

Mark 9:1-9 - “Jesus Rules!”

Pr. Kurt A. Van Fossan - The Transfiguration of Our Lord - 2021

In our closing hymn last Sunday, “Joy to the World,” we sang, “He rules the world” (referring to Jesus). In today’s lingo we might say, “Jesus Rules!” And thank God for that, since Jesus, like the Father and Spirit, loves us and rules all things for our good.

So that this Good News, that “Jesus Rules!,” may continue to transfigure our lives from sinners to saints, let’s consider our Gospel reading from God through St. Mark which speaks of Jesus’ transfiguration. Our text begins by saying, “*After six days.*” Six days after what? Six days after Jesus spoke to a crowd of people (both believers and unbelievers), and said: *Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.*” What does this mean? How would some of them see the kingdom or reign of God come with power?

Most certainly the kingdom/reign or rule of God came visibly in Jesus, but not in a visibly powerful way. He was born of the virgin Mary, who “*wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger*” (Luke 2:7). That’s why, during this season of Epiphany, we have been focusing on some of the visibly powerful events in Jesus’ life which reveal His divine nature as God. Take for example, His powerful authority over every disease and even demons, casting them out with a touch or simply by His spoken word (chapter 5). These were all powerful signs that Jesus is God—that “Jesus Rules!”

But what would be one of the most powerful visible signs that “Jesus Rules”? His resurrection from the dead on the third day, just as He promised. Jesus ruled over all the things that seek to separate us from God, especially death. “Jesus Rules!”

So let’s go back to Mark’s account of Jesus’ transfiguration, in which he speaks of Jesus’ powerful transfiguration in ways which connect it to His powerful resurrection. Take for example the “*six days*” mentioned earlier. It was unusual for Mark to be so precise about the number of days from one event to another. This may, therefore, indicate that he wants us to dig a little deeper into why he mentioned the “*six days.*”

Where else in Scripture do we hear of six days? The six days of creation may be the first thing that comes to mind, which began on a Sunday. Now think of Jesus’ visible and powerful resurrection, also on a Sunday, which marks the beginning of the new creation.

But Jesus’ transfiguration is not only a pre-resurrection glimpse. It’s also a glimpse of Jesus’ return on the last day. We don’t hear of the radiant light of Jesus’ transfiguration at the time of His resurrection, but we do hear of a similar transfiguration light at the time of His return on the Last Day. In Matthew 24:27 Jesus compares His return on the Last Day to the intensely white light of “*lightening,*” which “*comes forth from the east and shines in the west.*”

This does not mean, however, that Jesus will rule only on the Last Day. Jesus Rules the world and all creation right now, but not in such a visibly powerful way. Instead, it appears to us that the forces of evil in us and around us are ruling, causing all sorts of trouble in our lives and the lives of others. That’s one of the reasons Jesus’ transfiguration is so important. Like His resurrection, it is a visible reminder that “Jesus Rules” even when it doesn’t look like it—even during times of trouble, suffering and death.

And that brings us to what’s temporarily bypassed with this transfiguration glimpse of Jesus’ glorious resurrection and return on the Last Day, and that’s the cross—Jesus’ suffering and death, which makes it look like Jesus does not rule. But when you think of Jesus’ death on the cross as the meat, sandwiched between Jesus’ transfiguration and resurrection, God enables us to feast on or think about Jesus’ death on the cross in a new and glorious light.

Instead of seeing Jesus death on a cross as being the sign of a weak “epic fail” when it comes to His rule, Jesus transfiguration and resurrection enables us to see the cross as the epic display of God’s powerful rule of love. Instead of coming to clobber us because of our sins, which is what we all deserve, Jesus comes to be clobbered for our sins on a cross to save us from being clobbered—to deliver us from our sins, death and the devil.

Thus, sandwiched between His transfiguration and resurrection, Jesus’ death on a cross becomes for us a sign not only that “Jesus Rules” over all sin, death and the devil—all the pain, suffering and troubles of this world, but also a sign of His love for all people. “Jesus Rules” in love. He sets us free from the rule of sin and suffering in our lives through His suffering, death and resurrection. Through this Good News the Holy Spirit works to first enable us to rule over the sins in our lives by repenting of our sins and rejoicing in God’s gift of forgiveness. Then He enables us to share Jesus’ rule of love with others.

On this St. Valentine day, which commemorates a third century pastor who ministered to persecuted Christians in the Roman Empire, we might want to edit out the hearts, which are a popular symbol of love today, and replace them with crosses. Instead of using a heart to say I love you (I ♥ you), use the symbol of a cross to say I love you (I ✝ you). We can then explain what this means through our words and actions which speak of and demonstrate our faith in Jesus saving act of sacrificial love for us on the cross.

As members of the body of Christ, His Church, God calls and enables us, through the Good News of Jesus’ rule of love, to rule with Jesus not in a worldly way (riots/ destruction), but in a Jesus way. This rule begins by repenting of our sins and rejoicing in God’s forgiveness. Then it moves us out into the world were we go “*not to be served but to serve, and to give [our lives] as a ransom for many*” (Matthew 20:28) by sharing with others the love of Jesus Christ through our words and actions. This is what St. Paul was talking about in our Epistle reading when He said, “*what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.*”

[Children’s sermon] What’s one of the ways your doctor helps to protect you from the viruses in this world, like COVID-19? They use something like this  to give you a shot. The shot puts a serum into your body (like the red stuff in this needle) that’s suppose to protect you from getting sick.

Do you like shots? Not many people do since there’s a little pain involved. But, if suffering the little pain of a shot can spare us from some big pains later, most people will get a shot.

But what about when it comes to the worst of all viruses; the sin that we’re all born with? If we don’t get a shot of serum to protect you from our sins, our sins will kill us.

Is there such a shot of serum that protects us from our sins and death? Yes! It’s the serum that Jesus, our Great Physician/Doctor came up with through His death and resurrection. By dying on a cross to pay for our sins, and then rising from the dead Jesus shows us that He can do anything, even save us from our sins and death. So, Jesus is our cure for sin and death.

But, how does Jesus put Himself into our bodies? Does He use a big needle like this one ? No! Instead He uses His words in the Bible and the water of Holy Baptism. And to keep us vaccinated from our sins and death, because we keep on sinning, He injects Himself into us whenever we hear or read what He says in the Bible (and whenever we eat the Lord’s Supper).

And the main thing Jesus tells us in the Bible is: “I love you!” He’s tells us this most clearly when He tells us about His death and resurrection for our salvation. This Good News is the serum that saves us from our sins and death so that we can live with God forever

Here’s a book mark to encourage you to keep reading the Bible, where God says “I love you” and continues to give you a painless shot of His eternal life and salvation at the same time!

The best Valentine we can get or give to someone else is the Good News about Jesus’ transfiguration, death and resurrection, where He says “I love you” and continues to give us a painless powerful shot of His eternal life and salvation at the same time! Jesus’ Rule of love! All glory be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.