' crucifixion. (TLSB)

Listen to him! The full sense includes obeying him. When God is involved, the only true hearing is obedient hearing (see Jas 1:22–25). (CSB)

There was a second answer to what Peter said, but this one in audible words from the Father in heaven: "This is My Son, the Beloved, keep on hearing Him." Read Deuteronomy 18:15-19, a clear prophecy concerning Jesus. There He was called The Prophet. Here He is called God's Beloved Son. Both have "keep on hearing Him" in common. Moses and Elijah were merely His spokesmen. But He is the author of all Truth. (Buls)

Peter had not listened when Jesus said (Mark 8:31): "The Son of man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders and the chief-priests and the scribes, and must be killed, and after three days must rise again." Peter objected to that and Jesus rebuked him very sharply. Peter had great pleasure in seeing His Lord transfigured in the presence of glorified saints. But first he must rivet His attention on and learn the meaning of what the Son of man must do in his behalf in suffering, dying and rising again. (Buls)

"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" In Mark's account of Jesus' Baptism, the heavenly message is primarily for Jesus ("He [Jesus] saw heaven being torn open. . . . 'You are my Son . . .'" [Mk 1:10-11, emphasis added]). Here, however, the Father speaks for the benefit of the disciples, and adds the command, "Listen to him." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

"This is my beloved Son; listen to him." Echoing words that began Jesus' ministry at his Baptism (and the Sundays of Epiphany for us), these words give clear witness to Jesus' divine nature, approval of the Father, and wisdom of teaching. Given the context, it cuts off Peter's tent plans and directs Jesus' followers to accept his teaching about his saving work of suffering. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

The command "listen to him," contains an allusion to Deut. 18:15 and serves to identify Jesus as the eschatological Prophet like Moses to whom Israel must listen because he is the final bearer of the word of God. The exhortation has bearing upon all of Jesus' words, but has particular relevance to the new instruction Jesus had been giving to his followers concerning the necessity of his suffering and of their participation in his humiliation. There can be no doubt that Mark intended his congregation in Rome to take this word to heart. (Lane)

The Scripture is how God talks to us so we can hear what he has to say. It is also the motivation for us to do his will. Note the quote below

"Christians cannot expect to resist the values of the unbelieving world if they devote one hour of the week to meditating on God's word and the other 167 hours to providing for the needs of their bodies and enjoying worldly entertainment. We need regular Bible study with fellow Christians. We need to recognize the importance of regular family devotions and personal Bible study. We need to cultivate the habit of remembering and applying the truths of God's word when we are confronted with temptations or faced with decisions in daily life. God's children will find their greatest joy and satisfaction in studying his word and thinking about it day and night." (Psalms I of People's Bible Commentary, Page 42)

It is said that the Sunday morning worship service is where we come to receive God's gifts for the purpose of taking them out to share them with the world. Those gifts are for the life of the world, not for us just to bask in.

9:8 *but Jesus only* - The vision was temporary, but its meaning, explained by the Father, is permanent. "Jesus only" emphasizes that the man Jesus is truly the eternal Son of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Mark uses the adverb "suddenly -- immediately" with high frequency. "They looked around," evidently they expected still to see the heavenly visitors, but not so. Here is a very strong double negative: "absolutely no one any longer." (Buls)

"But they did see etc." Bengel remarks "because He was still about to suffer." And on the words "only Jesus" he says: "Hence it is evident that He is the Son, who is to be heard, not Moses, nor Elijah." There is a great lesson in these words: No matter what the circumstances of life, be they of joy or sorrow, Jesus is always saying: "Lo, I am with you." He is always Immanuel, God incarnate, with us. We must listen to His Word. (Buls)

9:9 *tell no one.* After Jesus' resurrection the disciples were to tell everyone what they had experienced, for Jesus' finished work would have demonstrated his true and full character as the Messiah. (CSB)

Jesus continued the caution of silence. (TLSB)

Son of Man had risen. The heart of Jesus' prophecy was His death and resurrection. His glory did not dismiss the cross. (TLSB)

"Until the Son of Man had risen from the dead." These words frame the entire transfiguration with predictions of Jesus' death and resurrection. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

The first five words of this verse are a genitive absolute denoting time. The text implies that at there was silence on the part of all four. It was a very high mountain. Some time, during the descent, Jesus broke the silence. Note the word order: "to no one what they had seen should they tell." There was one exception, denoting time: "except when the Son of man would rise from the dead." (Buls)

On the use of the term "the Son of man" look at 8:31 again. (Buls)

This prohibition surely included the other nine disciples, waiting at the foot of the mountain. This prohibition implies a somber observation on the carnal nature of human thinking. Mankind wants glory without suffering. There is glory alright, but always preceded by suffering, be that of the Messiah or His followers. Read 8:34-38 again. He suffered in our stead. That we cannot suffer. But, suffering for His sake and for the sake of the Gospel are inevitable. (Buls)

Had the disciples told people what had happened on the mountain, this message would have become distorted. Not only is Jesus bent on saving us but He is also careful to say to us what we need hear at the proper time lest His saving message be lost on us. (Bulls)

Son of Man. Jesus' most common title for himself, used 81 times in the Gospels and never used by anyone but Jesus. In Da 7:13-14 the Son of Man is pictured as a heavenly figure who in the end times is entrusted by God with authority, glory and sovereign power. That Jesus used "Son of Man" as a Messianic title is evident by his use of it (v. 31) in juxtaposition to Peter's use of "Christ" (v. 29). (CSB)