

'And He Said Unto Them, Verily I Say Unto You' - Mar 9:1

by G. Campbell Morgan

The sermon explores the profound truth that the Kingdom of God is established through the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, culminating in His resurrection and power.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, Mark 9:1

Topics: "The Kingdom of God", "The Power of the Cross"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the pivotal moment in Jesus' ministry as He transitions from proclaiming His Messiahship to teaching about His impending suffering and death. He highlights that the Kingdom of God will come in power, but only through the Cross, a concept that perplexed His disciples and remains a stumbling block for many today. Morgan explains that the disciples would witness the Kingdom's power not in its final form, but through the events leading to and following Jesus' death and resurrection. He stresses that true understanding of the Kingdom requires recognizing its establishment through suffering and sacrifice, challenging the notion that it can be built by human means. Ultimately, the sermon calls believers to embrace the Cross as the pathway to experiencing the Kingdom's power.

Transcript

"And He said unto them, verily I say unto you, there are some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God come with power."- Mar 9:1.

Mar 8:27-38 - Mar 9:1-13.

THE stories which we grouped in our last meditation gave a graphic revelation of the conditions obtaining at the end of the second period of the ministry of the Servant of God, which was practically also the end of His more formal and public propaganda. The multitudes were interested, and were prepared to receive His gifts. They were prepared, moreover, to crown Him and follow Him in the establishing of a material kingdom, in which He would supply their needs. The rulers on the other hand, were definitely and desperately hostile to Him. The disciples were dull of spiritual apprehension, needing to be warned against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. At this time in the ministry of our Lord He might fittingly have employed the words of the great Servant of Jehovah, as found in the prophecy of Isaiah:

"Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? For He grew up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised, and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as One from Whom men hide their face He was despised, and we esteemed Him not."

The paragraph now under consideration tells the story of a crisis in the ministry of our Lord, and of a new beginning. In the teaching ministry of Jesus there were two distinct stages. The burden of His early teaching was that of declaring His Messiahship, and of bringing men to understand that He was the Messiah, in fulfillment of prophecy. The second matter of importance in the teaching ministry of our Lord was that He should show men that Messiah must go by the way of suffering and death, to His crowning. Men who were familiar with the ancient prophecies knew full well that the two aspects had been suggested. At the time, however, they were so strangely puzzled by this fact, that there were those who declared that there would be two Messiahs, one, a suffering Messiah, and the other, one who should come in glory, and establish a Kingdom.

In this paragraph we are at the parting of the ways, at the hour of crisis, when He ended the first phase of teaching, and began to devote Himself, within the narrower circle of His disciples, to the second stage. This particular verse has been selected as text because I believe it to be central to the whole paragraph. With slight variation the statement which our Lord made upon this occasion is found in exactly the same contextual relation in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The statement opens chapter nine in Mark's Gospel; and of its placing there, Dr. Morison says:

"It was in a mood of mental somnolence that Hugo de Sancto Caro concluded the eighth chapter with the thirty-eighth verse, and carried forward into a new chapter the verse before us."

Here is one illustration of the unfortunate division of our Bible into chapters. By its system of paragraphing the Revised Version attempts to remedy the blunder, and yet the supreme mistake was a chapter division at all, at this point. Observe the sequence of events. Jesus journeyed north until Caesarea Philippi was reached; and there at some one point, as Mark says, somewhere among those villages, came the sudden halt, and the challenge to His disciples: "Who do men say that I am?" The answers were given, and then He challenged that narrower circle of His own, "Who say ye that I am?" Then came the hour toward which the Lord had been moving, the victory for which He had been working, the hour of illumination, when one man, Peter, made his great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That confession was immediately answered by our Lord with another confession, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Mark does not record this, but Matthew in his Gospel, which is supremely that of the Kingdom, tells the story of that word of Jesus.

Immediately following these confessions of Peter and of Jesus, a new note in the teaching of our Lord was sounded. He "began ... to show unto His disciples, how that He must . . . suffer"; and the use of the word began there, and the emphasis I place upon it, are warranted. Never before had He talked of His coming Cross or suffering. Never before had He spoken of the resurrection which should crown the Cross. Never before had He spoken of the second advent. All this teaching began then. The supreme note of the teaching was that of the Cross.

This gave rise to the fear, born of love, in the heart of Peter that made him say, "Be it far from Thee, Lord"; and called forth the sudden, startling, stern answer of the Lord to the man whom He had commended for

his confession: "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Then followed the teaching of the disciples and the multitudes in the presence of the Cross, His insistence upon the necessity for the Cross; and at the end of that whole incident, the words: "I say unto you, There are some here that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God come with power."

Then there were six days of silence, followed by the transfiguration mount; and after that the descent from the mount, and the conversation by the way.

