

The Glory of Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] well some of you will know that earlier on this year i was invited over to the united states to north carolina to a church there to tell them about our church christ church glasgow and it was a great privilege and when i was over there the host family that i was staying with didn't see much of me because i was tired and there were lots of meetings back to back but one night when i was there the the guy who was my host had some car racing on on the tv and um i'd never seen this before i said to him what is this and he said oh it's nascar racing i thought okay seems lots of sponsors big money big bucks fast cars and all the rest of it so it was exciting for all of two minutes and then i fell asleep on the sofa and that was my experience of nascar it wasn't live it was on tv but that was probably enough anyway it did remind me of a movie clip that i'd once seen i'm not recommending the movie at all don't watch it but it's called talladega nights and in it there's a scene where the actor will ferrell who is a nascar driver he is seeing grace with his family at the dinner table just before a meal and he prays by saying dear lord baby jesus we thank you so much and he keeps saying the phrase dear lord baby jesus we thank you we thank you and then his wife interrupts him and she says hey you know sweetie jesus did grow up you don't always have to call him baby and then he says well i like the christmas jesus the best i like the baby version best and then everybody at the table sees the version of jesus that they like best or how they like to picture or imagine jesus and the scene basically highlights that people do like to have their own image of jesus their own picture of jesus that they form and their imagination that probably comes from the past from history from family experience from what they were taught at school or church or so on a picture of jesus in their heads but of course the problem is that we can imagine a jesus that is nothing like the real jesus as he's revealed to us in the bible and so when we come to mark's gospel it is the real jesus the true jesus that he wants to introduce us to and so at the beginning of his gospel mark chapter 1 and verse 1 mark says that he jesus is the son of god and that's why the first half of the gospel focuses on the identity of jesus who he is and then it reaches a climax which is where we stopped last time in mark chapter 8 verse 29 when peter one of the disciples confesses you are the christ you are the messiah and then the second half of mark's gospel focuses on jesus why he came his mission and his purpose because straight after peter says you are the christ jesus then explains that he must suffer and be killed and so the story of jesus moves from chapter 9 onwards towards jesus death on a cross and that's what jesus wanted his disciples to understand that the cross was the way for jesus jesus was heading to his death but the cross or the way of the cross is also the way for everybody who will follow jesus because just before the passage that we read this afternoon there in chapter 8 34 we read this jesus says whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me and so unless we see who jesus is and why jesus came then we will never understand what it means to follow him and that's why the transfiguration which is our bible reading for

today the transfiguration of jesus comes at this turning point in the gospel of mark because the glory of jesus is revealed to these three disciples peter james and john and it is really to prepare them to help them see jesus is going to the cross that's his way and to follow jesus will mean a way of suffering for them too and as readers today we are able to look on because if we are going to take up our cross and follow jesus then we need to see who jesus really is and that's what the transfiguration teaches us and so three things this afternoon first of all we need to see his glory we need to listen to him and we need to live his way see his glory listen to him and live his way so see his glory first of all verse two says after six days jesus took peter james and john with him and led them up a high mountain where they were all alone there he was transfigured before them so the reference to the time six days after six days probably points back to peter's confession of jesus as the christ and then also jesus's first prediction of his death it's there in chapter 8 verse 31 and afterwards jesus then speaks about coming in his father's glory and then he predicts that some would see the kingdom of god come with power in chapter 9 verse 1 and so the kingdom of god coming in power is what peter james and john in part see in the transfiguration of jesus because it would help them better understand jesus his purpose in coming and also the reality of his kingdom now i always thought that jesus took peter james and john up on the high mountain and was transfigured before them because they were the closest disciples to jesus but the more i read mark's gospel i think it's because they're the ones who actually struggled most to understand who jesus is why jesus came and what it means to follow him because peter had just refused to accept that jesus must die and then a bit later james and john in chapter 10 they demand the best seats next to jesus in glory they want to sit on his right and on his left and so none of them had grasped that the way of jesus is the way of the cross that it would be suffering before glory all they wanted was the glory without the suffering and so for jesus and for them and for any who will follow jesus we need to know that following jesus involves suffering before glory and that's why these three disciples needed to catch a glimpse of jesus with the veil pulled back as it were in order to properly follow him and so we read his clothes became dazzling white whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them and there appeared before them elijah and moises who were talking with jesus so when jesus is transfigured before them his appearance changes his clothes become dazzling white and so this was an experience like no other for peter james and john as the glory of jesus is revealed to them they saw jesus for who he truly is as the son of god now it's no accident that all of this took place on the top of a mountain because throughout the bible you may know that god often reveals himself to people on the top of mountains where heaven comes to earth as it were in fact the transfiguration of jesus echoes god's revelation to moises in the old testament up another mountain mount sinai and so we can read about this back in exodus chapters 19 24 and 34 where

