



*To Know Christ . . .
and to Make Him Known*

Wilmington, North Carolina
Dr. Mark E. Gaskins, *Senior Pastor*
The Lord's Day, March 3, 2019

www.templebaptist.us
(910) 763-3351
© 2018

Glimpses of His Glory Luke 9:28-36

You've probably seen it around Christmas time, and probably more than once. The made-for-TV Christmas movie "Borrowed Hearts" came out in 1997, and has played over and over on TV around Christmas since then.

It's a heart-warming story in which things simply are not as they appear to be. Sam Field is the owner of a thriving manufacturing company, and he's trying to strike a deal to sell his company to a wealthy Mexican businessman, Señor Javier Del Campo.

Now Sam is single, but Señor Del Campo considers family to be very important. So Sam, at the urging of his associate, Dave Hebert, hires one of his employees, Kathleen Russell (who is divorced) and her daughter Zoey to play his wife and child during Del Campo's visit. As I said, things in this story aren't as they seem. But this is only the beginning.

You see, Señor Del Campo is actually *an angel*, sent to bring these three together to become a family. The only one who suspects, then is convinced of his real identity, is the seven-year-old Zoey. She hasn't yet lost that wonderful capacity to believe in and maybe even see a realm that's beyond what we can see with our eyes. She notices the twinkle in Del Campo's eyes. She hears the tinkling of the bells whenever he's near them or walks by them—he even has that effect on the chandelier in the foyer of Sam's mansion. And then, for her the real clincher—she finds a feather in Del Campo's bed!

Of realms and reality

This idea of another realm is a common theme in literature and film, isn't it? Some of the real classics are about entering another world through some kind of portal. We see it in children's literature, for instance, in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* and C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*. Adults usually explore this theme in science fiction movies or literature, often in terms of time travel or entering another dimension or universe through a portal that somehow interfaces with our realm.

But in our "real" world, it all seems so foreign to us, doesn't it? We've been taught to trust only what we can verify by empirical evidence, and that any and every occurrence has to have some kind of *logical scientific explanation*. In this kind of world, can we really believe that there's another realm out there—what the Bible calls *eternity*—and that it's there all the time, even though we can't see it or touch it or feel it?

Yet sometimes God purposefully, maybe even playfully, pulls back the veil that separates time from eternity, just for a moment or two. He briefly opens the portal onto the eternal realm so that we can see things as they *really* are.

That's what happened when Jesus took Peter, John, and James with Him, and led them up the mountain, where they were all alone. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell this story, but only Luke tells us that Jesus took these three disciples with Him *to pray*. Jesus spent a lot of His time in prayer, and He loved to pray in the mountains.

And no wonder! After all, in Scripture, significant events, especially events of *revelation*, took place on mountains. In fact, this story has some strong parallels with the stories in the book of Exodus about Moses receiving the tablets of the Law on the mountain.

While Peter, John, and James were there with Jesus, something absolutely astounding took place. Right before their very eyes, Jesus was *transfigured*, transformed into His eternal, glorified state. Now Luke doesn't use the term "transfigured" in his telling of this story as Matthew and Mark do. He simply says that **the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe [became] white [and] glistening** (9:29),¹ or as it could also be translated, **His clothing [became] white, flashing like lightning.**² Although Luke doesn't use it, the Greek word that Matthew and Mark both used to describe what happened is the root from which we get our English words "metamorphosis" and "metamorphosed." It's through metamorphosis that a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, and when a rock has been metamorphosed, one kind of rock has become a totally different kind of rock! No wonder the appearance of His face changed!

Can you imagine what it must have been like for those three disciples? Jesus' clothes became dazzling white, and He appeared in His glorified state. They knew it was Jesus, but they'd never seen Him like that! And to top it all off, Moses and Elijah, those two Hebrew heroes who represented the Law and the Prophets, appeared with Jesus, holding a conversation with Him. Luke tells us they were talking about **His decease** (literally **His *exodus***) **which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.**

Despite the stupor of their sleepiness, Peter knew something *big* was up. In fact, he may have thought that the kingdom had come, and that the nations were ready to come for the Feast of Tabernacles as prophesied in Zechariah 14:16. He really didn't know what to say—after all, what *do* you say when you see Jesus in His eternal, glorified state holding conversation with one man who lived at least thirteen centuries ago and another who lived more than eight centuries ago, and both of them also appearing in glorious splendor? But you know Peter—he *had* to say something! So just as Moses and Elijah were leaving Jesus, Peter said, **"Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah . . ."** (9:33).

Even as he was saying that, **a cloud came and overshadowed them**—the cloud of God's *shekinah* glory that led the children of Israel through the wilderness and that settled on the tabernacle and later on the temple of God when Solomon dedicated it. Out of the cloud came a voice, a voice that could only be the voice of God. It was the same voice that had spoken to Jesus as He was praying after His baptism (Luke 3:21-22), a voice that said now to the disciples, **"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"** (9:35). And then, just as suddenly as it had all begun to happen, they looked all around, and saw that Jesus was alone again.

