

Who are the people at the top of your list that you would like to meet? Maybe it's a sports figure like Larry Bird, Magic Johnson, Nick Foles; maybe it's a historical figure like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, or Harriet Tubman; maybe it's Chip and Joanna Gaines, Dude Perfect or Justin Timberlake. What would you do if you actually got to meet them?? Ask for an autograph, ask for advice, never wash the hand they shook? Maybe you'd be like the kid at the super bowl who got a selfie with Justin Timberlake during the half time show. In our passage today, we find Jesus and His inner core of disciples, Peter, James and John at the top of a mountain in the region of Galilee and they have an experience kind of like the kid at the super bowl. First they get to see Moses the leader whom God used to bring the Israelites out of 400 years of slavery in Egypt, through the parted Red Sea. Moses also spent time on Mt Sinai with God as He delivered the 10 commandments and the laws for this nation and who lead the nation through the wilderness for 40 years. He represented the Law and the founding of the very nation of Israel. This was huge for Peter, James and John – Moses was one of the most historical figures in their nation and talked about and revered from generation to generation. On top of that, they got to see Elijah - one of the huge heroes of the faith who was a prophet, a true messenger of God in a time of remarkable apostasy and debauchery under the leadership of Ahab and Jezebel in the kingdom of Israel. It was this Elijah who was at the center of an epic battle against the prophets of Baal. Elijah prayed to God and called down fire from Heaven that consumed an altar of sacrifice saturated in water and the fire consumed a moat of water and the very rocks of the altar. All this after the prophets of Baal tried to call fire from heaven and danced and chanted and carried on for a long time with no results. Elijah taunted them and suggested that maybe they needed to yell louder because Baal was asleep or away on a trip – maybe not the most humble of acts, but it's pretty funny! Elijah and Moses – dead for centuries and right in front of their very eyes.

Well Peter is so excited – he doesn't know what to do, but because he's Peter – he's going to do something! So he suggests to build a shelter, a tent for each of these guys to try and preserve this momentous occasion. Maybe that was the equivalent of taking a selfie and posting it on facebook or instagram! Luke is gracious and says Peter "did not know what he was saying." Because it is at this point that the cloud descends and envelops them and they hear God say "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." When the cloud lifts, Moses and Elijah were gone. You see Moses and Elijah were huge – but they were just men. At first glance, building a couple of tents doesn't seem like a big deal, but building shrines on top of mountains to false gods is what got Israel in trouble previously and led to the defeat and exile of the nation. Jesus is God's Son – there is no parallel. As awesome as Moses and Elijah were, being with and learning from Jesus was to be with and learn from God Himself – the one who worked through Moses and Elijah. God intends for Him alone to be the focus of our worship. The earthly leaders that God gives us are great and very important to our lives – but we should never confuse them with our God who put them in those positions and equips them for service. No matter how great they are at crossfit.

[God alone is the focus of our worship.](#)

[Luke 9:34-36a](#)

[While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone.](#)

Drawing close to God and experiencing His glory is great. Peter does get that right when he says “Master, it is good for us to be here.”

Being in God's glory is good for us.

Luke 9:33 ...“Master, it is good for us to be here.”...

But as Jonathan alluded to a few weeks ago, God's glory is something we've heard and read, but maybe it's a little difficult to articulate what it means. Maybe it seems a little abstract.

Weight or Worthiness of God → His greatness or splendor or brilliance.

Experiencing God's glory – reminds of us who He is in all His fullness and virtue.

Our God is not small, nor weak, nor slow, He does not make mistakes and does not operate in luck or coincidences. Experiencing His glory re-orient us that He alone is God Almighty – All knowing, all powerful and completely righteous

Being in God's glory re-orient us.

Luke 9:35- A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.”

Exodus 34:5-8⁵ Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. ⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.” ⁸ Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped.

Being in God's glory is illuminating:

When Moses was on Mt Sinai, he came down radiating the glory of God from his encounter with Him. We see in this account of the transfiguration, Jesus is glowing as well – Luke describes it “as bright as a flash of lightning.” The difference is Moses was *reflecting* God’s glory – Jesus was letting His own glory shine through. It was not a reflection – it was the real thing. Again, this is a distinction between God and the leaders He puts in our lives. Revelation 21 tells us that His glory will illuminate Heaven and that there will be no need for sun or moon

Experiencing God’s glory in illuminating:

²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

It is also illuminating in the sense that when we experience God’s glory, we see more clearly our brokenness and our need for Him. It’s kind of like the gym for me. Before I go to the gym, I feel like I’m pretty fit. At the gym I see the guys who clearly lift a lot more weights than me or can run laps around me my self-assessment falls flat. That is why all fall to the ground when they encounter Him – but the great thing is, the good news is His mercy bridges the gap between His worthiness and greatness and beauty and our brokenness. When we examine ourselves in the light of God’s glory we can’t help but to see the flaws and shortcomings – the brokenness and sinfulness. But when we put our trust in Jesus Christ, when the Father looks at us He sees not our failure but the perfection of Jesus Christ – He sees us not as the out of shape 40 something but like the guy who is totally fit. Isaiah’s encounter with God is a great example of this recognition of shortcomings.

God's glory illuminates our sin:

Isaiah 6:1-5 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.⁵ "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

NKJV I am ruined → I am undone

Being in God's presence, experiencing His glory is great for us and needed. Master, it is good that we are here! It brings clarity and certainty – for Peter, James, and John – they heard the Father say "This is my Son, my Chosen One, listen to HIM!" Reset – recharged. It also illuminates our need for Him in light of our brokenness.

