

## When God Chooses to Change Your Scenery

Mark 1:9-13

The Gospel of Mark #3

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

If I asked you, at this very hour, to explain what life can often be like without using a Bible verse or a personal story, I would be willing to assume that we wouldn’t beat the church crowd to CJ Cannons for brunch on this Lord’s Day. We would all be so hard pressed to do it that this very hour would turn into another and then another. However, we would be out of here in less than 30 minutes if we explained what life can be like by using only song lyrics. And the lyrics each of us would choose would vary depending on our age, attitude, musical preference, gray hairs, or complete lack of them altogether. Those with the most seniority in this room this morning might explain what life can be like with these lyrics: *I’ve been a puppet, a pauper, a pirate, a poet, a pawn, and a king. I’ve been up and down and over and out, and I know one thing. Each time I find myself flat on my face, I pick myself up and get back in the race. For that’s life.* Those of us with who like to convey our message with hand and head gestures and attitude might explain what life can be like with these lyrics: *Oh no, not I, I will survive. Oh, as long as I know how to love, I know I’ll stay alive. I’ve got all my life to live. And I’ve got all my love to give. Because I. I will survive.* The realists among us would most likely quote these lyrics about what life can be like: *You can’t always get what you want. But if you try sometimes, you just might find. You get what you need.* But all of us would identify with these lyrics about what like can be like: *Don’t blink. For just like that your 6 years old and you take a nap, and you wake up and your 25. For trust me, friend, a hundred years goes faster than you think. So don’t blink.*

Friends, the truth is life consists of mountaintops and valleys. It’s full of highs and lows. And we don’t need to use song lyrics to convey to others that the scenery of our lives can change in an instant, in the snap of a finger, and in the blink of an eye. You blink once and you are on top of the mountain. But you blink again, and you are smack dab in the middle of a valley. And in both places, it is just as easy to lose sight of the Lord Jesus Christ as it is to sing “I Will Survive” with head motions and attitude. For the dangers of the mountaintops and the peril of the valleys are but opposing sides of the same faithless coin. On the mountaintop, we are inclined to forget God while patting ourselves on the back for our ascent. In the valley, we are inclined to reject God as we sing: *nobody knows the troubles I’ve seen. Nobody knows my sorrows.* Church, I want to tell you this morning that the scenery of Jesus’ life changed in an instant, in the snap of a finger, and in the blink of an eye also. As a matter of fact, in the first major scene in the life of Christ that Mark chooses to record, he informs us that God the Father found it in His own best interest to send His son right smack dab into the middle of valley of the shadow of death right after the mountaintop experience of the Lord Jesus Christ’s baptism. Jesus blinked once and was on top of the proverbial mountain. But he blinked again and found himself in the middle of the valley. But he didn’t forget the Father on the mountain or reject Him in the valley. For Jesus knew His Father was intimately involved in both experiences. So therefore, my objective today, church, is to tell you why the Father often finds it in His own best interest to change your scenery in an instant, in the snap of a finger, and in the blink of an eye. It’s to tell you why He will lead you to the mountaintop in one moment and the valley of the shadow of death in the next. To do that, please turn with me to Mark 1:9-13

<sup>9</sup>At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” <sup>12</sup>At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness,<sup>13</sup> and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

### Why the Father Finds It in His Best Interest to Change Your Scenery

#### 1. No Change in Scenery = No Change in Assumptions

- **The Waving Assumption** – (1) I did something very embarrassing at Sam’s last week that I’m sure you’ve done at least once or twice. (2) I was minding my own business pushing my buggy down the main isle when I noticed a lady waving at me. I did nothing at first because I didn’t know who she was. (3) But since she kept waving and waving, I returned the favor. (4) As soon as I did, she looked at me like I was off my rocker. (5) Turns out she was waving at her husband right behind me. (6) False assumptions can lead us to some rather foolish situations that can affect our behavior and our attitudes.

- **Main idea of the Point:** We tend to accept the mountaintops of our lives as ordained by God and reject the trials and tribulations as mistakes. But the truth is God ordains them both.
- **Textual Emphasis (v10; v12): The Spirit's Role in Jesus' Baptism and His Role in the Wilderness:** (1) In the first scene, the Spirit descends on him like a dove. A dove is a clean animal. It was pure. It was innocent. It was an animal suited for sacrifice according to Levitical Law. And Jesus saw it. What a compliment! Then the Father confirms Jesus with phrases like "You are my Son" and "With you I am well please." More compliments. More clarity. More encouragement. More mountaintop experiences. (2) But as soon as he could blink, the tune changes in v 12. Now the Spirit sends him into the wilderness. Jesus was already in the wilderness area where John the Baptist ministered. But the connotation here a dangerous one that will test every ounce of purity and cleanness that the Father bestowed upon him. The same wilderness that caused the Israelites to rebel against God in when tested. (3) His circumstances changed with a blink. And the Spirit of God orchestrated them both.
- **App:** If mountaintops are ordained by God, so are the valleys. And God is intimately involved in both. So don't forget him on the mountain. And don't forsake him in the valley.

