

## Who Is This Jesus?

Mark 9:2-13

Sometimes you can see an event, but you don't see *through* that event. Sometimes something happens, and you see what has happened very factually, but you don't see *through* it – you don't see the bigger picture of what is *really* going on.

Let me give you a little example. Almost 20 years ago now I went with my wife, Sue, and our 2 daughters, and some people from our church on a mission trip. We went to a very poor Mayan village in rural Guatemala. I vividly remember how the people's houses were just shacks of tree branches with rusted metal sheets nailed on for shade. The floors were dirt. There was no sewer system and little streams of foul green water ran through the dirt from homes and along the sides of streets. I remember the bronze faces of the Mayan people, the smiles, the sight of the kids playing together even though they had absolutely no toys. When I arrived back home in the U.S., then I began to see *through* that week. I felt the impact, the meaning. Their poverty was far worse than anything people experience here in the States. But without possessions they were happy, even joyful. Their families were loving. And they loved their Savior, Jesus very much. In the end I came to see our many, many possessions, and our wants, and our worries about our lives in a new light. How unimportant possessions and most of our cares really are.

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Here's another example. In March, six years ago, I first became a grandfather with the birth of our first granddaughter. I remember the details of that day clearly. Driving downtown to Rainbow Babies to see my daughter and meet my granddaughter. I recall holding the tiny little baby in my arms the first time, so light, so small, so fragile, wrapped in a warm pink blanket, a pink stocking cap on her head to keep her warm; counting 10 little

fingers; marveling at eyebrows and eyelashes all in their proper places. Amazed that God could put together a little human body so perfectly. Fast forward a year I began to see *through* this grandparenting experience when I felt her love back to me. That was something I didn't expect or understand at first.

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Peter, James and John experienced an *incredible* event. They were disciples, followers of Jesus. Jesus led them up on a mountain alone with Him. Everything was still and quiet -- only the sound of the wind in the trees, the birds calling from the distance, the quiet chit chat between companions.

Then suddenly the stillness was shattered. Jesus ***"was transfigured before them, and His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them."*** *Mark 9:2b-3* They got a glimpse of Jesus' heavenly glory, His purity, His holiness. He was transfigured. He was metamorphosized – to borrow a word from an ugly caterpillar changing into a beautiful butterfly. His "divinity" literally "peaked through."

Next, ***"...There appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. .... And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is My beloved Son; listen to Him.'"***  
*Mark 9: 4,7*

Elijah was the greatest prophet. Moses up on the mountain received the Law from God in a scene very similar to this. These two great men talk with Jesus like old friends meeting once again.

Then the voice from the cloud. It was just like the voice 3 years earlier at Jesus' baptism. The Heavenly Father proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son."

Peter didn't know what to do so he offered to build 3 tents and stay there.

Then, as quick as it started it was over. Mark records, ***"And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, He [Jesus] charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man***

***had risen from the dead.*** Mark 9:9 “Risen from the dead” – Jesus brought that up again. Why? What could that mean?

Jesus, however, had told His disciples plainly what this all signifies. Mark tells us: ***“After six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.”*** Mark 9:2 “After six days,” says Mark. Six days after what?

Well, 6 days earlier Peter had just proclaimed, ***“You are the Christ.”*** Mark 8:29 Jesus said, “Yup, You’re right!” But the issue of how Jesus would be the Savior was yet to be answered. So, Jesus really threw a curve ball at His disciples. Mark tells us: ***<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: “The Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. He will be put to death, but three days later he will rise to life.” <sup>32</sup> He made this very clear to them. So Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup> But Jesus turned around, looked at his disciples, and rebuked Peter. “Get away from me, Satan,” he said. “Your thoughts don’t come from God but from human nature!”*** Mark 8:31-33 *GOOD NEWS Translation* That was the first time told the disciples that He was going to die and rise again. Peter remembered the words – He saw, but Pete sure didn’t get what Jesus meant – He didn’t see *through*. So much so that Peter *rebuked* Jesus, and Jesus called him “Satan” for his trying to stop God’s plan.

