

Citizenship 104 (Power and Glory) –Mark 9:2-29
Saint Marks UMC, Charleston, WV Transfiguration Sunday (February 10) 2013

²And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; I listen to him.” ⁸And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

⁹And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. ¹¹And they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” ¹²And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.”

¹⁴And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. ¹⁶And he asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” ¹⁷And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” ¹⁹And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.” ²⁰And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. ²²And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But **if you can do anything**, have compassion on us and help us.” ²³And Jesus said to him, “**‘If you can!’** All things are possible for one who believes.” ²⁴Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” ²⁵And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” ²⁶And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. ²⁸And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁹And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer [and fasting.]”

In this sermon series Citizenship 101 through 104, we are studying the most important thing Jesus taught – in his preaching, in his miracles, in his teaching, in his living, in his dying, and in his living: the Kingdom of Heaven (Kingdom of God.) What does it mean for us to claim OUR citizenship in this Kingdom – or, as Paul says, to be AMBASSADORS for that Kingdom in this place? What does it mean for us who operate out of this embassy called Saint Marks?

In the **first lesson (101)** we looked at our **IDENTITY: We are beloved children of God, precious and beautiful to behold.** That is who we are. That is the location and origin of our worth, our value. **We do not have to aspire to BECOME ANYTHING in order to be worth something.** **We already are.** It comes from the King, from the Creator, in Whose very image we have been lovingly made.

In the **second lesson (102)** we learned our **PURPOSE**. Jesus went back home, to Nazareth, and he preached his INAUGURATION address – saying what his life and ministry are about:

Turning things upside down - good news to the poor; release for the captives; recovering of sight to the blind; setting at liberty those who are oppressed; and proclaiming the year of the Jubilee

Then in **Citizenship 103**, we were reminded that there is a cost to citizenship. One of the most important costs is that of LETTING GO, in order for God's Kingdom to work through us.

We must pay the cost. But the biggest cost of all is trusting that God will cover whatever check God asks us to write.

One of the recurring comparisons in this sermon series has been the **COMPARISON OF CITIZENSHIP CHARACTERISTICS**: (a) Kingdom of God and (b) USA.

Both have identities, both have purposes, and both have costs.

But **Power and Glory?** Ah, here we are perhaps going to see a much bigger divide.

What is our Power and Glory, as citizens of this great country? And just how does that perspective shape our view of the Power and Glory of citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

Throughout His ministry – EVEN UP THROUGH HIS HANGING FROM THE CROSS – Jesus had followers AND detractors who thought the REAL POWER was to be found in CONQUERING, *i.e.* POWER OVER. Even while He was dying on the cross to show how much God loves us, people thought that if He had REAL power, God would come in like

- John Wayne with the US Calvary
- either General Patton or Arnold Schwarzenegger keeping their promise backed with great military strength, “I’ll be back!”
- Obi Wan Kenobi with a band of Jedi Knights

all to “save the day.”

One of the best presentations of how Jesus and the forces of the world outside the Kingdom of Heaven live out POWER AND GLORY differently was given in a song from the rock opera JESUS CHRIST, SUPERSTAR. **[Choir rendition, with solos by LaDonna Yaussy & Ryan Hardiman is presented at this time.]**

Simon represents the folks who believe that power means **POWER OVER**. Just take your popular appeal & add a touch of hate at Rome; then we'll have power & glory. (It was a formula followed by several, two of whom were named Simon, whose stories are not known today except by a few students of history.)

Jesus, however, constantly demonstrated in His teaching, His healing, His living, His dying, and His resurrection that **REAL POWER -- KINGDOM OF HEAVEN POWER --** is about **EMPOWERMENT OF**.

The disciples saw the representation of Jesus’ Power and Glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Indeed, some wise people claim that the REAL transfiguration was of Peter, James and John, who were able to see what others could not – even though it wasn’t until after the Resurrection that they understood what they saw that day.)

Like so man of the Renaissance paintings of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

that portray a halo glow around their heads, Peter, James, and John were enabled to see Jesus' Power and Glory shining.

But IMMEDIATELY after this, they were taken down from the mountain, back into the real world – back into the day to day affairs of life where people kept coming back, again and again to Jesus, saying (in a manner of speaking) **WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR ME LATELY, JESUS?**

- We want miracles.
- We want healing.
- Prove that You are the Christ.

And in the midst of all that, we find one of the MOST POWERFUL STORIES IN THE GOSPELS, SHORT OF THE RESURRECTION ITSELF.

Here is this poor man who only wants his son healed – his son who has been possessed by this terrible condition that seems to us much like extreme epilepsy.

And he says to Jesus: ***“If you can do anything?...”***

Jesus turns the question back around on him, to give us this powerful lesson about FAITH: ***“If you can?...All things are possible for one who believes.”***

And then, in absolute sincerity and honesty, this poor suffering man says the words with which almost every person who encounters Jesus since that day can identify: ***“I believe, help my unbelief.”***

The POWER AND GLORY of the Kingdom of God are meant for EMPOWERMENT OF, not in the usual worldly understanding of getting power over someone.

And all we need is FAITH. And ***“I believe, help my unbelief”*** is enough. We just need to believe 50.0001% more than 49.9999% doubt. And Jesus will take care of the rest.

The season of Epiphany began with the Light of the Star – light that transformed baryard straw and manure into a holy tableau.

The season of Epiphany ends (we begin Lent this coming Wednesday) with the holy light of Transfiguration. It shines through Jesus and is passed on to us in the ordinary day to day living of our lives.

The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, Jesus said. It still is.

The POWER and GLORY of that Kingdom are available to US to empower so many.

- If you're looking for a way to get over on somebody,
- to make your life better,
- to win your salvation

you're still thinking too much about yourself.

But if you're willing

- to be last,
- to serve,
- to step out in faith (***“I believe, help my unbelief”***)
- to empower other people's healing ...

Then step up and

- CLAIM THE LIGHT.
- Become a LIGHT BEARER.
- Become one of GOD'S AMBASSADORS who quits saying:
Nothing I can do about it; too big for me to handle.

- Be willing to spend time in prayer and fasting, so that NO DEMON is big enough to stop God's Power from shining through your life – yes, even you; yes, even me.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.