

Mark 9:2-9

EACH SPRING I TEACH 2 SECTIONS OF A COURSE CALLED “LIFE, LOVE AND MONEY” AND ONE BOOK WE READ AND DISCUSS IS THE ENERGY BUS WHICH IS ABOUT A DISGRUNTLED MAN NAMED GEORGE WHO IS UNHAPPY WITH HIS LIFE...ALWAYS THE VICTIM. ONE LINE IN THE BOOK STATES: “THERE ARE TIMES IN OUR LIVES WHEN WE LOOK AROUND AND WONDER, ‘IS THIS ALL THERE IS?’” WE TALK ABOUT THAT AND MOST STUDENTS ADMIT TO HAVING FELT THAT WAY A TIME OR TWO IN THEIR YOUNG LIVES.

SOMETIMES IT’S JUST A PASSING QUESTION, OTHER TIMES IT’S FOR A SEASON. WE LOOK AT OUR LIFE, OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, AND WE WANT MORE. THERE IS A RESTLESSNESS, A SEARCHING, AND LONGING FOR SOMETHING ELSE. IF THIS RESTLESSNESS LASTS FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME, SOME CALL IT A MID-LIFE CRISIS...MAKING PEOPLE DO CRAZY THINGS WITH ALL THE SEARCHING AND SEEKING. SOME GET A NEW JOB, A NEW CAR, A NEW RELATIONSHIP. OTHERS TAKE UP A NEW HOBBY, GO ON A TRIP, OR WORK EXTRA HOURS. BUT NOT MUCH CHANGES.

IT IS NOT ABOUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE. IT’S ABOUT US. THE RESTLESSNESS, THE DESIRE FOR SOMETHING MORE, GENERALLY MEANS THAT WE HAVE BEEN LIVING LIFE AT THE SHALLOW END OF THE POOL SO TO SPEAK. LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS HAVE BECOME SUPERFICIAL. WE HAVE BEEN SKIMMING ACROSS THE SURFACE. IN SOME WAYS LIFE AT THE SURFACE IS EASIER, MORE EFFICIENT, ENCOURAGED AND REWARDED BY MUCH OF THE WORLD TODAY. IT FAILS, HOWEVER, TO SEE AND EXPERIENCE THAT THE WORLD IS ALREADY TRANSFIGURED AND CREATION IS FILLED WITH DIVINE LIGHT.

LIFE ON THE SURFACE KEEPS US JUDGING THE CIRCUMSTANCES. WE LOOK AT OUR CIRCUMSTANCES AS A PICTURE. IF IT IS PRETTY, PLEASING, AND SHOWS US WHAT WE WANT TO SEE THEN GOD IS GOOD AND LIFE IS AS IT SHOULD BE. WHEN WE DON’T SEE WHAT WE WANT THEN WE OFTEN LOOK FOR A NEW PICTURE. THE RESTLESS SEARCHING, THE LONGING FOR MORE, THE DESIRE FOR MEANING ARE NOT, HOWEVER, USUALLY ANSWERED BY CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES. THE ANSWER IS FOUND IN THE DEPTH AND VULNERABILITY OF THE INTERIOR JOURNEY.

WE DO NOT NEED TO SEE NEW THINGS. WE NEED TO SEE THE SAME OLD THINGS WITH NEW EYES. A STUDENT ONCE WROTE IN A PAPER: IF YOU CHANGE THE WAY YOU LOOK AT THINGS, THE THINGS YOU LOOK AT BEGIN TO CHANGE.” WE DO NOT NEED TO HEAR A DIFFERENT VOICE. WE NEED TO HEAR THE SAME OLD FAMILIAR VOICE WITH DIFFERENT EARS. WE DO NOT NEED TO ESCAPE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR LIFE. WE NEED TO BE MORE FULLY PRESENT TO THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES. WHEN THIS HAPPENS LIFE IS NO LONGER LIVED AT THE SURFACE. THESE ARE TRANSFIGURED MOMENTS, MOMENTS WHEN THE PICTURE OF

OUR LIFE BECOMES A WINDOW INTO A NEW WORLD AND WE COME FACE TO FACE WITH THE GLORY OF GOD.

