

Good morning everyone, my name is Mark and I'm one of the pastors here at North Shore Alliance Church. If you've been with us throughout January, you know that we have taken the last 4 Sundays to highlight one of our values, namely, missional living. We believe that God has called us to participate in His mission, bringing the good news of Jesus across the street and around the world.

This morning, I'm going to step back into the preaching series we began last October, and continue to make our way through the Gospel of Luke. The word "gospel" simply means "good news." The first four books of the New Testament are called "gospels" because they tell us about the person and work of Jesus Christ. His birth, His life, His death, resurrection, and ascension are still good news for us and our world today.

You might be just beginning to consider Jesus, or, you might be well along the path—either way, I trust you will encounter Him as good news. I'd like to invite you to open your Bible with me to this morning's text, Luke 9:18-36; you can find our text on page _____ in the Blue Bible in front of you.

"18 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" 19 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." 20 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "God's Messiah."

21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. 22 And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by

the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

23 Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?"

26 Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. 27 "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

28 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. 29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. 31 They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

32 Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. 33 As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

34 While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." 36 When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen."

Let me offer two brief observations before we dive deeper into these texts; here's the first:

- Revelation flows from relationship—it is no accident that Peter's confession and Jesus' transfiguration flows from the place of prayer. Think about it—how do we grow in our knowledge of a friend? We spend time together, we observe, we listen, we talk with each other. Peter's confession—*you are the Messiah*—came by way of revelation, and this revelation came by way of prayer. Eight days later, again, while praying, Jesus and the disciples were caught up in a weight of glory.

Revelation from God, revelation of God, flows from relationship. If you find yourself starving for revelation—hungry for a firsthand knowledge and experience of God—remember that revelation flows from relationship; spend time in the place of prayer, and you will find the One you seek. Here's a second observation:

- While these two events are separated by time—8 days in all—Luke places these texts side by side because they are thematically linked; both texts speak of suffering and glory. And not only are these two events linked, but suffering and glory are themselves linked, in the

person of Jesus and in the life of discipleship He holds out to all who would follow Him.

With these observations behind us, I want to direct your attention to the first text, vs. 18-27, and to the revelation of Jesus as both Suffering Servant and Glorious King.

When Peter named Jesus as the Messiah, he had a particular meaning in mind, a meaning that was shaped less by the Scriptures and more by the culture around him. In 1st century Palestine, there was a national longing for God to send a Messiah, a Deliverer, to throw off Roman oppression.

The moment Peter named Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus set out to explain the path the Messiah would take. In vs. 22, Jesus said, "*The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*" The path Jesus walked would end in glory, but not before He took upon Himself the sufferings of the world.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of Jesus, hundreds of year years before He was born—"*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from who we hide our faces He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment*

that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.”¹

Jesus was God’s Anointed One, the Suffering Servant, and as such He didn’t take a hands off approach to sin. When dealing with hazardous material, people don a hazmat suit, helmet, and gloves to protect themselves from the effects—not so for Jesus. He took the disease of sin and death into His own body, that it might be broken and defeated in His own death and resurrection. It is clear in the ministry of Jesus that suffering preceded glory.

In vs. 26, Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man and spoke about coming “*in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*” Jesus is using the language of Daniel 7, evoking Kingly images: riding on the clouds, clothed with God’s authority—it’s a promise that vindication, glory, and power are coming. The glorious Kingship of Jesus awaited, but suffering would come first.

I want to ask you a question this morning—**if suffering and glory were linked in Jesus’ life, can we not expect a similar link as we follow Him? Is it even possible in following Jesus to take a shortcut around suffering and go straight to the glory?**

illus: On April 21st, 1980, America’s most prestigious road race—the Boston Marathon—was well under way. For over 42 kilometres men and women pushed their bodies, pounding the pavement, seeking the

elusive victor’s crown. When Rosie Ruiz crossed the finish line, the crowd erupted—she had won the women’s race in nearly record time; one of the fittest marathoners Boston had ever seen.

Even more impressive, she looked like she could have run another 42 kilometers—not a hair out of place, and barely breaking a sweat. Quoting now from Time Magazine, “Ruiz made winning a marathon look easy. And it was, using her signature strategy: Don’t run the whole [race].” Ruiz had used Boston transit to get ahead of her competitors.

A few hours after the race, officials became suspicious. Ruiz had beaten the best marathoners in the world, but she was not an elite runner. She’d only run one previous marathon, and that at a much slower pace. The other elite women remarked that Ruiz had not been seen on the course until the last mile of the race.

Her shortcut to victory was exposed for what it was. In both marathons and our discipleship, short cuts don’t lead to the finish line, they lead to dead ends.²

In vs. 23-25, Jesus said “*Whoever wants to be my disciple must [say ‘No’ to themselves]³ and take up their cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?”*

¹ Isaiah 53:3-5.

² <http://time.com/3822577/rosie-ruiz-history/>

³ N.T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone*, 110.

It's not easy saying to "no" to ourselves, and we've got the addictions, the credit card debt, and the broken relationships to prove it. If former generations treated self-control as a virtue, succeeding generations have treated self-control with contempt. We live at a time when the unbridled pursuit of desire has been championed as the greatest good, and human society is reaping the consequences of what has been sown.

The concept of delayed gratification has never been so unpopular. People today place a high value on instancy—we want what we want, and we want it now. We crave transformation, but we want instant results, we don't want a process, and we certainly don't want to push through mess or pain. When the going gets tough, far too many people give up or give in—the muscle of perseverance has been so under-exercised that we've convinced ourselves that anything worth doing should come easily.

