

Barriers to Beholding Glory
The Gospel of Mark Part 2: #1
Mark 8:2-8

For Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. For God was pleased to have all his fulness dwell in him.

In the yard and driveway of 119 Englewood Dr in Inman, SC in the 1980s, I had no equals in sporting competition. In fact, I was the king of the castle. In boxing, I floated like a butterfly and stung like a bee against the air. In football, I completed every pass to myself and scored every touchdown. In baseball, my 14mph fast ball was the stuff that legends are made of. In long distance running, I set the pace with a 17-minute mile. But, oh, how things changed when I left the hallowed grounds of my yard and driveway and ventured onto higher grounds to see how my sporting skills stacked up against actual living, breathing, and human competition. The experience taught me I was no longer the king of my universe, or any universe for that matter. In fact, I wasn't even an equal. I was surrounded by far superiors. And the barriers of my yard and driveway prevented me from seeing things as they were.

According to the Bible, the closer Jesus gets to coming back, the more people are going to act like that child in Inman, SC whose legendary status in his yard and driveway prevented him from seeing things as they were. "Mark my words," Paul told Timothy, "There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim 3:1-4).

Well, people of God, as the world moves in that direction, I invite you to leave the barriers of your yard and driveway today and go up to a high mountain with me. It's the same high mountain Jesus called Peter, James, and John to ascend with Him because there was a lesson they needed to learn that the world was not going to teach them. It was this lesson: Jesus is not only the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. He is the king. He is the centerpiece of the universe. He has no equals. And He has no superiors. And the only way they could learn that was to leave the barriers of their yard and driveway to see Jesus transfigured in all His glory and a voice from the clouds say "this is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

But I warn you, people of God, to be careful when you get to the top of the Mt of Transfiguration. For it is possible to confess Him, walk with Him, even fellowship with Him, and still not see Him for who He truly is. It happens when we construct the same barriers that prevent us from seeing things as they are that they constructed, most especially Peter. To see clearly, God had to remove those barriers. And he wants to do the same thing for us today. So, invite you to that Mt. of Transfiguration with me today. It's found in Mark 9:2-13. And from this mountaintop, I want to give you **4 barriers that will prevent you from seeing Jesus as He is: barriers to beholding His glory.**

²After 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. ³His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) ⁷Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" ⁸Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

1. The Barrier of Pride (2-3)

- **Pride Comes Before the Fall:** (1) My kids taught me how to do a google search on what famous person I look most like. (2) "All you have to do is take a selfie and click this button," they said. (3) Before I did it, my mind started racing with pride thinking about the options: Bruce Willis, Patrick Stewart or maybe Vin Diesel. (4) But when it came back as Mr. Clean from the television commercial, I knew the meaning of "pride cometh before the fall."
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Pride is one of the greatest barriers to seeing things as they are and seeing Jesus for who is.
- **How We Know Pride Was an Issue for These Disciples:** (1) According to Matthew's Gospel, the mother of James and John, Salome (we saw her last week at the empty tomb), asked Jesus to grant one son the privilege of sitting at his right hand and the other at his left in his kingdom (Mt. 20:21). When He asked them if they drink from the cup he was going to drink, their response was "we can." (2) Similarly, with Peter, he's the one, out of all the disciples, who just declared Jesus as the Messiah a chapter ago (Mk 8:29). (3) It's no coincidence that these disciples were chosen by Jesus to be witnesses to the transfiguration. That much is indicated at the phrase "where they were all alone." They saw it as a privilege. Jesus saw it as an opportunity to remove a barrier.
- **How the Barrier was Removed:** God's recipe for removing that barrier was transfiguration. The word "transfigure" to change from one form or figure to another. Up to this point, they had only known him in his human body. Now they were witnessing his deity. That much is indicated by the phrases "dazzling white" and "whiter than anyone could bleach them." It's like how Jesus is referred to in Revelation.