MOST OF US, I THINK, SEEK GOD IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE. WE WANT GOD TO SHOW UP, BE PRESENT, AND DO SOMETHING. THIS IS THE GOD WHO DOES. THIS IS THE GOD DESCRIBED IN MARK'S GOSPEL UP TO THE POINT OF TODAY'S READING. WE MIGHT THINK ABOUT THIS AS THE FIRST PART OF THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY. IT IS THE JOURNEY OF DISCOVERING GOD IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES. THIS IS WHAT THE DISCIPLES HAVE BEEN DOING.

THEY HAVE WITNESSED JESUS CAST OUT DEMONS, HEAL PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW, AND CURE THE SICK. HE'S CLEANSED THE LEPER AND MADE A WITHERED HAND NEW AND STRONG. PARALYTICS NOW WALK, THE BLIND SEE, AND THOUSANDS ARE FED. THIS IS THE GOD ABOUT WHOM PEOPLE TALK.

AT SOME POINT WE MUST, HOWEVER, BEGIN TO DISCOVER THE GOD WHO IS *BEYOND* THE CIRCUMSTANCES. THIS IS THE GOD WHO *IS*. THIS IS THE SECOND PART OF THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY. JESUS IS LEADING PETER, JAMES AND JOHN, UP THE MOUNTAIN TO DISCOVER THE GOD WHO IS *BEYOND* CIRCUMSTANCES. HERE THEIR PICTURES OF LIFE'S CIRCUMSTANCES WILL BECOME WINDOWS BY WHICH THEY MOVE INTO THE DEPTHS OF GOD'S LIFE, GOD'S LIGHT, AND GOD'S LOVE.

THERE ON THE MOUNTAIN THEY SAW JESUS TRANFIGURED BEFORE THEM, AND HIS CLOTHES BECAME DAZZLING WHITE. THE CLOUD OVERSHADOWED THEM AND THE FATHER'S VOICE SPOKE OF HIS BELOVED SON. PETER WANTS TO BUILD DWELLING PLACES. HE WANTS TO FRAME JESUS, ELIJAH, AND MOSES. "IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE," HE SAYS. HE WANTS TO PRESERVE IT. HE WANTS TO TAKE A PICTURE.

PICTURES, HOWEVER, ARE STATIC. ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION OUR PICTURES OF LIFE'S CIRCUMSTANCES BECOME WINDOWS THROUGH WHICH WE STEP INTO A NEW WORLD, A NEW WAY OF SEEING, A NEW WAY OF HEARING, AND NEW WAY OF BEING. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED FOR PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN. JESUS DID NOT SUDDENLY LIGHT UP AND BECOME SOMETHING HE WAS NOT. NO, THEIR EYES WERE HEALED AND OPENED SO THEY COULD SEE JESUS AS HE HAD ALWAYS BEEN. THE VOICE IN THE CLOUD WAS NOT NEW. THEIR EARS WERE OPENED AND THEY HEARD THE VOICE THAT HAS NEVER CEASED SPEAKING FROM THE BEGINNING. THE TRANSFIGURATION IS AS MUCH ABOUT THEM AS IT IS ABOUT JESUS. WHENEVER OUR PICTURE OF LIFE'S CIRCUMSTANCES BECOMES A WINDOW INTO A NEW LIFE WE STAND IN A TRANSFIGURED MOMENT. CIRCUMSTANCES HAVEN'T CHANGED. WE HAVE CHANGED AND THAT SEEMS TO CHANGE EVERYTHING.

THOSE TRANSFIGURED MOMENTS ARE ALL AROUND US. EVERY ONE OF US COULD TELL A STORY ABOUT STEPPING BACK FROM THE PICTURE OF OUR LIFE, SEEING WITH NEW EYES, LISTENING WITH DIFFERENT EARS, AND DISCOVERING A WINDOW THAT OPENED INTO ANOTHER WORLD AND ANOTHER WAY OF BEING.