When we gather together to Worship, it's a small picture of that time to come in Heaven when we'll experience His glory all the time. Here we draw close to Him, experience His brilliance, hear from Him and we see areas in our lives that need change. It is a time of strengthening in our faith and encouragement in the community of like-minded people who love Jesus. It's such a special, needed time – that is why it is a priority for us and because He is worthy.

One of my fondest memories is Saturday mornings. My dad would get up before everyone else and begin making eggs, bacon, toast, grits, and depending on the

time of year fresh peeled and sliced tomatoes from the garden. My brothers and I would straggle in and fix our plates – you just didn't want to be last because you were likely to not get many eggs or you got the bottom of the pot of grits which was thick and chunky. After the initial fog cleared, those were some of the best meals and times together as a family. We would joke and laugh at stories, and enjoy a great meal. It was a time to become strengthened and invest in our family relationships. Those were amazing times. But it didn't end there. As much as I might have wanted to watch Looney Tunes or Ric Flair, there was work to be done. Sometimes that meant cutting grass, cutting wood, raking leaves (you've never seen so many leaves as our front yard.) We would work to sun down and be all tuckered out. You see, while the breakfast was awesome and needed – it didn't end there. There was work to be done. And we could find joy in the work because of that time of strengthening and encouragement together.

Moses had an amazing encounter with God on the top of Mt Sinai (Exodus 33), but he didn't stay there. He had work to do in leading the nation of Israel. Elijah had an encounter with God on the same mountain centuries later (1st Kings 19), but he didn't stay there. He still had work to do. Isaiah 6:8 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" Similarly – Jesus, Peter, James, and John don't stay on top of the mountain. They come down and enter an ugly scene of chaos and pain. The book of Mark records it this way.

We can't stay on the mountaintop, but need to enter the chaos.

Mark 9:14-18

When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked. A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

Mark tells us there is an argument going on within the crowd between disciples and scribes. There is a distraught father with a son suffering from seizures and the other disciples had been powerless to help. Our family knows first hand what it feels like to watch a loved one to be suddenly, unexpectedly thrown into a seizure. Each time Julia had a seizure it was heartbreaking and you lived life thinking what if she has a seizure doing this... ..and you feel powerless. When Jesus assesses the situation His response is "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you. Bring your son here." That is a pretty strong rebuke. We won't dive fully into that, but in Mark the disciples asked why they couldn't cast out this spirit and Jesus's response is that "this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." The implication is that they were relying on their own strength and not the intercession of God. They were relying on their abilities and not God. It isn't the mechanics of addressing a few sentences to God in earnest with the proper wording and hands properly folded, but really recognizing the need for God's intercession and the limitations of our strength and abilities. When we tie back into God intentionally and on a regular basis, we can maintain this attitude of dependence on

God. I wonder if Peter, James, and John came down the hill without Jesus would they have been able to cast out this spirit because they had just enjoyed the glory and presence of God? I like to think they would and if we fast-forward we get a glimpse in Acts 3 when Peter and John encounter a man crippled from birth, Peter says “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” And the man does walk and praises God and later Peter challenges the crowd who is amazed “Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?” “ By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.”

We can't move the chaos towards the kingdom in our own strength:

Mark 9:28-29: After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn't we drive it out?” He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

Acts 3:12&16 Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?” “ By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.”

And then we see at the end of this account in Luke 9:43, that it comes back to God's glory. “And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.” Megaleiotis is the Greek word for greatness which also translates: glory or splendor:—magnificence, majesty, mighty power.

You see a cycle here which is really neat - when we draw strength from Him and His glory and then in His power we bring His love, mercy and grace to the chaos around us God receives glory.

So now what? If you haven't already, make it priority to join in worship. To be strengthened, renewed, challenged and grown, and encouraged – so that you can enter the chaos. So that you can enter the pain and angst and confusion of your family, of your friends, classmates, coworkers, the guy at Dunks, the lady in market basket distraught because she is having a hard time managing three kids through the store, the family down the street shattered by opioid addiction or unfaithfulness in marriage, the guy fresh out of prison for sexual crimes, the guy protesting in anger and pain who thinks you have the IQ of a Neanderthal because of your faith. Why would we ever want to do that, to get dirty, to get hurt? Because our Lord Jesus Christ did it for us. It doesn't have to be dramatic, front page type of things. Bari met an older lady named Francis. And Francis needed some help. She was lonely, had little family support, not very good managing her finances, and deaf. She lived about 20 minutes away, but for a stretch she had a significant presence in our lives. Bari loved on this lady – spent time with her, helped her with finances, and was just a friend to someone who needed one. It wasn't convenient or easy or pretty, but Bari took advantage of this opportunity to love like Jesus. At the bottom of the spreadsheet, it didn't add up in her favor, but God was glorified and Francis was lifted up.

Maybe you are here this evening and God's glory, Elijah and Baal, transfiguration, healing from seizures – maybe that is all a bit foreign to you. Maybe you can't make sense of all of this, but something is tugging at your heart. Maybe you're like the father of the boy who had this exchange with Jesus in Mark's account:

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Help me overcome my unbelief! We all struggle at times with difficult truths. None of us have it all figured out – and we don't have to. Jesus is looking for a willing heart. Meet Him in your chaos with a willing heart – it isn't a recipe for an easy life and rainbows and unicorns, but it is a path of hope in a time to come, there is confidence in that we serve a God who loves us so much that He willingly entered our chaos.

As we close, I want you take hold of a few things - to enjoy time in God's glory – look forward to it, be encouraged, be strengthened, but leave the mountain, leave the pew, leave the breakfast table to get dirty, to get tired, to be poured out sharing the love of Christ in word and deed. Sharing the love and hope that we have in the midst of difficult circumstances to make an immediate and an eternal difference in others' lives leading them to benefit from God's glory.