

Sermon for Transfiguration 2Kings 2 1-12 & Mark 9 2-11

The Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ is observed by many Protestant tradition on the last Sunday before Lent whilst in the Catholic and Episcopal traditions on the 6th of August. In the Protestant tradition, it serves as a transition point from Epiphany and the revelation of Christ to the world and to Lent the commemoration of our Lords passion. It is an occasion of wonder and awe over the revelation of the person of God in Jesus Christ.

The old testament reading from 2 Kings we just heard marked the end of the ministry and life of Prophet Elijah. It is an account of Elijah's transfiguration and ascendance; he was drenched with light as he was taken in a chariot of fire and horses of fire. In that moment Elisha is faced with an uncertain future as his master was taken which is balanced by a sensation of sheer joy. The God who works so mightily cannot be one who does wrong. Therefore, the experience left Elisha and the company of prophets marvelling over what their eyes have seen and what their hearts are barely bold enough to believe.

Psalm 50 tells of a God who shines forth and who is a devouring fire. In the reading from Mark's gospel, we heard about a time when Jesus and his three disciples Peter James and John saw him light up and it really helped them to see him in a new light. This is a kind of happening none of us are used to. Then, imagine in your mind's eye that morning we are climbing up a steep rocky mountain path, with Jesus leading the way, Peter, James, and John his disciples struggling to keep up behind him. We are all panting a bit and sometimes dirt or stone get stuck in our sandals and we might see a lizard or two basking in the morning sun and hear the wind in the grass. When we reach the top, we can see around us, the lake, villages down below and it's like been on top of the world (this feeling I believe will resonates with hill or mountain climbers). Jesus has come here to

pray, to get away from the crowd and to spend quiet time with his Father in heaven. We all need time to pray to God our father too.

Suddenly, Peter, James and John realised that Jesus is looking different. He seems to be shining, in Mark's gospel it is described as 'dazzling' which is like when you look into the sun and have to screw up your eyes because its just too bright to look at comfortably. It is as if they are looking at the presence of God himself, here up on the mountain. To their surprise Jesus was not alone either as if he is in heaven, rather standing on the mountain side, he had two other people with him, people we recognise from history. One is Moses, who led the Israelites out of slavery from Egypt and gave them God's ten commandments, and the other person is Elijah a prophet from long ago whom we heard of from the first reading. These two people were Moses and Elijah both holy men. The experience must have been both frightening, also so holy and full of glory, very unusual. Just as Peter, James and John were shielding their eyes from the brightness, the cloud came and covered them and they hear a voice speaking out of the cloud and they know it is God speaking, "This is my beloved Son, listen to him". That is Jesus, he is speaking about! And we have just seen with our own eyes that Jesus wears God's glory, this side of Jesus we haven't been allowed to notice before and also the first time we hear Gods voice in Mark's gospel. What does this mean to us, how is your listening, do you give yourself time and space to listen and hear God?

Like Jesus both Elijah and Moses laboured to help the people of God remain faithful in the face of religious leaders who were more concerned with their practices than the needs of the people. These three sought to keep God's people hopeful as they suffered under abusive and oppressive foreign rule. Furthermore, Moses and Elijah's closeness to God was not something to be hoarded but it energised them in their service to others, equipping them to know and pursue the Lord.

Therefore, at the Transfiguration, Jesus is in excellent company sharing the moment with Moses and Elijah who know what it is to share communion with God. Finally, the bright light of the Transfiguration affirms life, a light that shines ahead into Lent to keep that season in perspective, never without hope and confidence. This light speaks a promise that God is here, who is knowable and seeks to have a relationship with you and me because God is life. Amen.