there are so many parallels from how god revealed himself to moises on that mountain to how jesus revealed himself to these three disciples on this mountain and so in exodus god called moises up on the mountain to see him and here jesus takes peter james and john up another mountain to see him and mount sinai god came down in a cloud and he spoke to moises out of the cloud here again a cloud overshadows them and god speaks out of it but there's a difference because for moises and for the israelites the glory of the lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain so moises couldn't see god's glory and live if he saw it he would die but here it's different because peter james and john get to see the glory of god emanate from jesus and so this is full of significance and how did it happen well it happened mark simply states that jesus was transfigured before them the original word for transfigured in the greek is where we get our word metamorphosis from which is if you're a scientist you know what that means it means basically a change takes place or a transformation and so what's happening here is that jesus who has always been fully god and always will be fully god well his appearance changes before their eyes and so while moises was only able to see enough to reflect the glory of god jesus displays the glory of god and so until now the disciples had seen jesus act like god but look like a normal bloke but here it is as if the veil is pulled back and they get to see the breathtaking glory of god on display before their eyes and it's no coincidence that elijah and moises show up because they'd been dead a long time and yet here they are talking with jesus both were men who'd met god on a mountain we've already mentioned moises but elijah also met with god in fact he met with god on the same mountain mount horeb mount sinai which is the same place and so there's elijah and there's moises these old testament heroes both on top of the mountain both had previous experiences of god on a mountain moises gave the law elijah was the great prophet in the old testament david had a brilliant series looking at elijah these past few weeks and here they were moises and elijah probably representing the law and the prophets and they're here to bear witness to jesus to show that jesus is superior to them because jesus is the one that they were preparing the way for jesus is the one who fulfills the old testament scriptures he's the christ he's the messiah he's god's chosen king and so peter james and john were up there to see the awesome son of god in all his glory and although we weren't there obviously we are supposed to see that too because if the glory of jesus has been revealed in order for us to understand who he is then we shouldn't get him wrong and yet so many people today do get jesus wrong and because they get jesus wrong they too easily turn away from jesus simply dismissing him thinking he is an irrelevance to their lives and yet if he is the king of glory who has come and who will come again then we need to deal with jesus so that's the first point we need to see his glory the second point is we need to listen to him

so here is peter and he has a bright idea up on the mountain verse 5 peter said to jesus rabbi it is good for us to be here let us put up three shelters one for you one for moises and one for elijah he did not know what to say they were so frightened it's often said that basically there are two kinds of speakers there are those who've got something to say and there are those who've got to say something and we know which kind peter was and so peter is here with the three vips jesus in all his glory moises and elijah up on the mountain and so peter was probably thinking the kingdom has already come that is the christ god's chosen king the messiah is here and so if he is here let's set up camp and yet he doesn't understand the commentators pick up that the word translated tents or shelters here is actually the greek word for tabernacle and way back in the old testament in the story of the exodus god commanded his people to make a tabernacle a shelter a tent and that play that tent was to be the place where god's presence would be with his people and now that jesus has come what the transfiguration is saying that tabernacles and tents and temples are no longer needed because god's dwelling with his people is in jesus and it's emphasized with god's voice coming from the cloud verse 7 then a cloud appeared and covered them and a voice came from the cloud this is my son whom i love listen to him so this cloud somehow envelops them and it's a symbol of god's presence and so they not only see the glory of jesus but they experience they feel the very presence of god and that's when the voice speaks this is my son whom i love listen to him and it's an echo of the voice that came from heaven when jesus was baptized so when god spoke to jesus assuring him that he was his beloved son mark 1 verse 11 he said you are my son whom i love with you i am well pleased but here god speaks to the three disciples commanding them to listen to his son jesus and so god doesn't just confirm the identity of jesus but he demands that jesus be listened to god commands them to listen to jesus and so the point of the transfiguration is not only for them to see his glory but to listen to his voice now of course they had to listen to everything that jesus said but this glimpse of his glory at this particular point means that they have to pay particular attention to what jesus says about his suffering and death that's what they really need to listen to because they still hadn't grasped that the christ god's chosen king the messiah must suffer and die and that is the way of the cross for jesus and so the disciples had to grasp what following jesus meant if they were going to do it but then this awesome experience comes to an end verse eight suddenly when they looked around they no longer saw anyone with them except jesus and so the sight of jesus and the very real presence of god with them the sound of his voice stopped and these three men were left standing all alone with jesus because they needed to see jesus in all his glory in order to listen to his voice they needed to see