Thus the text selected is seen as central. It gathers up and emphasizes that teaching of Jesus; first that the Kingdom is to come in power note the confession about the Church-but supremely that the Kingdom can only come in power by the way of the Cross. "There are some here of them that stand by"-a special reference in His mind undoubtedly to His own apostles, although others would be included "who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God come" not in perfection, not in finality, but "in power.

We are at once reminded of a paragraph in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, which has the closest spiritual relation to this word of Jesus (1Co 1:18-25). From the paragraph we select these phrases: "The word of the Cross . . . is the power of God." "Christ crucified . . . the power of God." "Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God come with power.

Our Lord was declaring, not that these men who were round about Him could ever see the Kingdom come in its perfection in the present life. He was declaring to them, startled, amazed, mystified as they were by the strange new thing He was saying, that by that very process from which they were shrinking, and naturally so, the Kingdom of God would come with power.

Now this is still a stumbling-block, not to the Jew alone, but to many others; still foolishness, not to the Greek only, but to many others. This view of the way through which the Kingdom comes continues to baffle the philosophy of the age and the world. These are "the things of God," to which the

In order that this meaning and value of our text may be apprehended, let us consider the ideas of the text in the light of its context; first, the idea of the Kingdom; secondly, the idea of the Kingdom coming in power; concluding with an inquiry as to how these men really saw it come in power.

The Kingdom idea runs throughout the whole of this story.

We are inclined to think, or we sometimes speak as though we were, that our Lord at this point departed from what evidently had been the master passion of His ministry, that namely, of the establishing of the Kingdom of God in the world. We seem to imagine that this reference to the Church, and to the Cross, and to a second advent were all removed from the theme of the Kingdom. It is of supreme importance that we recognize that they are closely related to the purpose of the Kingdom of God. When our Lord challenged these men, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" it was a Kingdom passion that moved Him. With singular daring, and arresting intention, He made human opinion concerning Himself the supreme thing in His ministry. He did not ask what men thought of the things He had done. He did not ask what men thought of the things He had said. He asked, "Who do men say that I am?"

In view of all that followed, in view indeed of all that had preceded, wherein we have seen Him moving forward with singular authority and dignity, we immediately recognize that He was seeking to discover whether men would recognize Him as supreme. When the answers came He was not satisfied until He asked the inner circle, "Who say ye that I am?" and one man had confessed Him supreme. That is the real value of the confession. Thou art not John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, a prophet; Thou art not one looking for Another; Thou art the Other for whom all have looked; the last and final One, to the brightness of Whose coming, longing eyes have long been lifted, Messiah, anointed King, and Priest. It was for that confession the Lord was seeking. His question was the question of the King. All prophetic references to Messiah looked upon Messiah as King, through Whom should come the establishment of the Divine Kingdom. This is the real meaning of the word. Christ is but the Greek form of Messiah, or anointed One. Messiah is not a name; Christ is not a name. When we speak of the One Whom we worship as Christ, let us remember that is a title, and not a name; marking the eternal Son of God for one mission and one work. It is the title of an office, the office of supremacy, of Kingship, of the One Whose business it is to ransom men, and realize the Kingdom of God.

All this is patent also if we listen to the confession of Jesus. "Upon this rock I will build My ecclesia, My church." "My ecclesia." This was a word in common use at that time, used of the Hebrew nation as constituting a theocracy, and used in every Greek city with regard to the governing body in the city. It is a word saturated with the ideas of authority and kingship.

When our Lord said, "Upon this rock I will build My ecclesia," He really inferred, Upon this rock I will build My Kingdom. The reference is to the Kingdom realized, the functions and the purpose of the Kingdom revealed through the instrument to be known as His Ecclesia, His Church. The master passion in the heart of Jesus here, as always, was that of the Kingdom, and its establishment.

So also, the function of the Church is essentially revealed: "Upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it," The Church is a conquering Kingdom, bringing all kingdoms into subjugation to itself. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom"; by the Church the moral standards of life are erected and revealed to all kingdoms, until coming into harmony with it, they become the one Kingdom of our God and of His Christ. The supreme idea is that of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom throughout all this period, was not seen in power, but in weakness; an ideal, but not realized; a vision, but not a victory. In the answers that they gave to Him, reporting the things said concerning Him, is a revelation of the failure of the Kingdom ideal. The vast multitudes of men had not seen the Kingdom, and although here was one soul illuminated, so that he confessed Him Messiah, in his halting a moment afterwards was a revelation that the Kingdom seen, was not yet with power. In the "must" of the new unveiling of Jesus, when He said that He must go to Jerusalem, was a revelation of the Kingdom in weakness, for notice with what carefulness He named the opposition that confronted Him in Jerusalem: elders, chief priests, scribes. That was no careless grouping, but the naming of all the authorities within the city; elders, the civic rulers; chief priests, the religious rulers; scribes, the moral rulers. All the authority within the city-civil, religious, moral-was massed against Him. The Kingdom was in weakness; and as He Who represented it, in Whom it was brought, Who had come for its revelation and establishment, moved to the centre of national life, to Jerusalem, He came into the realm of hostility and suffering, and He must suffer, and be killed. The Kingdom in weakness, is the picture presented to us here.

