

# Coming through Captivity

The limitlessness of God's love and work in Creation is revealed in Jesus. This week's passages suggest reaching out to God through prayer and reflection as we strive to keep our focus for ministry. Sustained and restored by faith, we can serve in fresh and vital ways as messengers of good news.



## Focus scripture

**Mark 1:29–39**

## Additional scriptures

**Isaiah 40:21–31**

**Psalms 147:1–11, 20c**

**1 Corinthians 9:16–23**

## Focus scripture: Mark 1:29–39

*Immediately* is a word used repeatedly in the gospel of Mark and suits its pace. The accounts in the first chapter of Mark's gospel are a frenzy of activity: the preaching of John the baptizer, Jesus' baptism, calling of disciples, teaching in the synagogue, and casting out an unclean spirit. Seeking rest at the home of Simon and Andrew, Jesus is called upon to heal Simon's mother-in-law. Crowds begin to press in around the house, demanding more words and deeds of power from Jesus.

Jesus moves quickly in Mark's narrative, but Jesus also stops, receives the ministry of others, retreats away from the crowd, and enters the stillness and into the presence of God. However, it isn't much of a break from the action. The disciples follow Jesus and right away implore him to get back on the road. In that brief time apart, Jesus found renewed energy in God, the source of his strength. Jesus moves on with the disciples to preach and cast out demons throughout Galilee.

Such renewal is the gift Jesus offered to Simon's mother-in-law the previous night. Jesus reaches out to this woman who is weak with fever, raises her, and restores her to serve. Jesus is restored to continue preaching and healing. Simon's mother-in-law is restored to continue serving as host to those in her home. Common to both is a sense of ministering to and with others. The Greek word used for what the woman does, *diakoneo*, is often translated in English as "to serve" and also can be translated as "to minister." This is the same word used in Mark 1:13 to describe how the angels cared for Jesus in the wilderness. Mark describes what Simon's mother-in-law does as something beyond mere hospitality.

This woman provides what is necessary to sustain life, as does Jesus.

**Isaiah 40:21–31** the prophet of Isaiah 40 calls God's people to remember that God is their source of strength. Some scholars place the writing of in the sixth century BCE when the people of Judah were living in exile following the Babylonian conquest. The temple and Jerusalem had been destroyed. It is easy to imagine the people's discouragement and weariness. The prophet reminds them of the power of God to restore and liberate, of God's desire to renew their strength.

The psalmist rejoices in God, who restores and renews. **Psalms 147:1–11, 20c** praises God who gathers those who are outcasts, heals the broken-hearted ones, and lifts those who are downtrodden,

To Paul, freedom in Christ is the source of strength for those who seek to further the mission of God's realm. In **1 Corinthians 9:16–23**, Paul's rhetorical questions make a case for Paul's apostolic rights and claims, including the right to be supported by the community. At times, Paul needed the community to be his source of strength as he ministered

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The texts for this day sing with confidence in God's faithfulness. Jesus drew from this source of strength as his authority for healing and teaching. With Jesus, we are invited to trust in the power of God, who promises, "I will raise you up on eagles' wings." In what ways does confidence in God's faithfulness give shape and purpose to your life as an individual disciple and as a church? How might you forge a stronger connection with this source of strength?

**Holy One, who makes all things possible, lift us when we are weary. Be our strength and fill us with hope as we seek to serve you and our neighbour this day. Amen.**

## Lection Connection

links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca) and click on the link.

## The Focus for Ages 5–12

Children as young as five or six years old are aware that it is important to listen to certain people, such as parents and teachers, a child minder, a coach, or a music teacher. The session this week provides the opportunity for the children to hear a story in which God tells people to listen to Jesus. This concept might be a little abstract for the children in your group who are still largely concrete thinkers and a discussion after the story will offer some concrete ways to listen to Jesus today.

