**THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

**CHRIST REVEALED**

**Luke 9:28-36**

**INTRODUCTION**

Please open your Bibles to Luke 9. Today we continue our series in the Gospel of Luke called "Finding Certainty in a World of Doubt".

There was a time in my life when I used to love watching action movies. I wanted to see things blow up. I wanted to see the bad guys die. If a good guy or two had to die as well, that was ok, as long as the bad guy was dead too.

But over the past few years, something has changed in me. I can barely watch any sort of violence any more, even if it's done to a bad guy. What's even worse for me is seeing the good guys die. I know that the good guys will eventually win, but that doesn't make it any easier for me to watch.

This is one of the reasons I am thankful for the invention of streaming services. Generally speaking, I think streaming services do more harm than good, because they give people unlimited access to an almost unlimited number of entertainment options that can be accessed at any time. As a result, it's not uncommon for people to use up all their free time "binge watching" shows.

One of the good things that have come out of streaming services is the ability to pause the show. I do this all the time. When the action gets too intense, or when a good guy's life is being threatened, then all I have to do is hit pause. At that point, I do one of the following: I go on the internet to read a summary of the plot in order to find out what happens next, I fast forward, or I do both.

Life can be like that too. Sometimes life gets so intense, painful and difficult that all we want to do is hit pause and fast forward to the end. We may believe that everything's going to eventually work out, but we can't wait until then. We need to know how everything's going to work out right now.

In our text today, Jesus is going to do exactly that. He is going to give some of the apostles a glimpse of what's to come later, so that they can persevere through the trials they're about to face now. And as we look at how Jesus does this, we will also see how Jesus helps us to trust him and obey him, even if we don't know exactly how everything's going to work out.

The title of this message is **Christ Revealed**. My aim today is to show you that Our Confidence in Christ Determines Our Confidence During the Trials and Difficulties of this Life.

We will have three points today:

(1) Christ's Glory Strengthens Us

(2) Christ's Mission Saves Us

(3) Christ's Authority Rules Us

(1) **CHRIST’S GLORY STRENGTHENS US**

Our text today begins after a crucial turning point in the Gospel of Luke which we saw last Sunday, where Jesus finally revealed his true identity and mission: he is “The Christ of God”, who had come to suffer, be rejected, and killed at the hands of men. This was a crucial turning point in the gospel because, up until then, the question, “Who is Jesus?” was an open-ended one. As Jesus worked miracles and preached the good news of the Kingdom of God from town to town, people everywhere were asking each other, “Who is Jesus?” Is he a prophet? Is he a resurrected John the Baptist? Is he another ancient prophet who has returned from heaven? Or is he a heretic who must be eliminated?

This question, “Who is Jesus?” relates to Luke’s original purpose for writing his gospel. Remember that Luke wrote this book to a believer named Theophilus. We don’t know much about Theophilus, but we do know that he was struggling with his faith. It may have been because of all the persecution that Christians were facing at the time, or it may have been because he was a wealthy aristocrat in a religious movement that was largely made up of the poor. We don’t know. What we do know is that Luke wrote this book to help Theophilus grow in the certainty of his faith. As he wrote in Luke 1:3-4,

“…[I]t seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”

Now that we’re nine chapters into Luke’s gospel, we can see how Luke went about helping Theophilus grow in the certainty of his faith. He didn’t use philosophical arguments (though there’s certainly a place for that). Instead, he slowly and gradually answered the question, “Who is Jesus?”

That is where true certainty of faith comes from. It comes from asking the question, “Who is Jesus?” and believing that he is the Christ of God, who came to suffer, be rejected, and be killed at the hands of men. Certainty about Jesus is the key to certainty of faith. We need to know *who* Jesus is, and *what* Jesus came to do. If we don’t, then no amount of apologetics and philosophy will convince you that you can be certain in your faith in Jesus.