Yet once s more glancing over the picture from another standpoint, the way of the coming of the Kingdom in power is revealed. First, this is seen in the declaration of the Lord Himself. As I hear Him speak and interpret the thing He said in the light of subsequent events, I know that there is a deeper meaning in the "must" of Jesus. When He said the Son of man must go to Jerusalem and suffer, He was not declaring that He was hemmed in by circumstances; He was not declaring that He was the victim of forces that were against Him. Partially, yes, we may have admitted it; but there is a deeper note. The "must" of Jesus is something profounder than that.

In the next book to the Gospel stories, the book of the Acts, I find the first recorded address of this very man, Peter, who made his confession of Christ, and then shrank from the Cross and was so sternly rebuked. In that first address delivered on the day of Pentecost, I find an account of the Cross, strangely full of light. Speaking to these men in Jerusalem, within a few minutes or hours after the illumination of Pentecost had come to him, Peter thus spoke of the Cross: "Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay." Now mark the words of Peter. That to which he referred in the second place was that which has been first in our consideration. Ye rulers of Israel did crucify and slay by the hands of men without the law; that is by Gentile hands, ye crucified Him, and slew Him. Yes! but Peter had now seen something more than that in the Cross, and so he declared that He was "delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." In the "must" of Jesus there was recognition not of the compulsion of circumstances, but of the compulsion of the will of His God, and of His cooperation with God. Into the "must" of Jesus there is gathered the strange and mystic light which reveals Him even at this juncture, not as One going as a Victim to be murdered, but as the one Priest, proceeding as a Victor over all circumstances including the death to which He went, in order that He might accomplish a purpose, and build a Kingdom, and realize the will of God.

That value of the "must" is borne out by the fact that He interpreted His death by His resurrection. When they presently descended from the mount of transfiguration, they inquired what this resurrection from the dead should mean. That was the arresting thing to them. Strangely enough they never seemed to grasp its significance, or to have been able to believe in it, as something to come immediately. Even after He had answered their inquiry, they were inclined to think of resurrection as Martha did. When Jesus said to her, "Thy brother shall rise again," she said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." By which she meant, Do not try to comfort me with a far-off resurrection; I want him now! I think these disciples had the same attitude toward the resurrection. They believed in it as a far-off event.

We must never forget this fact, that there is no instance in these New Testament records of Jesus referring to His Cross, but that at the same time He also referred to His resurrection. The Son of man must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer, and be killed, and the third day rise again. That is not the language of a man who says: I am beaten by circumstances; but I must be loyal to a principle; I must go on, though I die. No! It was the calm, strong, amazing language of One Who saw death interpreted by resurrection; of One Who must suffer and die and be raised again. In the mystic language of our Lord, even though as yet we have not come to the full realization of it, we begin to hear the thunder of His power, and find the Kingdom coming in power.

Then in all the teaching that followed-His stern rebuke of Peter; the statement He made to the multitudes as to the necessity for following Him by the way of the Cross if they would be in cooperation with Him in the building of the Kingdom; and the final and resultant words concerning His second advent in the glory with His Father and with the angels in all these things, we catch the tones of power, and see that our Lord

knew and declared that the Kingdom would only become dynamic by the way of the Cross.

Then followed that wonderful event of the transfiguration. The disciples saw the Lord transfigured. It would be better, perhaps, if we changed the word "transfiguration," anglicizing the Greek word; and read it thus, They saw the Lord metamorphosed. "Transfiguration" is a perfectly accurate word, only we are apt to think of it as though they saw Him with light falling on Him. On the contrary, He Himself was metamorphosed, changed completely in some strange mystery of glorification and realization.

The disciples saw Moses and Elijah talking with Him. Mark does not tell us this; but another of the evangelists. They heard Him talking with them of the exodus that He was about to accomplish; that is, of this going to Jerusalem, and dying, and rising again. Then the disciples said, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." We have been forever criticizing them, and trying to say what they meant when they said that; all the while forgetting that the evangelist tells us that they did not know what they were doing; and did not know what to say, so they said that!