Revealing His glory

They saw Jesus that day as they'd never seen Him before. In a few fleeting moments, they saw what would be the outcome of His obedience to the Father, and the Father's glorious approval of the path He had chosen. They saw a foreshadowing of His resurrection and His eternal glory, in which He will one day return. But they didn't understand all this until *after* He was raised.

A number of scholars suggest that the reason Jesus took Peter, John, and James with Him for

this experience was that it was these three who were having the hardest time “getting it” in terms of who Jesus was and what He was about!

But now, things were different for them. They still didn't yet get it, but they would never again be content with what they had thought of Jesus to this point. It had been a dramatic moment a week earlier when Jesus had asked the disciples who He was, and Peter had boldly declared that He was the Messiah of God. Now Jesus' declaration later that same day and this experience a week later had turned what Peter *thought* his confession meant on its head! Even in the midst of this revelation of Jesus' glory, the Father's voice from heaven had commanded these three disciples to listen to Him, especially to what He had recently told them about His coming suffering, death, resurrection, and exaltation, *and* about what it means to follow Him. While Peter and John and James kept this experience to themselves until after the resurrection, you can be sure that it was constantly on their minds as they mulled over its meaning time and again.³

Pulling back the curtain

More than fifteen years ago now, I heard Caroline Jones, then president of the Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina, share a story about an experience with her father shortly before his death.

Her father was a Baptist minister, and had been ill for some time. The children of the family had been visiting frequently to help take care of him. When she would come, they'd often talk about his ministry and about the Lord. But that day when she came in, he seemed to be preoccupied, even distant, as though he were looking out there somewhere beyond her. She stood at the foot of his bed, and when he didn't respond when she spoke, she touched his foot, gently rubbing it to get his attention.

Finally, he spoke. “Move out of the way, Caroline. I can't see.”

“What can't you see, Daddy?”

“Move, darling! I can't see Him!”

“Who can't you see, Daddy?”

“I can't see Jesus! Don't you see Him? He's right behind you!”

Now some will say that as he was nearing death, this ailing old man was experiencing hallucinations. Was he? Or did he, as I've heard a hospice chaplain describe it, have one foot in this world and the other in the next? Had that secret portal opened to him, so that though he was still here in this earthly realm bound by time and space, he was now looking into eternity, not only *feeling* Jesus' promised presence, but *looking at Him* face to face, glimpsing His glory?

But we don't just glimpse His glory in our last moments on earth, or in visions and dreams of the night. We glimpse it in other ways as well, in our worship and on our journey—*those glimpses of His glory that show us the eternal reality of who Jesus is!*

John experienced it on the Island of Patmos, you know. Sent there because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, he was in the Spirit as he worshiped on the Lord's Day. He heard behind him a loud voice like a trumpet. When he turned he **saw seven golden lampstands**, and there, standing among them, the risen, glorified Christ, walking among His churches, tending their lamps, holding their angels in His right hand. He identified Himself as **the First and the Last**, the living one; though He was dead He is alive forevermore, and He holds **the keys of Hades and of Death** (Revelation 1:9-20)!

Sometimes we glimpse His glory at unlikely times and places. He reveals Himself in a glorious sunrise or sunset, or in an incredible mountain vista. Or we see Him at work in quiet yet

powerful ways as we minister in His name or He radically changes lives. Ever so briefly, God pulls back the curtain, and we glimpse Christ's glory.

Wayne Stacy captured it well in one of his sermons on the Transfiguration when he said:

Sometimes it happens that way, and we “glimpse the glory,” and suddenly we see it all clearly, if not fully—who He really is, and who we really are, and what, in Him, we can really be.

However, the cross comes before the crown, and tomorrow is a Monday morning. You can't get to Easter without going through Lent, because there can be no resurrection until somebody dies.⁴

So, brothers and sisters, when the veil is pulled back, and the portal is opened for that fleeting moment, and ever so briefly we see Him as He really is, how we will someday see Him face to face, remember these words from the Father: **“This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!”**

†MEG

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version®.

² My translation.

³ These commentaries were helpful in my interpretation of this text: James A. Brooks, “Mark,” in *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, Vol. 23* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991); Sharyn Dowd, *Reading Mark: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Second Gospel* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000); Robert H. Stein, “Luke,” in *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, Vol. 24* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992); Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002); Malcolm O. Tolbert, “Luke,” in *The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 9* (Nashville: Broadman, 1970).

⁴ R. Wayne Stacy, *The Search: The Soul's Secret Signature* (Nashville: Fields Publishing, 2000), 34.