After Jesus revealed his identity and mission, he went on to describe the identity and mission of all who would follow him. They must deny themselves, and take up their crosses daily and follow him. This meant that, like their Master, they also must suffer, be rejected, and possibly killed for the sake of following him. If the world hated Jesus, then the world will hate those who follow him as well.

It’s never easy being told that you’re going to suffer. Indeed, I don’t think there’s any harder news to receive. Think about a person first receiving the news that they have cancer that’s going to take years to treat. How hard would that be? How hard would it be to prepare yourself to face all the pain that is to come?

In times like that, people need one thing: hope. Hope is what we need to persevere through pain. Hope is what tells you that all the pain will be worth it, because a day is coming when things will get better.

That’s why Jesus does what he does in our text today. His purpose is to give his followers hope through the suffering that all who follow him will face.

Verses 28-29 say, “Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.”

Matthew and Mark give us a few more details about what happened up there on the mountain:

“And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.” (Matt. 17:2)

“And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.” (Mark 9:2-3)

What’s going on here? Jesus had just told his apostles who he truly is. Now he decides to show them.

There on the mountaintop, after spending time in prayer with his Father, he unveils the divine nature which he shares with his Father. Of course, it wasn’t a full disclosure of his deity, for if the three apostles saw Jesus fully revealed with merely mortal eyes, they would have melted away before him. No, this wasn’t a full unveiling of his true power and glory. It was only a glimpse, a slight parting of the curtain, so that the apostles could get a taste of the heavenly realities yet to come.

This is what we need to persevere through the suffering, the rejection, and the self-denial that comes from following Jesus. We need glimpses of Jesus in the fullness of his glory. Why? Because when we see him as he truly is, it reminds us that this world isn’t our true home. It doesn’t represent ultimate reality. There are many beautiful things in this world, but they are mere shadows compared to the glory of Christ and his Kingdom that all who trust in him will one day see.

It’s no different with our physical bodies. There are beautiful people in this world, but they are only beautiful according to the standards of this world. Those standards aren’t going to last. They’re going to completely change when Christ returns in his glory. The people in this world can put on all the makeup they want to try to look radiant, but none of them will actually shine. The people in this world can wear all the finest clothes, but none of them will be robed in light. Compared to Jesus, the most beautiful person in the world is like a light bulb trying to compete with the sun. There is just no comparison.

So how do we behold Christ’s glory? After all, Jesus isn’t physically with us anymore. He’s not walking around ready to take us up to have our own mountaintop experience with him. Where do we behold Christ’s glory now? The answer is that we behold Christ’s glory by remembering, rehearsing, and rejoicing in the gospel. This is what Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:4:

 “…[Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing *the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ*, who is the image of God.”

Do you see what Paul is saying here? He’s telling us that the glory of Christ is found in *the gospel*.The gospel *is* the glory of Christ. It is the good news that Jesus the Son of God became a man, lived a perfect life, died on a cross for sinners, rose again on the third day, ascended in glory, reigns at God’s right hand, and will one day come back to judge the living and the dead, that reveals his glory to us. When we remember, rehearse, and rejoice in these truths, we aren’t just going through a mental exercise. We are beholding the glory of Christ, and that alone gives us the strength to endure through the sorrows of this life.

This is why it’s absolutely crucial that churches base everything they do and say on the gospel. There’s too much suffering and pain in this world to do anything else. People don’t need to hear “everything’s going to get better. Don’t worry.” That’s not enough. People need to hear of Christ. They need to hear that Christ will make everything better. It is only through his life, death, and resurrection that we have any hope in this world. But if we truly grasp, cherish, and cling to the gospel, then we have a hope that will carry us through every storm of life.

(2) **CHRIST’S MISSION SAVES US**

The gospel is central to every part of the Christian life, and it was also central to what Jesus came to do. We’ll see that in the next part of our text as we move on to our second point: Christ’s Mission Saves Us.

