

## Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.  
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.



## Mark 9:2-9

*The Transfiguration is an apt Preface to Lent and Jesus' journey to Jerusalem because what lies ahead is both a confrontation between the non-violent justice of the Kingdom of God and the violent injustice of the Roman Empire; as well as the non-violent way of the Beloved versus the hoped-for victory by the Messiah.*

### Year B

### Transfiguration Sunday

**February 19, 2012**

*Sunday Before Ash Wednesday*

*Last Sunday of the Season of Epiphany*

*May be as early as February 1 or as late as March 7.*

**Or**

### Year B

**Lent 2,**

**Alternate Reading B**

**March 4, 2012**

Read the passage at the bottom of this post: [Mark 9:2-9, The Message](#) or [Mark 9:2-9, The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click [here](#) for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Sermon by the [Rev. Dr. George Hermanson](#), "[Farewell Tour](#)."

This passage requires reading the First Testament passages about the prophet Elijah, 2 Kings 2:1-12: [The Message](#) or [The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Just as he later does when he goes to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane ([Mark 14:33](#)), Jesus selects Peter, James, and John to accompany him. He leads them up a high mountain. Although unnamed and unstated, a "high mountain" is a "thin place," a place that is close to the spiritual realm, a place for sacred encounters.

Elijah and Moses represent the Prophets and the Law. Their talking with Jesus would signify the high spiritual status of Jesus.

Because Elijah was lifted up into the heavens before his physical death, he is still looked to by Jews today as a fore-runner of the Messiah. This is the role that Jesus ascribes to John the Baptist (Mark 9:13)

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(An interesting experience that Elijah, Moses and Jesus share is their 40 day fast: Exodus 34:28, 1 Kings 19:8, and Matthew 4:2)

Mark begins his Gospel, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (Mark 1:1)

The title, "Son, the Beloved," was earlier heard by Jesus at his baptism as a voice coming from heaven. (Mark 1:11)

It is now confirmed to Peter, James and John by a voice coming from a cloud.

They are also instructed to "Listen to him," which suggests that Jesus is of higher status than Elijah and Moses. Indeed, Jesus is "my Son, the Beloved." The only human in the Gospel of Mark who ever ascribes this title to Jesus is the Roman centurion soldier who was present at Jesus' execution. (Mark 15:39)

Peter's offer to build three dwellings for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah provides a little comic relief, for, as the text says, they were terrified out of their minds and did not know what to say.

Jesus urges Peter, James and John to tell no one about what they had seen until after his resurrection because in Jesus' day making any public claim to fame was shameful in the extreme. Others could give you honour and glory. But anything less than personal modesty would cause Jesus and his followers to lose public support and be scorned as mere attention seekers.

The Transfiguration is an apt Preface to Lent and Jesus' journey to Jerusalem because what lies ahead is both a confrontation between the non-violent justice of the Kingdom of God and the violent injustice of the Roman Empire; as well as the non-violent way of the Beloved versus the hoped-for victory by the Messiah.

The crowds at Jerusalem will be cheering for "the one who is bringing the Kingdom of our ancestor David." This is not the same as welcoming God's Beloved.

I wonder how much in our hearts, we are still cheering for Jesus as the triumphant Victor?

David Ewart

[www.holytextures.com](http://www.holytextures.com)

Historical background information in this post is drawn primarily from Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, see link below, pages 183-184.

\* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.

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### Mark 9:2-9 (NRSV)

<sup>2</sup> Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" <sup>8</sup> Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

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### Mark 9:2-9 (The Message)

<sup>2</sup> Six days later, three of them *did* see it. Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain. His appearance changed from the inside out, right before their eyes. <sup>3</sup> His clothes shimmered, glistening white, whiter than any bleach could make them. <sup>4</sup> Elijah, along with Moses, came into view, in deep conversation with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Peter interrupted, "Rabbi, this is a great moment! Let's build three memorials—one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> He blurted this out without thinking, stunned as they all were by what they were seeing.

<sup>7</sup> Just then a light-radiant cloud enveloped them, and from deep in the cloud, a voice: "This is my Son, marked by my love. Listen to him."

<sup>8</sup> The next minute the disciples were looking around, rubbing their eyes, seeing nothing but Jesus, only Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> Coming down the mountain, Jesus swore them to secrecy. "Don't tell a soul what you saw. After the Son of Man rises from the dead, you're free to talk."

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