Peter, James and John, saw, but what’s it all about? They just couldn’t see *through*. Mark tells us in the next verse, ***“So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean.”*** Mark 9:10 “What does this mean?” they wondered -- dying, crucifixion, rising again. Jesus would speak about this again several more times. And even when it was actually happening before their very eyes, even when they witnessed Jesus betrayed, beaten, whipped, contemned, and nailed up on a cross they wondered. They didn’t understand.

Even on Easter morning when Jesus rose from the dead, Mark tells us that they left the tomb confused and afraid. We are

left in a cliff-hanger. They see it, but don't get what's going on, what it all means.

These disciples, as well as every believer in Jesus since, they would need to know again and again who this Jesus is, who this Messiah is. And they, like us, would be called to trust Him. But that meaning, the significance of it they realize later.

It would not be until years had passed when Peter would write in his own hand, ***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...”*** 1 Peter 1:3-4

What's it all add up to? God the Father has given YOU new life, a living hope – it's about hope. Hope based on Jesus' resurrection – alive. A living hope – certain, sure. And its about heaven guaranteed for you – imperishable and unfading – its still to come but definite!

Peter came to understand that all this – these amazing everlasting gifts – they are his – and yours-- because of the kind of Messiah, the kind of Savior Jesus is. He is pure, innocent, holy, and true God. He's that kind of Savior. Peter never forgot that day on the mountain seeing Jesus in His glory. And that's the One who went to the cross, and rose again, for *you*.

Friends, you and I can know the details. We can see. So often it's hard for us to see *through* -- to truly fathom the depth to which God must go to forgive our sin. We miss what it means that we are given new life, hope, and eternal life.

That was the challenge of a certain Professor of Religion named Dr. Christianson who taught at a small college in the Western United States. Christianson taught the survey course in Christianity at this college. Every student was required to take this course regardless of their major. Although Professor Christianson tried hard to communicate the uniqueness, the *meaning*, of the gospel in his class, he found that most of his students looked upon the course as nothing but required drudgery. They learned

and could regurgitate the facts for the exam, but couldn't see *through*.

One year though, Professor Christianson had a special student in class named Steve. Steve was only a freshman, but he was also the best student in the class, the only one with a perfect grade. And Steve was fit, athletic. Even as a freshman, Steve was the starting center on the football team.

So, this year, Christianson had an idea. This year, with this student, maybe he could get his class to think about what Christ really did for the world, and for them. So, he asked Steve one day after class, "How many pushups can you do?"

Steve said, "I do about 200 every night."

"200? That's pretty good, Steve," Do you think you could do 300?"

Steve replied, "Well, I don't know. I've never done 300 at a time."

"You don't have to do them all at once." said Dr. Christianson. "Can you do 300 in sets of 10 in class on Friday?"

Steve said, "Well... I... yeah, I can do it."

Dr. Christianson said, "Good! Let me explain what I have in mind for you to do this Friday."

Friday came and Steve got to class early and sat in the front of the room. When class started, the professor pulled out a big box of donuts. These weren't the normal kind of donuts, they were the extra fancy big kind with cream centers and frosting swirls.

Everyone was pretty excited about it. It was Friday, the last class of the day, and they were going to get an early start on the weekend with this donut treat in religion class.

Dr. Christianson went to the first girl in the first row and asked, "Cynthia, do you want to have one of these donuts?"

Cynthia said, "Yes."

Dr. Christianson turned to Steve and asked, "Steve, would you do ten pushups so that Cynthia can have a donut?"

"Sure." Steve jumped down from his desk to do a quick ten then he got right back in his seat. Dr. Christianson put a donut on Cynthia's desk.

Then the professor went to Joe, the next person, and asked, "Joe, do you want a donut?"

Joe said, "Yes."

Dr. Christianson said, "Steve, would you do ten pushups so Joe can have a donut?" Steve did ten, Joe got the donut. And so it went, down the first aisle and the next, Steve doing ten pushups for every person before they got their donut.