This week's biblical story is full of mystery and awe. Children have vivid imaginations and older children are often intrigued

by stories of fantasy. This can help them participate in the wonder and excitement of the story. For those who still wonder about the story you can say that some experiences are hard to understand and this story is about one of those times.

The story of the Transfiguration also offers an opportunity for older children to learn more about Moses and Elijah. As this is the last week in this season several of the activities will help children review stories about Jesus in Mark's gospel. Pray for the children that they will sense the wonder and mystery of this story and learn more about Jesus.

## Prepare

### Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Mark 9:2–9, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 91).
- ❑ Bring Bibles, matches, [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2).
- ❑ Bring, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and *CD player*; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca).

### Gather

- ❑ Set a worship space with a white cloth, Christ candle, Bible (with bookmark placed in focus passage), bowl, and a jug of water.
- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song "Invocation" (p. 19 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #5 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).
- ❑ Bring objects that symbolize the act of listening (such as, music CD, mp3 player, earphones, mobile phone).

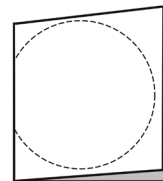
### Engage

- ❑ Bring this week's resource sheet "[A Mountaintop Experience](#)."
- ❑ **Bible research group:** bring copies of this week's resource sheet "[Transfiguration Characters](#)."
- ❑ **Listening group:** bring copies of resource sheet "[Listen to Jesus](#)" (p. 104).

### Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Art zone:** dowels, string, glitter, kitchen foil, used CDs and other reflective items
- ❑ **Quiet zone:** writing paper, pastels, copies of resource sheet "[Thin Places](#)" (p. 106)
- ❑ **Music zone:** recording and printed music for the "The Galilee Song" (pp. 38–39 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #8 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7)
- ❑ **Game zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet "[Game Cards](#)," cut apart to form several sets
- ❑ **Outreach zone:** copies of resource sheet "[Listen to Jesus](#)" (p. 104), yarn, glitter, folded pieces of construction paper cut into circles (8 cm/3 in)



### Bless

- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song "May You Find Peace" (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).



February 14, 2021

# Coming through the Cloud

## Scripture

Mark 9:2–9

**FOCUS** To hear an amazing story of Jesus on the mountaintop and explore ways of listening to Jesus

## Gather

**Welcome** the children as they arrive, introducing guests and newcomers. Explain that today is the last Sunday in the Season after the Epiphany, a time when we hear a special story about Jesus.

### Opening ritual

**Gather** around the worship space and point out the colour white, which symbolizes that this is a special day. This Sunday is called Transfiguration Sunday.

**Sing** or listen to, if possible, the “Circle Song” (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

**Prayer ritual** Come, let us remember God’s love poured out over all creation and us. (*Pour water into bowl.*)

Let us remember the light of God’s love that Jesus brought to our world. (*Light the candle.*)

God’s love shines out for you and me. (*Invite the children to repeat this line after you.*)

Receive the offering and extinguish the candle to signify the end of the gathering worship.

### Connecting with the focus

Invite children to look together at the objects and talk about what they have in common.

#### ■ What are some other things we might use for listening?

This week’s story is about an amazing experience, when the disciples heard a voice telling them to listen to Jesus.

## Engage

### Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship area and use the bookmark to open it to the focus passage. Review the stories heard this season from the gospel of Mark: Jesus calls the fishers (Mark 1:14–20), Jesus teaches and heals (Mark 1:21–28, 29–39). In today’s Bible reading, we will hear a story about Jesus and three of his special followers. We will also meet Moses and Elijah, two important people in the history of the Jewish people.

### The Bible story

Use the resource sheet “[A Mountaintop Experience](#)” to tell the story based on Mark 9:2–9. After the story, ask:

- What is amazing in this story about Jesus?
- What does the voice say to Jesus’ followers?
- What do you think Peter, James, and John were thinking as they walked down the mountain?