- **The Lesson:** Jesus is King. Jesus is Superior. Jesus has no equals. Jesus is God. Therefore, he outranks them. And pride will always steer us away from beholding the glory of Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration.
2. **The Barrier of Misunderstanding His Revelation (4-5)**
- **Autism and Social Cues:** (1) I ran across a meme a week or so ago that says “God created autism to help offset the number of boring people on this earth.” (2) Those who have high functioning autism (Asperger’s) will testify to misunderstanding the significance of the present occasion. (3) If you ask them to think outside the box, they’ll respond by saying “I don’t know where the box is.” (4) If you ask them to put something in the oven at 120 degrees, they’ll stand the item up in the oven at precisely 120 degrees. (5) But most of all, they’ll say almost anything at the most inopportune times. (6) But when it comes to how God reveals himself in all our lives, we all often misunderstand his cues.
 - **Main Idea of the Point:** Misunderstanding how Jesus reveals himself in a way that gives us wrong conclusions will always be a great barrier for seeing Him as He is and for seeing things as they are.
 - **How We Know Misunderstanding His Revelation Was a Barrier for Peter.** Peter says it is good for us to be here, Lord. Let us make three shelters (booths/tabernacles): one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. The Festival of Booths commemorated Israel’s wandering in the wilderness. They stayed in booths. Peter wants to commemorate the occasion and treat it like the Festival of Booths. That’s not all bad. The problem, though, comes in how he wants it to go. He wants 3 booths because he thinks Moses, Elijah and Jesus are equal. But there should only be one booth: Jesus, for He has no equals. And Peter completely misses Jesus’ supremacy.
 - **How the Barrier was Removed:** To shut Peter up, God rebuked him from a cloud. The last time a cloud played a major role among God’s people, it was leading Israel to the Promised Land. This time it’s closing Peter’s mouth.
 - **The Lesson:** When God reveals something to you, don’t give him the opportunity to rebuke you from a cloud when you get it wrong. Get it right the first time. That comes when we mediate, think, and pray a lot more. And talk a lot less.
3. **The Barrier of the Unbridled Tongue (6)**
- **Elementary School Redlights:** (1) In elementary schools across this nation, there is something you might see in the cafeteria that might seem out of place to you at first. (2) It’s a traffic light. It isn’t there to direct foot traffic through the serving line. (3) It’s there to tell the students to be silent when it’s on red, to listen when it’s on yellow, and when to speak when it’s on green.
 - **Main Idea of the Point:** Not knowing when to speak, when to be silent, and when to listen to the Lord is a great barrier to seeing Jesus as He is and seeing things as they are.
 - **How We Know the Unbridled Tongue Was a Problem for Peter:** (1) We’ve already seen the problem that existed with Peter’s statement that diminished Jesus’ superiority. (2) But Mark tells us in a parenthetical notion in verse 6 why it occurred: he did not know what to say because they were so frightened. (3) Fear caused Peter to revert to what he does often in crisis: unbridle his tongue and educate God himself about the significance of the occasion. (4) But if Peter was going to see Jesus for who He is and make any difference in the world, God needed to deal with this on the mountain. So, he did.
 - **How the Barrier was Removed:** (1) The mountain became an educational laboratory for when to speak, when to be silent, and when to listen. (2) The transfiguration was a good time just to be quiet and behold the revelation of incarnate deity. Walking down the mountain was a good time to start speaking again. But not before. And when God said: “this is my son, listen to Him.” It was a good time to listen. The interesting thing here is Jesus is not saying anything. But later he would say a lot. And Peter needed to listen.
 - **The Lesson:** When to speak, when to listen, and when to be silent is an art the world has not mastered. But God’s people are called to be different if we are going to see Him for who is He in our lives.
4. **The Barrier of Equals and Superiors to Jesus (8)**
- **One of My Most Treasured Possessions:** (1) An anonymous card I received in the mail several years ago with three words on the front and a quote in the middle. (2) The quote in the middle: Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, he washed it white as snow. (3) The three words on the front: Jesus is enough.
 - **Main Idea of the Point:** The greatest barrier to seeing Jesus for who he is and things as they are is giving Him equality, not superiority, with other things in our lives.
 - **How We Know This Was a Problem:** (1) Peter had already assigned Moses and Elijah as equals to Jesus in his statement. (2) The 3 greatest figures of the Old Testament were Moses (a prophet and deliverer), Elijah (a prophet and a priest), and David (a king). (3) Now, Moses and Elijah disappear and only Jesus remains because He is the prophet, priest, and king.
 - **How the Barrier Was Removed:** (1) Matthew adds a detail to this story we don’t get in Mark: ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.”⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus (Mat. 17:6-8). (2) What an image! They expected scorn, condemnation, and judgment for putting up barriers. They got an encouraging directive to rise and touch of compassion instead.
 - **The Lesson:** When we put up barriers to seeing Jesus for who is He, the same directive to rise again and the same touch of compassion applies as much to us today as it did for Peter, James, and John. For we need both going down the mountain. Praise the Lord! Glory to His name!