Jesus' teaching is counter-intuitive to say the least; He invites us to do the exact opposite of what we are most inclined to do. Instead of pursuing our own desires, Jesus tells us to say "no" to our desires, and "yes" to His. Actually, He said something far more radical—"if you want to save your life, you have to lose it."

What would it look like to lose your life for Jesus sake? What do we stand to lose if we spent our lives on Jesus? The first thing to go is independence, autonomy, and self-rule. Following Jesus means going His way instead of my way. But the more I think about what is lost, the more I see this loss as "gain."

When I let go of the illusion of control, I am ushered into an experience of God's providential care. When I let go of independence in favour of a life centred around Jesus, I find a security, a significance, a love that isn't rooted in how well I perform. When I give up the mad scramble for more things, more accolades, more prestige, I become aware of the eternal inheritance that is waiting for me—an inheritance that will never perish, spoil, or fade.

I am reminded of something the band, Caedmon's Call once wrote, "This world has nothing for me, and this world has everything; all that I could want, and nothing that I need". Let's not make the mistake that Jesus warns against—it's foolish to ascribe eternal significance to things that don't last.

Whatever we give up in the pursuit of Jesus isn't truly lost, it's simply repurposed. Our life isn't "over" when we surrender to Jesus, in fact, true life is just beginning. So don't lose heart when following Jesus becomes difficult, keep pressing in.

The apostle Paul had it right when he said, "*For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.*"⁴

In the time remaining, I want to turn our attention to the second text—Luke 9:28-36. Eight days after Jesus spoke of His upcoming suffering, Peter, James and John joined Him on a mountain top to

⁴ 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, New Living Translation.

pray. Vs. 29-30 says, “*As [Jesus] was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus.*”

The disciples were sleeping, but when they awoke they did not see a Suffering Servant, they saw a Glorious King—Jesus was radiant with glory.

Let me draw your attention to a few details in the text:

- first, the disciples awoke to find Jesus in conversation with Moses and Elijah? Why these two? Moses and Elijah are two of the greatest figures in the Old Testament—these two are representative figures of the Law and the Prophets. All of Scripture, in fact, all of redemptive history, pointed forward to the coming of Jesus. Moses, Elijah, and all of history had been waiting for God’s plan to be fulfilled through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.
- second, in vs. 31 we read that Moses and Elijah were speaking with Jesus about His “departure;” a more direct translation would read, “*They spoke about his exodus, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.*” This word, “exodus,” is meant to set off alarm bells; it draws upon a well known Old Testament story.

God raised up Moses as a Deliverer to set Israel free from her slavery in Egypt. And now God has raised up another Deliverer, Jesus the Messiah. Instead of delivering Israel from Rome, Jesus would set people free from sin’s enslaving power. The texts says that Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about His “departure,” His “exodus”—

they were speaking with Him about His impending death. In order to lead people from death to life, Jesus Himself would suffer death on behalf of the world.

- third, notice Peter’s response. When Peter saw Jesus’ glory, and Moses and Elijah beginning to leave, Peter wanted to freeze this moment in time. “*Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.*”

Reading between the lines, here’s what Peter was saying: “*You see Jesus—this glory—this is what I want for You and for us. All that talk about suffering...what we have right here, this is good—there’s no reason to leave. Why don’t we build three vacation properties on this exact spot? Let’s spend a little more time here—I could get used to this.*”

And in response a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and God the Father spoke saying, “*This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him.*” There’s two things going here, I think.

(1) The Father makes it clear that three shelters are not necessary—as though Jesus, Moses, and Elijah are peers. No, Jesus is inherently superior to Moses and Elijah—all that Moses and Elijah said and did anticipated the coming of God the Son. *This is my Son; listen to Him.*

And, (2) As much as Peter preferred glory to suffering, Jesus still had to walk the path of suffering and death—it was the only way for humanity to be saved, the only way that we might one day share in God’s eternal glory.

The Hebrew word for “*glory*” is *kavod*; literally, it means “*to be heavy*,” or “*weighty*”. When “*kavod*” is used in the Scripture, it is rarely used in its literal sense; most often it’s used figuratively to describe a person of significance, someone worthy of esteem, someone who was weighty with respect to their presence.

In Isaiah 6 we read, “*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. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings... 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.*”

Isaiah had a vision of God’s glorious, weighty, presence—the song of the angels and the weight of God’s glory began to shake the temple, a building that in the mind of Isaiah, could not be moved. And as I read this text I wonder to myself, **are we willing to invite God’s glorious presence to fill and shake our lives?**

illus: a number of years ago I fell asleep and had a dream. In this dream I was a pastor here at North Shore Alliance Church, and it was a Sunday morning, not unlike today.

As is often the case, I found myself standing here on this stage, looking out over the congregation—there were many faces that I recognized and others that I did not. At one point I lifted my hands in worship and prayer, and the weight of God’s glorious presence descended in our midst. It wasn’t that I saw God’s manifest glory, but I felt it in my body, so much so, that I staggered under the weight of it until I could no longer stand.

As God laid me down on this stage, I was conscious of His loving presence in a way that I cannot adequately describe, but I remember waking up thinking that God had something special in store for our church.

The past few weeks, I’ve felt a new sense of urgency in my praying. The phrase that keeps coming to mind is, “*Now is the time.*” *Now is the time* to throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. *Now is the time* to run after Jesus with courage and perseverance. *Now is the time* for an awakening, *now is the time* for a shaking.

Are you willing to be shaken? Where is Jesus inviting you to say “no” to yourself, so you can say “yes” to Him? Do you hear Jesus calling you this morning? Out of familiar habits and routines, out of spiritual lethargy, away from divided loyalties, away from the pursuit of self?

Pray

Song of Response

Benediction