Invite children to tell about an “amazing” experience they may have had, perhaps a time when they felt very close to God: for example, seeing a wild animal in nature, or a beautiful sunset, or a shooting star, or... What was that experience like for them? How did it make them feel?

## Exploring the story further

*(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)*

**Bible research group** The children in this group will have an opportunity to learn more about the different people in the story of Jesus' transfiguration. Distribute Bibles and invite a volunteer to read **Mark 9:2–9**. Then distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Transfiguration Characters](#)" and read the information together.

### ■ What would have been surprising or amazing about seeing Moses and Elijah with Jesus?

**Listening group** The children in this group will have an opportunity to review some of the things that Jesus asks us to do as disciples and to explore how we can listen to Jesus today. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Listen to Jesus](#)" (p. 104) and

invite volunteers to read what Jesus said. Invite children to imagine how people could listen to Jesus today (for example, in Bible stories, through the words of songs, listening to other people, and listening to the quiet voice of God's Spirit deep down inside).

**Reporting** Invite the research group to share information about Moses and Elijah. Invite the listening group to name some ways we can listen to Jesus today.

## The Bible story and us

The disciples listened to Jesus and then they shared God's love and care with others. We too can listen to Jesus today by learning from his teachings and the things that he did.

### ■ What are some things you have learned from the stories of Jesus that will help you live in God's way?

## Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

❑ **Art zone: Mobile** On the mountain, the glory of God shone in and around Jesus. Invite children to make mobiles as reminders of God's light and glory. Help them to tie two dowels together and then suspend shiny objects from the dowels. Used CDs can be taped together with shiny sides out and decorated with glitter.

❑ **Quiet zone: Reflection** People today also have awesome and mysterious experiences of God's presence. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Thin Places](#)" (p. 106) and read together.

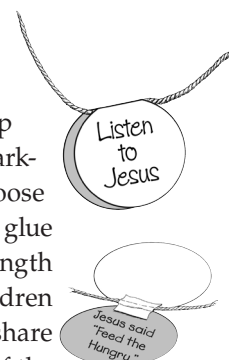
Invite children to use the materials provided to express their own experiences of God's presence through poems, stories, or drawings.

❑ **Music zone: Following Jesus** The words of "The Galilee Song" speak of both mystery and commitment to follow in Jesus' way. Invite children to listen to a recording of the song. Then teach the song by singing one line at a time, with the children repeating each line. Talk together as a group about what it means to listen to Jesus and to follow in Jesus' way with our words and actions.



❑ **Game zone: Stories review** Invite children to play a card game as a way to review stories about Jesus from Mark's gospel. Distribute sets of cards from the resource sheet "[Game Cards](#)" and invite children to play some games, such as matching the symbols or a "Go Fish" type of game. For groups of older children, distribute Bibles and encourage them to look up the scripture references to remember each story.

❑ **Outreach zone: Necklaces** The disciples discovered how special Jesus was and how important it was to listen to his teaching. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Listen to Jesus](#)" (p. 104) and invite children to cut the circles out. Distribute folded circles of construction paper and have them print "Listen to Jesus" on the top circle and decorate with markers and glitter. Then, choose one of Jesus' teachings to glue to the inside, and tape a length of yarn as shown. Help children to make extra necklaces to share with family and members of the congregation.



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## Bless

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**Gather** in the worship space and relight the candle. Invite children to name some of the amazing things that they have learned about Jesus during these last few weeks.

**Pray** Dear God,  
thank you for Jesus and his teachings.  
Help us to listen to Jesus and to follow in Jesus' way. Amen.

**Sing**, if possible, the song "May You Find Peace" (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

**Blessing** Send each child out saying, "(Name), listen to Jesus as you follow God's way."

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## Reflect

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Thank you for your leadership of this group during this season. As you reflect on your experiences with the children, what were the highlights? Please take some time this week to fill out the evaluation form at the back of your age level materials or in the Library on the [Seasons](#) website.



