

Back to the Future

Luke 9:28-36

When I tell the story of how my family and I escaped from Cuba, many people ask me how we dared to take such an adventure. For many, it is amazing how the events took place. Many people wonder where we got such courage and strength to take such an important step in our lives.

I usually don't say this, but before I made the decision to escape God showed me my future. I could visualize arriving in the United States safe and sound. The mental picture I had was not mere wishful thinking, because it came along with a deep sense of peace. I knew it was God talking to me. This is why we had the courage to undertake such a trip. I had the privilege of seeing a preview of what God had in store for me.

God showed me His good plans. The Lord shared with me His thoughts of peace. For a few seconds, I could see the great blessings of a successful journey. And, God made me understand that the vision was only a small bite. The best was yet to come.

In faith, I received the promise that God has great things for me; things that “*no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human mind has conceived*” (**1 Corinthians 2:9**). God gave me no details (nothing was said about being taken hostage by the cartel, or being left with only \$50 to support my wife, my oldest son, and myself for an entire month). God just told me, “I got your back covered.” I decided to believe in the promises and faithfulness of the Lord and I ventured in what many would call a crazy and dangerous journey. It all started with the trailer, showing the end of the adventure that was just unfolding.

What would happen if God showed you a preview of the end of your own movie? What would you do if in that trailer you see that everything will be fine, that you already have a good future, and it is guaranteed? Would you live more confidently? What would be your reaction if, for a few seconds, you see that, no matter the circumstances, at the end of the path there are tons of blessings waiting for you? What would you do? Would you be more positive? Would you doubt less? Would you take more risks?

Jesus wanted to encourage his disciples. The Lord also wanted to show them a glimpse of his glory. It was approaching the moment of facing the cross when Jesus decided to give a preview of the future to some of his disciples.

The Master took his closest followers (*Peter, James and John*) and led them to a hill to pray. The last thing they imagined was that, for a few minutes, they were to witness part of the future. They would know the outcome of their lives. While they were at the top of the hill, something supernatural happened. The glory of God was revealed with glorious splendor.

It's fascinating how God-self is revealed most of the time in high places, in mountains. At Mount Horeb, God revealed his glory to Moses for the first time and called him to be his servant. It was

on Mount Sinai where God gave the law to Moses. It was on a mountain where Moses stood with arms raised and God gave victory to the Hebrew people. It was on a mountain where Jesus preached his first sermon, “The Beatitudes.” It was on a mountain where the Father manifested the glory of Jesus to his disciples and said, “Remain in the faith, no matter what happens.” It was on a hill where Jesus was crucified for our redemption. It was on a mountain where Jesus gave us the mission to make disciples of all nations and ascended to the Father. Many of the *transcendental* moments that mark the biblical account took place at the top of a mountain.

Jesus took his closest friends up to the mountain. Most likely he wanted his disciples to see from above what they were about to face. This world that we think is huge becomes tiny when we look at it from high places.

I am absolutely convinced that Jesus wanted his disciples to understand and look at things from another point of view, from another angle, from another perspective. Jesus took his disciples up to the mountain to teach them that where his glory is revealed problems become “bonsais.” It is at the top, near to his glory where God gives us the chance to see that we are more than conquerors.

For a long time, I didn’t grasp the point of the transfiguration. I did not understand the purpose, much less the meaning of Jesus transfiguring in front of some of his disciples. If I ask you today, *what is the message of the transfiguration?* What would your answer be?

For many years, I didn’t see the goal of the event. Many people may believe, as I thought, that the transfiguration was just a magic trick as good as those of David Copperfield. But, what happened at the transfiguration was not a trick to amaze an audience. For us to understand the meaning of this event we need to identify the purpose of the meeting of Moses and Elijah with Jesus. The Bible provides us with the meaning of this meeting. The Scripture says,

*Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. **They** appeared in glory and **were speaking of his departure**, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. **Luke 9:30-31***

NRSV

Moses and Elijah came to meet Jesus to give him a pep talk, to remind him that God had given him victory already. You may be thinking, “why would Jesus need a pep talk?”. Let me remind you that Jesus was fully human as well as fully divine, and in his humanness Jesus needed reassurance.

Things were about to get really ugly and the Master needed some encouragement. I imagined Moses and Elijah saying things like, “*Jesus, the road ahead is really bumpy but don’t lose heart, you are more than a conqueror because God has given you victory. The Father knows how difficult your mission is, but he also knows you are an overcomer and he has prepared a big celebration in your honor. We have come to show you the outfit that has been chosen for you to wear when you enter in your glory.*”

The transfiguration contains a message of hope for difficult times. It imparts a message that God holds our future and everything will be fine despite the circumstances. It's a message that the glory of God is more than secure for those who wait in the Lord. It is a message that God's plans for us are awe-inspiring, and there is nothing else that could be better. The Father was bringing Jesus **BACK TO THE FUTURE** to show him once again the eternal glory that he would enjoy after the suffering.

This is a message for us today. Jesus was transfigured before some of his disciples to give them confidence and encouragement. As disciples of the Master, God has offered us a preview, the trailer of what is in store for each of us. Today Jesus is personally telling us, "Do not worry about what you face, and do not be discouraged. Despite the difficulties along the way, those who dare to walk through the valley will see my glory. Do not fear anything, because the way I look you will look, my bright garment and my shiny face reflect the kind of future I have for you." That is the point of the transfiguration. God has a bright future for those who obey, believe and trust in him.

Now, imagine your reaction to an experience like this. Would you respond like Peter? "*Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings...*" Let me tell you, the mountain is not a place to isolate; it is the place of meeting with God. It is the place to arm ourselves with faith. It is the place where God shows us part of the future to help us live the present fully. It's where our cup is filled so we can give and be our best as we go through the valley.

Jesus knows that he must return to the valley to complete his mission. You cannot isolate yourself in the mountain. You have to complete your God-given mission, and that takes place in the valley. It is in the valley where the daily and concrete life of men develops with all its hardships and limitations, with all its successes and failures, with all its materialism and idolatry, with all its violence and brutality.

In the valley, life lives together with death, health with disease, truth with lies, and war with peace. The valley can produce pessimism because of the amount of problems we have to deal with, but God wants us to know that "*even though we walk through the darkest valley we have nothing to fear.*"

Yahweh holds us in his hands, and he has a bright future for us. God wants you to know that he is in your present as well as in your future. So, do not let the bumps in the road ruin your life. Press on and fight the good fight. God is telling you, "you are mine and for that reason you are an overcomer."

Jesus pronounced the following words through the prophetic vision he gave John. "***All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine.***" **Revelation 3:5 NLT**

Now, when we know that our future is guaranteed and is extremely good we can make the mistake of not enjoying the present. We can become anxious. We must be careful not to ignore our present because we already saw our future. When God lets us see our future and He gets our attention with a vision, He wants us to learn that we must enjoy what we have in the present. The Lord wants us to learn that we have to do something of value every minute of our lives as a response to the Grace that has been invested in us.

Visionary people may have glimpsed the future, but they can make the mistake of not blessing their present. God will show you the future to let you know that He already planned what is coming, and that nothing and nobody can change it. The best is yet to come.

In summary, the transfiguration is a message of hope and encouragement. It is the message that tells us that despite danger and uncertainty, we can face tomorrow because He lives and holds our future.

What are your fears? What do we want to avoid because it appears to be very dangerous, demanding, or uncertain? When our strengths are insufficient, we have to bring ourselves **BACK TO THE FUTURE**, climb to the top of the mountain to witness the power of God, to see a glimpse of the best future ever dreamed. In this way, we can reconnect with God's vision for our lives and live fully without fear.