But now observe most carefully that they heard a voice, which said to them, "This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him." There had been six days of silence, because He had brought them face to face with the Cross, and they had shrunk from it. I think this was quite natural. Who could understand this strange mystery that One could build a Kingdom by dying, that One could gain a victory by being defeated, that One could come to crowning by the way of the Cross? Who could understand? We hardly yet believe it! It was revolutionary!

This is surely what they were thinking on the mount. Lord, not that Cross to which Thou art going; let us stay here! Let us build three tabernacles here. Let us stay in this light, in this glory, in this holy conversation. Yet the conversation was of the exodus; and if they had stayed there, the exodus had never been accomplished? The Divine voice rebuked them: "This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him." The supreme and sacramental glory of the mount of transfiguration was not "that of its flashing splendour, but of the conversation concerning the Cross, and the ratification of that conversation and purpose by the Divine voice.

These men saw the Kingdom come in power in His dying, in His rising, and in that immediate spiritual coming again, which took place in their experience on the day of Pentecost.

They saw the Kingdom coming in power in His dying. Grant their terror, their sense of defeat; and yet remember what they saw. During these days they saw things that they hardly saw at the time; but they knew afterwards that they had seen them. Impressions were made upon their souls, the value of which was not immediate, but which came after. In all these last and tragic events they saw the unconquered King. In every incident from that moment of foretelling, to the final act and fact of death, they saw Him moving with authority, with power, with dignity. Take this illustration. One of their own number, Judas, was plotting and planning with the priests for the arrest of his Lord; and in the dark and terrific business we are told that the priests said to Judas, "Not during the feast." Judas took the thirty pieces of silver, the bargain being made, and went with the money, oh! ghastly thing! into the very presence of Jesus, charged by the priests not to betray Him until the feast was over. While Judas was plotting with the priests, Jesus was talking to His disciples, and He said: "After two days the passover cometh, and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified." When Judas came into the presence of Jesus, after a little while Jesus looked at him and said, "That thou doest, do quickly"; and he went out, and betrayed Him at the feast. Not

the priests arranged the hour of His dying, but Jesus Himself.

This same activity in power runs all through. They saw Him in the garden, in the intervals of their sleeping, heard His words as He came back to them through the hours of His agony. They were all kingly words. They saw that strange thing happen in the garden, which we hurry over in our reading too carelessly. When the guard came to arrest Him, led by Judas, Jesus said, "Whom seek ye?" They replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." He said, "I am"; and those soldiers fell backward in His presence. Why? I am not going to answer the question. I have no details, but I pray you, mark it. These disciples saw this strange sight. Something happened that made these men fall back; and then something more wonderful happened, for they bound Him and took Him away. Through the trial they watched Him, some of them, and saw Him kingly, saw Him in the midst of the mock trial solemnly affirm His Messiahship, His Kingship; kingly to the end, until in the final act He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." As we listen we remember words He uttered long before, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." The men about the Cross had killed His body, but His spirit was commended to God, and He died as a King. We remember once again words that He uttered: "No one taketh My life away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." These are the things of the Kingdom in power, strange things, mystic things, things that raise questions, things the full value of which the heart of man challenges, and wonders whether they can be so. These are the things of power; the strange mystery of a kingly dying in agony and pain, and yet in triumph. So they saw the Kingdom of God coming in power; not in finality, but in power.

Then upon the resurrection I need not dwell. About that resurrection Paul said He "was declared the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection of the dead"; and Peter declared: "He begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." In those resurrection days, in the commissions He uttered, and in other appearances, He made them see the Kingdom, no longer as an ideal outside them, but as a power operating within them; until as He had told them in the upper room, He came again, in the coming of the Paraclete.

He so came, and these men began to preach, and they saw the Kingdom without weakness, his strength prevailing amongst the men listening, who had been hostile. Then they knew that this coming of the Kingdom in power, was by the way of the Cross.

These men saw the Kingdom of God come, not in perfection. That has been our mistake in reading our text, as we have interpreted it by the transfiguration mount. Not in perfection, and not finally; but in power; with mastery and force mastering the things against it, and proceeding toward its final glory.

Thus, and thus only the Kingdom still comes in power; only by the way of the Cross; and as the Cross is borne by those who name the Name. It is not easy to believe, and it is less easy to practice. Do we not, even within the Christian Church, often need to hear the rebuke of Jesus as He says to us: "Thou mindest not the things of God but the things of men"? We are seeking to establish the Kingdom by the methods of men, by their policies, and their programmes, and their machinery. The Kingdom of God can never be so established. The Kingdom of God only comes in power by the way of the Cross.

There is one terribly solemn suggestion in this text. Our Lord was speaking in the presence of the multitudes, yet surely with special reference to His own, and He did not say, All shall see the Kingdom of God come in power. He said, "Some here . . . shall in no wise taste of death.

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