jesus for who he truly is as the son of god so that they would listen to him and it's all saying that they need to listen to jesus more than they need to listen to moises and elijah because you notice these two old testament heroes were also there what were they there to do they were there to listen to jesus as well and so the whole scene is set up to say that jesus is greater greater than moises greater than elijah and so jesus must be listened to above every other voice in this world because jesus is supreme and he is sufficient and so in jesus these disciples needed to learn that jesus was everything that they needed and in jesus we too have everything that we need it's amazing today isn't it that so many people are on some kind of spiritual search looking for some kind of spiritual experience that they hope will give them some kind of meaning to life or even folks who look to god to do something to convince them that god is in fact real i would just believe if god were to come and display his glory right before my eyes and he's laying cross if i saw that then of course i would believe but here in the transfiguration of jesus as his glory is revealed to peter and james and john we too are able to understand who jesus is and so it is his voice above every other voice that we must listen to god himself speaks to confirm jesus's identity and yet still many today continue to walk past the king of glory as if he meant nothing that he isn't even worth listening to and many would just prefer to imagine a jesus who is not even worthy of our time let alone our worship and so if you're here today and you wouldn't call yourself a christian even if you would call yourself a christian and you've been christian a christian for years we all need to be careful that we don't dismiss the voice of jesus we each need to listen to him his voice in our lives in our ears in our hearts must be louder than all the voices in this world that will tell us what to do and how to live if jesus is the king of glory if jesus has all authority then he is the one that we listen to above anyone else and anything else he was revealed in the transfiguration for us as we look on so that we will listen to him that's our second point see his glory listen to him and then thirdly and finally live his way what is the way of jesus the way of jesus is suffering before glory and that's the context of the transfiguration so if you look down just before the reading we had chapter 8 jesus gives the first prediction of his death and resurrection and then immediately after the transfiguration jesus again speaks about his death and resurrection so verse 9 as they were coming down the mountain jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the son of man had risen from the dead they kept the matter to themselves discussing what rising from the dead meant so jesus was indicating that the transfiguration would only make sense in the light of his death and resurrection i mean who would believe if peter james and john told people what they saw nobody would believe but jesus is saying here keep quiet don't tell anyone because they still didn't understand who jesus is the christ god's chosen king the messiah and one who had to suffer and die on a cross and so