# A MOUNTAINTOP EXPERIENCE

(based on Mark 9:2-9)

A few simple gestures can help  
the children imagine  
themselves in  
the story.

**C**apernaum (KA-PER'-NA-UMM), Nazareth, Bethsaida (BETH-SEH'-E-DA), along the Sea of Galilee, in the villages of Caesarea Philippi (SEZ-A-REE'-A FILL'-IPP-EYE). Wherever Jesus went, Simon, Andrew, James, and John, along with others who were following Jesus, went too. Crowds of people came from all over to be with Jesus.

One day, Jesus said to Simon (who was now called Peter), James, and John, "Come with me."

Jesus took them up a high mountain away from the other followers and the crowds that came to be with Jesus. They were all alone, Jesus and these three followers, on the top of this mountain. Peter, James, and John looked around. (*Shield your eyes and pretend to look far away.*) What a magnificent view!

As they were looking around, something surprising, no, something amazing, happened! Right before their eyes, Jesus' clothes began to shimmer and glow with the brightest light they had ever seen. Then, Elijah and Moses, prophets from the Hebrew Scriptures, were standing next to Jesus, talking with Jesus.

Peter, James, and John couldn't believe their eyes or their ears. "Teacher," said Peter, "being here with you is wonderful. Let us build three shelters, one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for you." Peter really didn't know what else to say, and truth be told, he was more than a little afraid.

Before Jesus answered Peter, a big cloud came down over the top of the mountain. A voice from the cloud called, "This is my Beloved. Listen to him."

When the cloud lifted, Moses and Elijah were gone. The bright, dazzling light on Jesus was gone. As they walked down the mountain together, Peter, James, and John didn't know what to say or ask. But they did know that Jesus was very special and that God had told them to listen to Jesus. Jesus told them not to tell the others what had happened. They did not, but they kept this story in their hearts for a long time.





# Transfiguration

## Characters

### Moses

Moses was a great prophet, teacher, and leader who lived about 1,400 years before Jesus was born. The stories about Moses are told in the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Moses led the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt and received the Law (the Ten Commandments) from God.



### Elijah

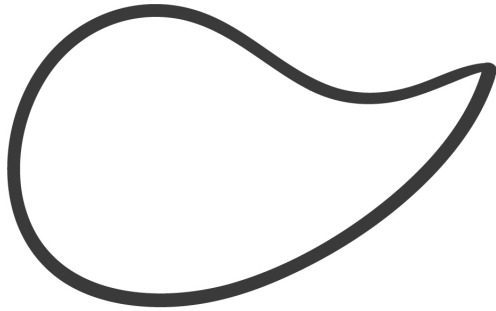
Elijah was a great prophet of Israel who lived about 900 years before Jesus was born. The stories about Elijah are told in First and Second Kings. There are stories about Elijah bringing fire down from heaven and going up to heaven in a great whirlwind.

### Peter, James, and John

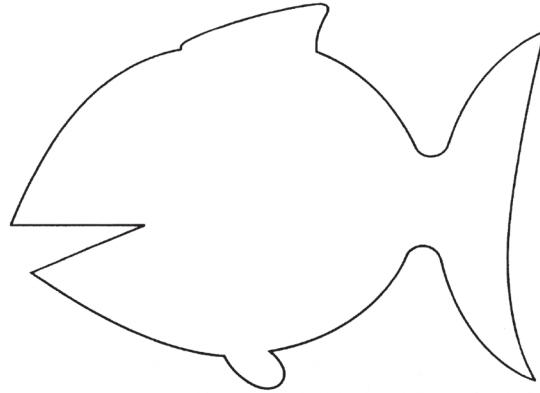
Peter, James, and John were the fishers who had been called by Jesus to follow him. Like Jesus, they were Jewish and had grown up hearing the ancient stories about Moses and Elijah. They had worked with Jesus for about three years and knew him very well. Peter had just announced that he thought Jesus was the Messiah, the one sent from God.