Luke tells us in verses 30-31 that “two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

What an incredible meeting! Moses and Elijah, two heroes of the Old Testament, make a reappearance in salvation history and stand with Jesus on this mountaintop. God used both of these men to accomplish his mighty works in Israel’s early history. They were so significant that God did something for both of them that he did not do for the vast majority of Old Testament figures: he took them to heaven himself. For Moses, Deuteronomy 34 tells us that God himself buried him. It was such an intimate time between God and Moses that Deuteronomy tells us that no one knows where Moses was buried. Similarly, 2 Kings 2 says that, when Elijah’s work on earth was finished, God took him up to heaven in a whirlwind, surrounded by chariots and horses of fire.

But why are these two men appearing with Jesus now? What does their presence represent? The answer is that, together, these two men represented the entirety of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was often referred to as “The Law and the Prophets”. Here, we have Moses, who brought the Law, and Elijah, who was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. In other words, in this meeting between Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, we have a visual depiction of how the Law and the Prophets related to Jesus.

What is that relationship? How are the Law and the Prophets to relate to Jesus? We find the answer in what Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus about. Verse 31 says that they “spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

Think about all the things these three men could have spoken about, and what that would have revealed about the relationship between the Law and the Prophets and Jesus. If Jesus were inferior to them, then you would have expected him to ask them questions. Moses and Elijah would have been his teachers and his mentors, the ones who were sent by God to instruct him on the Law, the Prophets, and God’s plan of salvation. But that’s not what they spoke about.

If Jesus were equal to them, then you would have had some back and forth. Elijah may have said, “You fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish? That’s pretty neat. I fed a widow and her son for months with nothing but two jars of flour and oil.” Or Moses could have said “You cast out a legion of demons? That’s not bad, but I drowned an entire Egyptian army.” That’s not what their conversation was like either.

Instead, they spoke about one thing: Jesus’ “departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” This is what Moses and Elijah came to speak to Jesus about: his “departure”. They’re not speaking about his departure *to* Jerusalem. They’re speaking about the departure that he would *accomplish at* Jerusalem.

What is this referring to? The majority of Jesus’ ministry was done in the areas surrounding Jerusalem, and yet, you could say that one of the main themes of Luke’s Gospel is Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. For example, a little later in 9:51, Luke writes,

“When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

Then later in Chapter 13, Luke writes:

“He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.” (v. 22)

What was supposed to happen in Jerusalem that made it so significant that, out of all the things Moses and Elijah could speak to Jesus about, they chose to speak of that? The answer of course is his death. Jesus would be arrested in Jerusalem, tried in Jerusalem, mocked in Jerusalem, beaten in Jerusalem, and flogged in Jerusalem. And after all this was done to him, Jesus would be taken to a hill just outside Jerusalem, where he would be crucified and executed.

Moses and Elijah came to speak to Jesus about the cross, because both the Law and the Prophets would be fulfilled on the cross. Jesus hanging on that cursed tree for our sins is the focal point of all salvation history. Everything in the Law and the Prophets testifies in some way to Jesus’ death on the cross to satisfy the wrath of God against our sins.

We don’t need to look any further for an example of this than verse 31. If your Bible has footnotes, you may have noticed the little footnote in verse 31, where the Bible translators tell us that the word used for “departure” is actually the word “exodus”. Jesus was about to accomplish an *exodus* in Jerusalem. Of course, this wasn’t the first exodus. Hundreds of years before this mountaintop event, Moses led Israel in a great Exodus out of Egypt as God freed his people from slavery. But now, Jesus was going to lead God’s people in a second Exodus, a greater exodus that would free God’s people from their slavery to sin.

Jesus wasn’t inferior to Moses and Elijah. Nor were they his equals. Jesus was just as superior to them as the work he would do was superior to theirs.

Jesus didn’t just come to add to the Law and the Prophets. He came to fulfill them. He came to show the world how all of salvation history pointed to him, and to his work on the cross. Jesus himself would make this clear after his resurrection, when, on the road to Emmaus, he would teach two of his disciples how,

“…beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:27)

The cross is the key to understanding all of Scripture. It doesn’t matter if you’re reading the Law of Moses or the miracles of Elijah. All of it is meant to point us to Christ and him crucified. If we miss this, we will miss the point. We can read all we like, study all we like, and teach all we like. If we don’t get the cross, then we won’t get God’s Word.

