

Evensong		
Feast of the Transfiguration	Luke 9: 28-37	St James

Over the years I have read many different readings, from different books of the Bible. Certain readings keep coming back to me, I remember them more than others, they speak to me more than others. This passage which gives an account of the transfiguration. And when I read this reading quietly to myself, I am always in awe of these words “Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my son, my Chosen; they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen” Luke 9; v35-36. Indeed, the Transfiguration is one of the five major milestones in the gospel narrative of the life of Jesus, the others being Baptism, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension.

I can remember once sitting at the back of a primary school classroom and watching what was happening. They were talking about Paradise, what it was, and where it was. What would it be like to be in Paradise. The children had a range of things to enable them to reflect – and towards the end of the lesson, the teacher asked the children what they thought Paradise was like – a child sitting somewhere near the back, gingerly put up her hand and replied to the question “A lovely holiday”.

For those three disciples, Peter, John and James, their experience up on that Mountain would not have been far from it. Prior to this, the disciples, who had travelled with Jesus had been busy. They had many demands placed upon them – Jesus had been at the height of his popularity, and with that comes the pressure, and the relentless throng of activity.

But here, in this very moment – Peter, John and James had a unique, a one off experience. God was treating them to a glimpse of Shekinah or glory. This miracle if you like, is unique among others that appear in the gospels, in that the miracle happens to Jesus himself.<sup>[5]</sup> You see Jesus could have gone up the mount on his own, with Moses and Elijah, but he chose on this occasion, three of his closest friends were permitted to share in the glory. To give them courage? Hope? To confirm, if needed who he said he was?

The voice from the cloud said “Listen to him!”

Jesus’ words were precious: everyone of them.

Heaven and Earth one day will pass away, but his words are eternal. Therefore, the disciples must mark, learn and inwardly digest every word. If they failed to listen, they would be wrong footed. We all know that at Calvary they faltered – denying they knew who Jesus was, but Easter brought a recovery.

How well do we listen to Jesus? How seriously do we study the Gospels, pray and take time to listen to what God is saying? We like to think that he is interested in everything we do: why do we sometimes assume that he has nothing to say to all that we get up to? Listen! Ian

last evensong was talking about an instruction for prayer – and concluded that what we needed to do was simply to listen

Peter, James and John were for us a tremendous role model. They had put Jesus before ministry that day – the other disciples were totally absorbed in ministering to a “great crowd” (Luke 9:37). But the three closest friends of Jesus had taken, as the five year old girl said “a lovely, lovely holiday”. Those who had stayed with the crowd found that either through mental, physical or spiritual weariness (perhaps a combination of all three) they couldn’t heal. There are times when we need to take a break, a holiday, when to soldier on, at half strength, means an impaired ministry that does not benefit us, the people we are trying to help or Jesus.

The three disciples, kept quiet about their experience. The reason is not shyness or reluctance – infact in Mark we are told why? That Jesus’ ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the son of man had risen from the dead. Some would not believe them, even then. But for those who could believe, the transfiguration would be a window into glory.

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