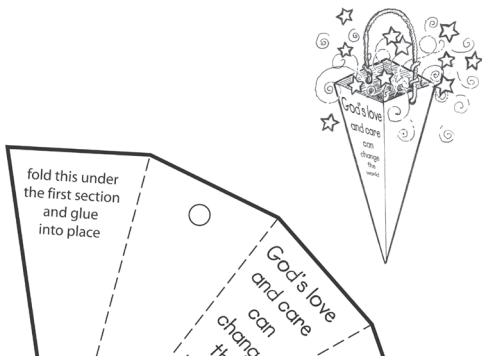
# Game Cards



(Mark 1:4–11)



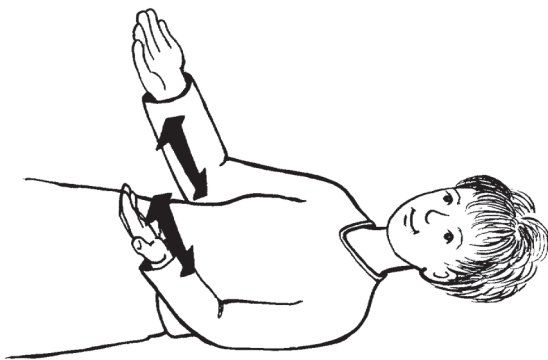
(Mark 1:14–20)



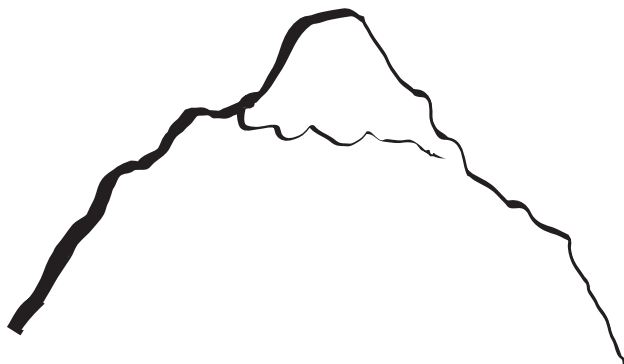
(Mark 1:21–28)



(Mark 1:29–39)



(Mark 1:40–45)



(Mark 9:2–9)



# *Listen to Jesus*

(February 14, 2021)

**Here are some  
of the things  
Jesus taught the  
disciples.**

*Jesus said,*  
"Feed the  
hungry."

*Jesus said,*  
"Love  
everyone."

*Jesus said,*  
"Give water  
to the  
thirsty."

*Jesus said,*  
"Listen  
to the  
children."

*Jesus said,*  
"Take  
care of  
the sick."

*Jesus said,*  
"Forgive  
others."



# Thin Places

*Some people have had mysterious and awesome experiences. Sometimes these are called “mountaintop” experiences because they are like the experience of the disciples on the mountaintop with Jesus. Sometimes these are called “thin places” because it seems as if the dividing line between the holy and the ordinary is very thin. Here are some stories of “thin places.”*

**When I lay on my back one dark night and looked at all the stars in the sky it felt so beautiful I wanted to cry. I felt really small but I also felt part of the whole universe. No one could talk out loud. We could only whisper.**

**I was walking down a dirty street. There was garbage everywhere. The old buildings by the side of the road had cracked windows. I was feeling sad and depressed. And then I saw a tiny flower, growing out of a crack in the pavement. Seeing that brave little plant filled my heart and mind with good feelings. It felt like God was talking to me through that flower.**

**When I sing with the big choir the music sometimes seems to swallow me. There is music everywhere and I hear the whole world singing with me.**

**Sometimes when I sit out in the woods all by myself, it is so quiet I can hear my breath going in and out. It feels as if God is sitting with me and everything is filled with wonder.**

*Think about a time when you have felt filled with wonder and close to God. Write a story or draw a picture about that experience.*