

## Surprised By Love: an exploration of Mark's Gospel—part 2

### Week 1: On the Mountaintop (Mark 9:2-13)

1. What associations do you have with the season of Lent? Have you traditionally observed Lent, and if so, how?
2. Was there anything in the message for this first week of Lent that resonated with you or that seemed timely? What did you find surprising or uncomfortable? Was there anything you disagreed with?
3. The story for this week is set on a mountain. Mountains in ancient Jewish thought were considered places where heaven was closer to earth and experiences of God were much more likely. Celtic people termed these “thin” places. Is there anywhere that represents a “thin” place for you?
4. Read Mark 9:2-13.
  - What do you think the author of Mark's Gospel wants us to understand about Jesus' identity from this story?
  - What do you think the disciples might have thought when they saw Moses and Elijah? Use your imagination—there are no “correct” answers!
  - What impact do you think the Transfiguration had on how they saw Jesus?
  - How does this story color your view of Jesus?
5. In parts of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the transfiguration is what happens to the disciples: they are changed to see Jesus as he always was. In what ways can thinking about the story in this way be helpful?
6. What can you do this Lent to make time and space to “see” and know more of Jesus? Are there particular activities that help you to connect to God? If you are reflecting in a group, break into smaller groups to share your responses and to pray for one another as we travel this Lenten road together.

#### Practice for the week: Sacred pathways

Different people find it easier to connect with God through various pathways. Some examples identified by author Gary Thomas are as follows:

- *Nature*: Appreciating the beauty of God's creation
- *Enthusiastic worship*: Celebrating God's goodness with thanks and praise
- *Learning*: Gaining insights about God and life with him
- *Tradition*: Following time-honored spiritual traditions and practices
- *Asceticism*: Abstaining from comforts to make more space for God
- *Sensation*: Experiencing God with your physical senses or imagination
- *Caregiving*: Offering God's compassion to those the hurting or struggling
- *Social justice*: Actively engaging with others to serve the poor and needy
- *Quiet prayer*: Being absorbed with God in quiet solitude (contemplation)

Take time to consider your preferred pathway and identify time in your weekly schedule to practice it. If you are unsure of your preferred pathway(s), you might like to take a survey here:

[www.soulshepherding.org/sacred-pathways-survey](http://www.soulshepherding.org/sacred-pathways-survey)