MAYBE IT WAS THE DAY YOU ACCEPTED CHRIST...IN THIS SURRENDER THE PICTURE OF YOUR LIFE AS ONE OF GUILT AND SHAME BECAME AN OPEN WINDOW THROUGH WHICH YOU STEPPED. THE DARKNESS GAVE WAY TO LIGHT, THE CHAINS FELL OFF, AND FORGIVENESS OVERCAME SIN. I REMEMBER A TIME AFTER MY MOM'S DEATH. I WAS IN DEEP SADNESS AS I TRIED TO FIGURE OUT HOW ONE'S LIFE GOES ON WITHOUT THEIR MOTHER. THERE WAS ONE BEAUTIFUL SUMMER AFTERNOON IN MY BACKYARD AND ALTHOUGH I COULD NOT SEE HER I SUDDENLY FELT THE WARMTH OF HER LIFE, HER LAUGH, HER HUG, HER VOICE. THE PICTURE OF DEATH AND LOSS HAD BECOME A WINDOW THROUGH WHICH I STEPPED INTO THE MYSTERY OF LIFE, HOPE AND RESURRECTION. THINK ABOUT THE DAY YOU HELD YOUR CHILD FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME. YES, IT WAS A PICTURE OF A NEWBORN BUT IT WAS ALSO A WINDOW THROUGH WHICH YOU STEPPED AND WERE FOREVER CHANGED. YOU EXPERIENCED A NEW BEGINNING AS A PARENT. YOU BECAME PART OF THE MYSTERY OF CREATION. THE LORD'S GLORY SURELY SHONE AS MUCH IN YOUR VERY HANDS AS IT DID ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION OVER 2,000 YEARS AGO.

I REMEMBER SITTING WITH A WOMAN WHO WAS DYING. TOGETHER WE TALKED, LAUGHED, CRIED, AND SAT IN SILENCE. SHE SAID SHE HAD HAD SOME UNUSAL EXPERIENCES. SHE HAD VISIONS AND HEARD VOICES. SHE ASKED IF THAT WAS REAL? WAS IT NORMAL? I TOLD HER ABSOLUTELY IT WAS AS I HAD BEEN INVITED INTO THE SACREDNESS OF MANY PEOPLE'S FINAL DAYS/HOURS WHERE THEY OFTEN SPOKE OF SEEING JESUS, OR HEARING THEIR MOTHER'S VOICE. THE PICTURE OF THIS WOMAN'S LIFE AS ONE OF CANCER, PAIN, AND SUFFERING HAD BECOME AN OPEN WINDOW THROUGH WHICH SHE STEPPED. SHE BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND THAT IN THE MIDST OF HER CANCER SHE WAS ALREADY BEING HEALED. "THERE IS SO MUCH MORE GOING ON HERE THAN WE USUALLY SEE OR KNOW," SHE SAID. THE TEARS WERE AS REAL AS THE VOICE WHO WHISPERED TO HER, "MY DAUGHTER, YOU ARE ALREADY OK." THOSE WINDOWS ARE EVERYWHERE IF WE HAVE EYES TO SEE AND EARS TO HEAR.

WE OFTEN WANT TO GO BACK TO THOSE TRANSFIGURED MOMENTS. WE ARE TEMPTED TO BUILD DWELLING PLACES FOR THOSE SPECIFIC MOMENTS. IF I COULD JUST GO BACK FOR A FEW MINUTES. BOOTHS, DWELLING PLACES, WILL ONLY KEEP US IN THE PAST. TO THE EXTENT WE CLING TO THE PAST WE CLOSE OURSELVES TO THE FUTURE GOD OFFERS. SO JESUS, PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN COME BACK DOWN THE MOUNTAIN. THEY COULD NOT STAY THERE BUT NEITHER DID THEY LEAVE THE MOUNTAIN. THEY TOOK THE EXPERIENCE

WITH THEM. IT IS WHAT WOULD CARRY THEM THROUGH THE PASSION AND CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION.

TRANSFIGURED MOMENTS CHANGE US, SUSTAIN US, PREPARE US, ENCOURAGE US, AND GUIDE US INTO THE FUTURE REGARDLESS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES WE FACE. THEY SHOW US WHO WE ARE. WE ARE THE TRANSFIGURED PEOPLE OF JESUS CHRIST. OPEN YOUR EYES AND SEE A TRANSFIGURED WORLD. OPEN YOUR EARS AND HEAR THE TRANSFIGURING VOICE. OPEN YOUR HEART AND BECOME A TRANSFIGURED LIFE. EVERY PICTURE OF LIFE IS AN OPEN WINDOW THAT SAYS, "NO, THIS IS NOT ALL THERE IS." MAY IT BE SO IN YOUR LIFE. AMEN.