Then Dr. Christiansen came to Scott. Now, Scott was also an athlete. When Professor Christiansen asked if he wanted a donut, Scott replied, "Sure, but can I do my own pushups?"

Christianson said, "No, Steve has to do them."

Then Scott said, "Well, then I don't want one."

Dr. Christianson shrugged and then turned to Steve and asked, "Steve, would you do ten pushups so Scott can have a donut he doesn't want?" With perfect obedience Steve started to do ten pushups.

Scott protested, "Hey! I said I didn't want one!"

The professor said, "Look, this is my classroom, my class, my desks, and these are my donuts. Just leave it on the desk if you don't want it." Steve did 10. The professor put a donut on Scott's desk and moved on.

Now by this time, Steve had begun to slow down a little. He stayed on the floor between sets because he was exerting so much effort. You could start to see beads of sweat on his brow. Dr. Christianson started down the third row and now the students were beginning to get a little angry.

When Christianson asked Jenny if she wanted a donut, she sternly said, "No."

Christianson turned to Steve, "Steve, would you do ten more pushups so Jenny can have a donut that she doesn't want?" Steve did ten. He put a donut on her desk.

By now, a growing sense of uneasiness filled the room. The students were beginning to say "No" and there were all these uneaten donuts on the desks. The pushups were getting harder and harder even for Steve. He began to really struggle, his arms and brow were red from the exertion, sweat was pouring down his face -- all so each student could receive a donut and be a part of the party. Dr. Christiansen went on, row by row, person by person. No one would be left out.

Just then, the bell rang. Dr. Christianson told all of the students to stay in their seats. Others were now gazing into the classroom from the hall, watching Steve do pushups and people get donuts. Some of them even tried to get in.

One of the students, Jason said, "Hey, can I come in and see what's going on?" And all the students yelled, "No! Don't come in! Stay out!"

But Steve lifted his head off the floor and said, "No, let him come in."

Professor Christianson said, "Now, you realize that if Jason comes in you will have to do ten pushups for him too?"

Steve said, "Yes, let him come in." Steve did 10, Jason, a bit bewildered, got his doughnut.

This went on until every student and even the visitors received the "blessings of Steve's labor." Ten perfect pushups for each person, no excuses, no fudging, no best efforts. It was perfect. As the students watched, Steve did his best for them. His arms were shaking, his back swayed, his waist barely cleared the floor, but 10 perfect pushups were done for each. The room was silent; there wasn't even a dry eye now to be found.

Finally, the professor came to the last student, Susan. "Susan, do you want a donut?"

Susan, with tears flowing down her face, began to cry. "Dr. Christianson, why can't I help him?"

Christianson said, with tears of his own, "No, Steve has to do it alone. I have given him this task and he is in charge of seeing

that everyone has an opportunity for a donut whether they want it or not." Steve did 10, Susan got her doughnut.

As Steve very slowly finished his last pushup, having done 350 pushups so that each person might have the gift that Professor Christiansen wanted them to have, his arms buckled beneath him and he fell to the floor.

With that, Professor Christiansen spoke one last time. "When I decided to have a party this last day of class, I looked at my grade book. Steve, here is the only student with a perfect grade. Everyone else has failed a test, skipped a class, or offered me inferior work. Steve told me that in football practice, when a player messes up, he must do pushups. So, I told Steve that only he deserved a donut party and that all of you owed pushups that must be done. None of you could come to my party unless Steve paid the price by doing your pushups for you. He and I made a deal for your benefit. Steve would do 10 so you could be here.

You need a Steve. You have a Steve. He is Jesus. Jesus is the only one qualified to pay the price for you. His transfiguration shows you clearly who He is. He is true God, pure, holy, innocent, perfect. He is everlasting. He has met all the Father's demands 100%, and did it for you.

You can see and know the facts about what Jesus did. Yet, see *through*. See who IS this Jesus. See what His going to the cross means *for YOU* -- new life, a living hope, heaven--imperishable and unfading, guaranteed for you. Amen.