[20 : 21] that didn't really fit their narrative the king of glory for them was one who conquered and reigned and ruled and that would come but suffering would come before glory and so that's why they were confused about jesus talking about rising from the dead because if there was to be a resurrection they couldn't understand how because they believed that yes there would be a resurrection but it would come at the end of time and yet that's not what jesus is talking about here he's talking about his own resurrection from his impending death and so they ask jesus a question they ask him why do the teachers of the law say that elijah must come first and what they're thinking about is a prophecy in the book of malachi that says this malachi chapter 4 verse 5 it says see i will send you the prophet elijah before the great and dreadful day of the lord comes and so they thought elijah would come before the end before the day of the lord and hadn't they just seen elijah up in that mountain they had and then they heard jesus talking about rising from the dead well they had and so surely they are thinking the day of the lord must be near and so why is jesus talking about his death and so jesus responds jesus replied verse 12 to be sure elijah does come first and restores all things why then is it written that the son of man must suffer much and be rejected but i tell you elijah has come and they have done to him everything they wished just as it is written about him so jesus said elijah has already come why because jesus sees malachi's prophecy as being fulfilled in john the baptist so john the baptist is the elijah that jesus is talking about so john the baptist has come but john the baptist is also gone and so when jesus says they did to him everything they wished he's surely referring to john the baptist being beheaded at the hands of king herod and so he's saying just as john the baptist suffered and died then jesus says the son of man must suffer much and be rejected so again jesus is explicitly telling these three disciples that he must suffer and die that he is the suffering servant that isaiah speaks of so yes glory will come but it's suffering before glory jesus wants his followers to know the way to glory is along the road of suffering for jesus for elijah for john the baptist for peter for james for john for anyone who will follow jesus christ suffering before glory is the deal that's why jesus doesn't bother putting it in the small print he's up front about it he repeats it he even lived it out himself and so if suffering came before glory for jesus the beloved son of god if we are going to follow jesus why would we expect a road with no suffering and that's why the disciples catch this glimpse of the glory of jesus on the mountain seeing his glory being in the presence of god and hearing god's voice would strengthen them for everything that would happen to them for all the suffering that they would have to endure after jesus was taken from them because just as jesus was moving towards his suffering and death so they would face the same and that's why they needed to see jesus in all of his glory i wonder if you remember looking through

a microscope when you were younger and looking at something that you'd seen you knew what it was but when you look through the microscope you see it in a way that you've never seen it before maybe a leaf or an insect human hair bacteria something and then you look at it it's the same substance but you get a much fuller perspective helping you better understand what it's really like especially bacteria when you see it moving around under the microscope and so the purpose of the transfiguration for peter james and john is the very same they need to see jesus in full perspective in technicolor as it were in all his glory so they grasp so they understand his true identity so they know him for who he is because this king of glory will be crucified on a cross and so it was to prepare them to follow jesus along that same path through suffering towards glory and so that is the perspective on jesus that we can't afford to miss because it will help us when suffering comes and suffering will come into our lives if it isn't there already and this vision of jesus will help us when life is hard because life is hard it isn't that you become a christian and life is all of a sudden easy it is tough and it will help us when things don't make sense so we don't understand why our circumstances are the way they are or why people treat us in the way that they treat us we need to see jesus for who he is and in seeing him for who he is we'll better be able to follow him and so as we close the disciples get a remarkable breathtaking awe-inspiring perspective on jesus and then they went up the mountain with the ordinary looking jesus and then they come down having seen the king of glory of course jesus hadn't changed jesus has always been the eternal son of god even when he lived on earth as a man but as his glory broke through momentarily the disciples could see his majesty and that's why the transfiguration isn't the only amazing thing to see here of course it's amazing that jesus the son of god should reveal his glory on top of a mountain but what is even more amazing is that he came down from that mountain to go to a cross to die for your sin and mine and so in the transfiguration we see jesus revealed in all his glory on the cross it was shame here his clothes are dazzling white on the cross they were ripped off here he is flanked by two of israel's heroes moises and elijah on the cross by two common criminals here there's a cloud with the presence of god covering them on the cross the presence of god was absent from jesus as he hung in darkness taking god's judgment for our sins here the transfiguration god declares this is my son whom i love on the cross jesus cries out my god my god why have you forsaken me can you see that's what jesus was prepared to endure for you and so the transfiguration shows us who it was who came to die it was the glorious son of god who laid down his life willingly for sinners like us and so we are supposed to look and to see who died so that we will live his way

and listen to him because if jesus is the one who is prepared to go all this way for you then why would you not want to follow him yes the road is a road of suffering but it does lead to glory and jesus shows us this through his transfiguration his death his resurrection that the glory will come of that we can be sure it is a certain hope and so that's why we can trust to jesus with our lives whatever we face even death and so do you trust jesus today do you see him for who he really is not as you imagine him to be or how you thought he was because of what you've been told in the past but do you see him for who he is for who he reveals himself to be isn't he a king worthy of our trust worthy of our love of our affection and of our devotion and so when he calls us to follow him he calls us because he has gone that way himself through suffering and into glory and so everything in this life even if it's tough it will in the end actually be worth it because as those who follow jesus we are promised that we will go and dwell in god's presence forever that's the glory that's what's coming suffering before glory for jesus and for all who will follow him you