

## When the World Stops

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Mark 9:2-9

### Slide: My Dad and I

I was just barely 20 years old when it happened. I got the phone call in my dorm room from my mother, telling me that it was time to come home. Dad had some lung complications following his last chemo treatment and was falling into a coma. It was time to come. It was time to let him go.

I don't remember who even drove me to the St. Francis Cancer Hospital in Seattle. It was an hour long drive and I don't even remember who drove me, but I didn't have a car, so someone had to. Maybe it was my friend Jayne. Maybe it was my sister Val. I simply don't remember. I was in a fog.

But, I do remember walking into that hospital room, my sisters all there, the hospital chaplain who was a family friend, my mother's face – drawn, weary, and saddened yet also relieved to finally see

Dad ending his struggle. I remember one of my sisters needing a cigarette which was really ironic considering my Dad didn't even have his larynx anymore because of the throat cancer. She stopped smoking the day after Dad passed – for good.

That day was May 7<sup>th</sup>. It was spring. It was finals week at my college where I was attending Pacific Lutheran University. It was my friend's birthday. On that day also, my Dad passed into eternal life. But, something else happened that day to me. The day before, my life was one way. The day after, it was completely altered and not by my choice. The only way I can explain it is that the world stopped.

Perhaps you know what I mean, and if you don't, you will. When an event happens such as the death of a loved one, you walk through those first days as if life isn't life. Everyone else around you goes on planning, seeing friends at Starbucks, going to work and meetings, but you...you stop.

It's like you stop and look around you at the busy world and you see things differently. No one else seems to see it either. They keep going on their merry but your world stops. The world you knew before suddenly gets a reboot – as if no one else notices around you. It's surreal. Your world has stopped. Why can't everyone else see that it has?

But, it's not just a death that can cause the world to stop in your life. An illness, a diagnosis, the loss of a pet, the loss of a relationship, a car crash that changes everything – these things, these events are a part of life as much as we may recoil from them and grasp instead for the joyful, pleasant and satisfying aspects of life.

My Dad passed away 30 years ago, which now seems like a lifetime. But, it changed my world forever. And yet, after time, I grew to understand it, honor it and learn from it. And, it made me more able to see when the world stopped for others around me. That is one of the reasons why I became a pastor, being able to see that, knowing it, observing it and

being with others when their world does indeed stop.

### **Slide: Shiny Jesus**

With this framing in mind, this for me changes how I look at this important pivotal moment in Mark's Gospel, that event when Jesus was suddenly transfigured on a mountain top. A lot of people look at this Transfiguration of our Lord as simply a revealing of who Jesus is, a simple example of Jesus as Lord. This is the big reveal for the disciples to see that Jesus is truly the Son of God, the begotten Son of the Creator of all things.

Shinier than bleached clothing, having a conversation with two prophets who, Scripture hints never really died in the first place – Moses who simply disappeared in the desert, never to see the Promised Land, and Elijah, taken up by a chariot into heaven. These are the biggest of the biggest prophets called by God, but they are nothing compared to the transfigured face of Jesus.

It's no wonder that the disciples were both terrified and awkward all at once. This experience was big. It's just about as big as the Resurrection itself. No one ever saw the face of God and if they did, they were altered forever.

And, yet, this transfiguring of Christ is not merely some magic trick by God to prove that Jesus is truly the Messiah. The Transfiguration of our Lord also isn't really for Jesus's sake, although I'm pretty sure that having a pow-wow with the two prophets was helpful for him in finishing his mission to die for the world. Rather, I'm pretty sure that the Transfiguration of our Lord was for the sake of the disciples.

And, it was for us. For the disciples, this was the pivotal moment. This was the moment the world stopped. For one glorious moment, and even in a moment of terror, the disciples could see God face to face. They had a brief glimpse of what the Resurrection would look like. They had a divine intervention, they saw the

promises of God and heard the voice beckoning that they listen. Coming down the mountain, nothing could ever have been the same. The other disciples, the women who supported the ministry of Jesus, and all the multitudes that followed and pressed in on Jesus, they would likely go on like nothing was different but to Peter, James, and John - to US, the world changed in a blink.

When the world stops is where the holy is. It is the intersection whereby the Transfigured Lord meets us. It is the glimpse of God that we sometimes miss when we are at our lowest, but it's there. It's there if you look, if you look around and deep within past the fast paced life around us. In those places of our lives when the world around seems to go on without us, there God comes to us saying, "Here is my beloved Son - listen to Him." And, it is there, in the face of Jesus, where we meet the brilliant face of compassion and mercy.

We each of us live in this world with something or other that we wish were different. Perhaps it's illness. Perhaps it's self-image, self-absorption, addiction, or apathy. Maybe you are sitting here today suffering from something that is secret. Maybe you are not. Whether it feels like the world around you goes by or you are spending so much time caught up in your own busy lives that you can't notice what's around you.

Either way, the Transfiguration of Jesus is a reminder for us that there is suffering in this world for which Jesus came to die. As he entered the fray as a human one despite his glory, so too are we to have compassion for the neighbor who suffers; and in turn, remember that Christ came to suffer with you when you do.

**Slide: My Prayer Concern is...**

In your bulletin today, there is a little piece of paper that says "My prayer concern is..." Each of you have something in your life for which you wish God would be

present for you or for a loved one, maybe even the world if you are concerned about others across the globe. Remember today that for someone else at this moment, the world has felt like it has stopped. For someone else, they need the bright glory of our Beautiful Savior to shed light upon them, and it may be you who God is calling to bring that to them. Perhaps you or they need a prayer for the light of Christ to be with them.

I ask you to take a moment now and write your prayer concern down. You will put it in the basket during the offering. At the end of the worship service, as you go out today, please take a prayer request with you from the basket and pray for that person or situation that is on that paper this week. Pray that the brilliant face of Christ will come into the life of the person who requested that prayer.

**Slide: Shiny Jesus**

It is time to enter into the time called Lent. This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, the one day each year we admit

our mortality and our need for God. It is also Valentine's Day. Maybe that's a paradox. Or, maybe it's not. The love of God tore into this world and shone on a mountain top to reveal his love for you, ashes to ashes and dust to dust, so that even when the world stops, you may know the endless joy that is won in victory, that of our Beautiful Savior, Jesus Christ. My prayer for you this day is that even when the world around you seems to cease that you may see the holy face to face. Amen.