But if we do get this, then reading the Scriptures will never be the same again. Teaching the Scriptures will never be the same again. Every time we pick up the Bible, the burning question in our hearts must be, “Where is Christ? Where is the cross? How does this verse, or passage, or chapter, or book, point me to my Saviour and to my salvation?”

One of my favourite books is *The Jesus Story-Book Bible*, written by Sally Lloyd-Jones. It’s a children’s Bible, but both Nina and I often feel that our souls are fed by its rich insights. I would guess that we’ve read all 350 pages of this children’s Bible with our kids at least 8 times already. Listen to what Lloyd-Jones writes in the first chapter of this precious children’s Bible:

“There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them.

It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story. And at the center of the Story, there is a baby. Every Story in the Bible whispers his name. He is like the missing piece in a puzzle – the piece that makes all the other pieces fit together, and suddenly you can see a beautiful picture.”

(3) **CHRIST’S AUTHORITY RULES US**

Jesus’ glory gives us hope, and Jesus’ death gives us forgiveness. Both of these, he gives to us freely. We don't have to earn them or work hard so that we can receive them. They are his gifts to us. But though they are gifts, they come with implications for how we are to live our lives. If Christ truly is the Lord of glory and the Saviour of sinners, then he must be obeyed. This leads to our third point: Christ's Authority Rules Us.

Luke reminds us in verse 32 that Jesus, Moses, and Elijah weren't alone on the mountaintop. Peter, James, and John were there as well. We just didn't notice them because they had fallen asleep! They were so weighed down by exhaustion that they slept through the majority of this amazing event.

Lucky for them, they woke up in time to see Jesus transfigured and Moses and Elijah standing with him. They must have gazed in awe as this heavenly council of godly men discussed what was to come. They were enjoying the sight so much that, when it came time for Moses and Elijah to depart, Peter said in verse 33, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."

When I was a teenager, I went to an overnight camp organized by my highschool. It was called "Project Spirit". If you've ever been to an overnight summer camp full of hormonal teenagers, you'll know what kind of camp I’m talking about. Lots of silly games, lots of late nights, lots of long talks by the camp fire, and lots of sentimentality. On the last night, after everyone had signed each other's T-shirts and the whole camp was gathered around the camp fire one last time, the Grade 12 students led us in a song that went like this: "mmhmm I want to linger, mmhmm a little longer, mmhmm a little longer here with you my friend." Nobody wanted to leave and return to the real world. Everyone wanted to stay in this make-believe world called highschool camp.

Verse 33 was Peter's way of saying, "I want to linger here a little longer." He didn't want to leave that mountaintop and return to the real world. He wanted to stay and enjoy this heavenly sight of heavenly beings. Peter, however, doesn't tend to give much thought to his words before he says them. Luke actually tells us in verse 33 that Peter proposed to set up these three tents "not knowing what he said."

But as he was saying these things, verse 34 tells us that "a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!'

One more voice enter this meeting between heavenly beings and mortal men. It's God the Father’s voice. There are only two times in the entirety of Luke's Gospel where the Father speaks in such a way that everyone can hear him: at Jesus' baptism in Chapter 4, and here at Jesus' transfiguration. On the first occasion, this is what the Father said:

"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." (verse 22)

It's amazing that, on the only two occasions that God chooses to speak audibly, he affirms Jesus as his Son. He wants everyone to know that he relates to Jesus as his Son, and Jesus relates to God as his father. But there are differences between what God says here and what God said at Jesus' baptism, and that’s what I want to highlight.

The first difference is that God calls Jesus his "Chosen One" in our text. “Chosen One” was another title for the Messiah. And so, we see Peter revealing Jesus’ true identity in verse 20 – he is “The Christ of God” – and now God confirms that this declaration was true. He is God’s “Chosen One”. As one commentator put it, this is God's "Amen!" to Peter's confession. There can be no doubt now that Jesus is the Christ. Men have declared it, Jesus has acknowledged it, and now God himself has confirmed it.