## 2. No Change in Scenery = No Chance for Clarity

- **Kids Hiding in the Car at Chick-fil-a:** (1) When we go to the drive through at Chick-fil-a, everyone in my family except for me follows a similar pattern. (2) They all sink down into their seats low like they don't want to be seen with me. (3) Here's why: Chick-fil-a is the only restaurant in the world that asks for your name before you order. And they've heard 100 different ones from me. (4) Buster P. Wafflehouse; John Jacob Jingleheimer Smith. If you can think of it, I've said it. (5) But an interesting thing happens when I get to the window: they say, "order for Derrick." (6) At the window of Chick-fil-a, I get clarity of who I am when I get it wrong so that my kids can sit up straight in the car. (7) Mountaintop experiences work the same way.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** In the mountaintop experience of Jesus' baptism, he witnessed the heavens torn open and the Father speak clearly. God orchestrates mountaintop experiences in our lives to give us clarity about who we are and what he wants us to do.
- **Textual Emphasis: The Clarity of the Message to Jesus at His Baptism (v10-11) –** (1) Clarity requires a messenger – In this introductory scene of the life of Christ, Mark wants us to know who the messenger in the story is. Notice three elements at work: (a) The Son coming up out of the water (v10); (b) the Spirit descending (v10); and (c) The Father speaking from heaven (v10); (d) It is the God of the Trinity narrating the mountaintop experience delivering the message. (2) And Clarity requires a message: Jesus witnessed the heavens torn open. Isaiah prayed that God would himself tear open the heavens and descend. He answered his prayer. Then Jesus heard a voice from heaven. The last time God spoke from the clouds, he was leading his people out of Egypt with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of cloud by night.
- **App:** Mountaintop experiences are orchestrated by the God of the Trinity in our lives the exact same way. He speaks to us with clarity in those experiences. And he has designed them to be that way in our lives. But he has not orchestrated our lives to stay up on the mountain forever. There are tests that await in the valleys below.

## 3. No Change in Scenery = No Chance for Comfort

- **Invention of Gatorade:** (1) On October 2, 1965, a team of scientists at a particular state university in Gainesville made a particular discovery in a university lab that changed the world forever. (2) University coaches noticed athletes were not recovering as well from the heat during practices as they would like. (3) So, these scientists developed a drink that contained salts and sugars that could be absorbed more quickly in the body and called it Gatorade. (4) The comfort of the sugars and salts came as a direct result of the exertion from the heat. (5) The comfort of God works the same way.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** In the valley of the wilderness, God sent angels to comfort Jesus after the time of testing. After every test of faith, comes the very comfort of God.
- **Textual Emphasis: How Mark Chooses to Narrate Jesus' Tempting (v12-13) –** (1) One of the more unique features of Mark is what he chooses to empathize and why. If you look at Jesus' temptations in Matthew and Luke, you'll notice that both go into intricate detail about 3 unique temptations. But not Mark. He only presents the dualities involved. The Spirit led him to be tempted by Satan. Then, at the end, he does the duality thing again by saying in the wilderness he was attended to by wild animals and angels. (2). Instead of giving us a list of temptations, he just gives us these two ideas and puts us right in the center of them to draw our own conclusions about what Jesus faced for 40 days. (3) But he closes verse 13 with something interesting – "angels attended him." The comfort came after the test.

- **App:** Search the Scriptures and you will find that in every case where God gave a test, his comfort came after it was over. He did it in Job's life. He did it in Elijah's life. And he did it in your life. Therefore, our greatest duty in our test is to thank him for the test because we know His comfort will soon follow. That's what faith is all about.
- 4. No Change in Scenery = No Change in Script**
- **Teacher Phrases:** (1) Teachers have several phrases they use that are tried and true and have stood the test of time through experience. (2) I hear them all the time being the husband of one. (3) Phrases like: (a) First time fast and (b) 123 eyes on me. (4) They've developed them because students don't usually do something the first time fast. Their eyes are never on the teacher at just the sound of her voice. Thus, the reason for the phrase. (5) So, I got to thinking that if a student did something the first time fast, a teacher would have to develop new phrases specifically because the student managed to flip the script. (6) Jesus changed the script in the wilderness, and we can to.
  - **Main Idea of the Point:** The Children of Israel wandered in the wilderness 40 years and rebelled. Jesus was tested 40 days in the wilderness and obeyed. His example now makes our obedience possible during moments of great testing.
  - **Textual Emphasis: 40 days and nights (v13):** (1) In between the dualism reference, Mark chooses to tell us Jesus was tested 40 days and 40 nights. (2) This reference is important because 40 denotes a time of testing and, in other cases, judgment. The flood lasted 40 days and nights. Moses was on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights. Israel wandered in the wilderness 40 days and 40 nights. There, though, they rebelled against God and Moses. (3) But Jesus reversed the script. If you're the son of God, tell these stones to become bread. No. It is written man shall not live by bread alone. If you're the Son of God, throw yourself down. No. It is written don't put the Lord to the test. All this I will give you Jesus, if you fall and worship me. No. It is written worship the Lord and serve him only.
  - **App:** Jesus' obedience in a great time of testing makes it possible to follow his example. That's why God changes your scenery. He not only orchestrates your scenery, but he's also intimately involved with you on the mountaintop and in the valley.