

Service for Week 24th Feb- 2nd March

2025 Sunday before Lent. By Chaplain

Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Loving God, we thank you for all the ways you are with each of us, the guidance you give, the strength you supply. The mercy that you show and the love with which you surround us.

Amen

Say to yourself The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.....

Amen

Bible Reading Luke 9: 28-36

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and

they were afraid as they entered the cloud.

A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

What are we to make of this account by the gospel writer Luke about what happened when Jesus, Peter John and James went up to the top of a mountain. We read a similar account in Mark and Matthew. But as Luke says while Jesus was praying 'his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning'. In Matthew it says 'his face was shining like the sun' and in Mark 'his clothes became dazzling bright'

When the disciples with Jesus fully woke up, they saw two of the ancient prophets Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus. Paul suggests they built three shelters-made of branches as people build (and still build sometimes today) to mark the Jewish feast of the tabernacles and were a reminder of the tents which had been used while the Israelites were in the desert. Perhaps Peter has the notion that God would live with his people as he had done when the Israelites lived in the dessert –but the writer Luke clearly thinks this was nonsense and adds –he did not know what he was saying.

Then a cloud appears at the top of the mountain and they hear a voice –the voice of God which says “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him”. You may be thinking we have heard about God appearing in cloud before and you would be right because back in the Old Testament in Exodus we read ‘When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.’

But back with Luke, after the Voice from the cloud it says that Peter, John and James kept all this to themselves and told no-one. Now if we think about this and try to explain it in a rational way –we know there are parts of the account which defy the laws of nature- such as seeing people (Moses and Elijah) who had been dead for over 2000years, and hearing a voice which comes inexplicably from out of a cloud - but that is how Luke describes what happened that day on top of a mountain.

But we can’t explain this and other things we read in the bible away in rational, logical way –when we try to do this, we are reducing these things to our limited human minds and experience. We are also taking away the incredible mystery of God our creator. Luke has tried to describe what happened but he can only do this from a human perspective using references which would have been clear to people at that time. The cloud

is a reference that the presence of God was there. There is also the appearance of well-known and respected patriarchs Moses and Elijah and together with the voice from the cloud all serve to confirm that Jesus was from God, was the Son of God.

In 1373 Mother Julian of Norwich was a 30year old recluse at St Julian’s Church in Norwich when she received a series of 16 visions. She then spent the next 20 years in prayer considering the meaning of her visions and wrote ‘Revelations of Divine Love’. Her visions have brought people to faith in God and become a source of spiritual comfort for people over hundreds of years.

Just as Mother Julian considered her visions not in a rational way but in a spiritual way I believe we should treat the account of Jesus’ change in appearance and the events that happened on the top of that mountain in the same way. Something deeply spiritual happened that convinced those disciples that Jesus really was who he said he was – from God and of God. If our minds and hearts are open to the Spirit of God, instead of just to things that are rational and seem to follow the natural order of things, then we can all experience that same realisation in our lives. **Amen.**

Closing Prayer

Lord, teach me to walk with you each day knowing that you are always by my side, and so may I trust you for the future, secure in the everlasting hope you have given in Christ.

Amen

Prayers inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett