Text: Mark 9:2-9

**Introduction**

Have you ever experienced something out of time? The most common is probably that too late in time offer. The old crush that asks you out after you’ve moved on. The perfect job offer that comes along after you’ve just bought a house. But I’m thinking a bit of the other way. Something that you know comes along too early in time. That thing that feels like a premonition, or that you might eventually regret not following, but it’s a not yet. The job offer in California at graduation, when you’ve been living and looking in Pennsylvania. The proposal from a high school sweetheart when you’ve been looking at schools out of state. The buddy who wants to start a company, but you’ve just been promoted. Things that you want, things that you plan for, but the opportunity comes out of time. Or maybe we should just say, out of time as we imagine it flowing.

**Text**

I want to take something that might seem like a detour, but I don’t think it is out of time. Within Old Testament Judaism there were three traveling or pilgrimage holidays. Every Israelite who could do so was encouraged to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the feast on these days. Passover, which was in March or April or roughly spring planting season. I’m going to emphasize two things, both the season and the religious reason, because they both have purpose. So Passover was planting with the religious reason being the event that formed the people of Israel – the Exodos. The second of these festivals was Pentecost or Weeks. It was in June and celebrated the early wheat harvest. The religious purpose of Pentecost was the giving of the law on Sinai, the giving of the thing that empowered this new people and the covenant into the future. The last of the three pilgrimage festivals was Sukkot or Boothes or Tabernacles. It was held in October just after the final harvest. It was called tabernacles because the people were to build tents and live in them for the feast in remembrance of the 40 years in the wilderness and the crossing into the promised land. The proper order in time was Passover, Weeks, Tabernacles. Planting, growing, reaping. The formation by God, the covenant, and the fulfillment.

And as Paul would say in Romans, “whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction (Rom. 15:4 ESV).” These were the shadows of the fulfillment to come.

And I think we are used to saying that Peter is just an idiot. And what the gospel writers say doesn’t completely discourage that. Mark today says, “for he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.” Matthew just has God the Father start speaking over Peter. Luke says “he did not realize what he was saying.” So we usually just jump to Peter felt some type of need to respond to the majesty he was seeing, but didn’t know what, so he was just babbling filling the silence. Although today, as a good Jew, I want to assert that Peter wasn’t as far off as we might thing. He was just out of time. He didn’t realize what he was saying because he was out of time.

Because what does Peter suggest? “Let us make three tents.” He’s suggesting that this is akin to the festival of booths, of tabernacles. And this might be where Jesus is a bit out of time. Because the transfiguration is Jesus radiant in all his glory. It is a picture of the glory. And I’d challenge you to go read the resurrection stories. Jesus is never described as being radiant. Although I admit we gloss that onto him. The angels at the tomb are, but Jesus isn’t. Jesus in all his glory does align with the final harvest, the movement into the Promised Land. Peter’s connection of tents, of tabernacles isn’t that bad. It is just out of time.

Why is it out of time? Because the immediate preceding story before this is Peter’s confession of the Christ and Jesus predicting the cross over the coming Passover festival. “The Son of Man must suffer many things…and be killed, and on the third day rise.” Peter famously rejects that which earns him Jesus’ rebuke. Passover comes well before Tabernacles. On top of that Luke tells us that Moses and Elijah are discussing with Jesus “his coming Exodus.” Luke literally transliterates the word. If you look it up our English translators completely kill it rendering it his departure. Yes, it is a departure of sorts, but this Passover is the Exodus of Jesus.

**Christology**

Jesus is going to bid these disciples to go down the mountain and he sets his face to Jerusalem. Just as the Exodus in the Old Testament was the majestic act of God that created the people of Israel, that redeemed them from their slavery. The trials and cross and resurrection are the Exodus of Christ. They are the mighty acts of God that re-create the people of Israel. A people not redeemed from slavery to Pharoah, but redeemed from our slavery to sin, and death and the power of the devil.

Jesus is going to go down this slope and the fulfillment of the Exodus, a fulfillment that continues today, starts. God is going to bare his holy arm and with Signs and Wonders do what is necessary to bring his people out of the land of deep darkness.

This isn’t exactly how we think about it typically, but it is the time order of the Bible. The Act of God, whether that is the creation itself, or the Passover or the Cross and Resurrection is the beginning. Lent starting Wednesday stands as a short winter before that action. A season of waiting and preparation. God has promised that he will act and we wait for his action. And like winter, it always seems to go on too long. Things get too cold. We might not make it. Like Moses and Elijah standing there who did not see the completion of things. But they saw it from a distance in faith. And here they are. Christ is to bring his people out.

**Moral**

But Peter’s offering is still out of time. He not only blitz the Passover, he skipped the weeks, the Pentecost. If that Old Testament covenant was sealed with the law, the New Testament covenant is sealed with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit that takes residence in you. If that Old Testament People of God wandered in the wilderness for 40 year eating manna. The New Testament People remain here in the power of the Spirit fed by the body and blood of Christ.

Maybe the 40 years will be over in our lifetimes. Probably not. We will probably be more like Moses and Elijah here. Or one like them even earlier – Enoch, who was taken up by God. Are we willing to follow God in this wilderness. Or do we long for whatever we think Egypt – the devil, the world and our flesh – offer us. There is this early harvest. This downpayment of the Spirit. This Pentecost that must be walked through in order.

**Eschatological**

Only then do you arrive at Tabernacles. Only then would the offering of new tents be appropriate. When we all are re-tented, re-clothed in the resurrection body. When we all cross the Jordon into the Promised Land. When we all can climb the Mt. Zion of the New Jerusalem. When we too will be changed. In the twinkling of a eye and the last trumpet. When this treasure we carry in this jars of clay is allowed to shine like the sun.

Peter wasn’t stupid. He knew what this looked like. It was the promise. The ingathering. The last day in these old tents. He was just out of time.

Moses and Elijah vanish. The voice is done echoing. The light has gone back into these jars and Jesus motions down the mountain. Down to the sequence. Passover, Pentecost…then Tabernacles.

Peter, which way are you going? Will you walk with me this way? In time, though time. We’ll get there. I promise. Just not yet, but in the right time.