The second difference is that God speaks not to Jesus, as he did at his baptism, but to the apostles. And what does he say to them? He says *listen to Jesus*. This is why God doesn't have to speak audibly throughout the rest of Luke's Gospel. Jesus is God's final, authoritative spokesman. When we listen to him, we listen to God. When we don't listen to him, we don't listen to God. Jesus speaks with the very authority of God, and therefore we must submit to his words. Of course, we believe that God can still speak to us as he guides us through life, but there will never again be a time when God speaks to us with the same authority as when he spoke to us through Jesus.

It's remarkable that God told the apostles to listen to Jesus even though two of the most significant figures in the Old Testament are standing right there. He doesn't say, "Listen to Moses and Elijah", or "Listen to the Law and the Prophets". He says, "Listen to Jesus". That's not to say that they are to stop listening to Moses and Elijah. Those who follow Christ must still read the Old Testament. The difference, however, is that how we listen to Moses and Elijah will now be shaped by what Jesus says about them. As Hebrews 1:1-2 says,

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..." (Heb. 1:1-2)

God's words to the apostles in verse 34 had massive implications, but they also had a more immediate application as well. What did Jesus just say to Peter, James, and John before he took them up the mountain?

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (9:23)

Jesus said that following him involves suffering. It involves rejection. It involves dying to yourself and following him on the Calvary Road. But what did Peter want to do instead? He wanted to stay on the mountaintop! He wanted to stay where it was safe and comfortable, where he could just sit back, relax, and enjoy the heavenly show.

That's not what listening to Jesus looks like. That's not what denying yourself, taking up your cross daily, and following Jesus looks like. Yes, there will come a day when we will spend all eternity beholding the glory of Christ in his glorious kingdom, but that day has not yet come. It will come one day, but not yet. Until it comes, we must listen to Jesus and follow him down the mountaintop, where we will carry our crosses as we carry the gospel to the nations.

This is a word we desperately need to hear from our loving, heavenly Father. Listen to Jesus. Listen to his call to deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow him. We laugh at Peter for talking about setting up tents, but we can be just like him. We can get so comfortable beholding Christ in our Christian bubbles, that all we want to do is set up our tents and stay on the mountaintop. Don’t get me wrong. It is *good* to enjoy the glory of Christ as we worship him for saving us. It is *good* to be with God’s people to hear the gospel preached. We were made to remember, rehearse, and rejoice in the gospel together, both in this life and in the life to come. It is *good* to be in this place, because this is what we were made for.

But as good as it is, we can’t stay here. Not yet. Not if we are to follow Jesus. If we are to follow Jesus, then we must continue to live as Christ’s witnesses in a world that will reject us just as it rejected him. We must continue not only to behold the glory of Christ, but call others to behold with us, so that more and more people will come to know our glorious Saviour.

**CONCLUSION**

Are you listening to Jesus today? I’m not talking about listening with comprehension. I’m talking about listening with obedience. Are you reading Jesus’ words in the Bible to get something for yourself, or are you reading his words to *give* something *of* yourself? When you listen to the Word preached Sunday after Sunday, are you changing the way you live, or are you continuing on as if Jesus had not spoken to you?

Listening to Jesus is hard. It takes planning. It takes willpower. It takes giving up what you may think is best for you, and taking up what God says is best for you. Listening to Jesus takes work, and it will often come with the pain of rejection from the world. Humanly speaking, it is an impossible task.

But we do not operate on a merely human level. The resurrected and glorified Christ dwells within us by his Spirit, and he empowers us to do what is impossible for ourselves to do.

Let us listen to Jesus. And as we listen to Jesus, let us behold him. Let us behold his glory in the gospel, for it is in his perfect life, sacrificial death, and triumphant resurrection that we will find all we need to obey him with all joy and perseverance.