

## Sunday Before Lent March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014

St Mary's Hampton Poyle



Revd Felicity Scroggie on *The Transfiguration*

The Transfiguration of Our Lord is one of those epiphanous moments – an episode where Jesus Christ is revealed as he truly is – not merely a fairly special man, or a marvellous teacher, or even a thoroughly good bloke, but he is shown to be God himself, revealed to us in all his glory. ‘Transfiguration’ in Greek is ‘Meta-morphos’ – from which we get metamorphosis – a change from one thing to another.

The Transfiguration was a marvelous experience for the closest of Jesus’ disciples, those privileged to see this revelation at first hand; and it was an experience which they wanted to go on forever. This is why Peter makes that rather embarrassing comment about making three tents for Moses, Elijah and Jesus – because if he sets up somewhere for them to stay then by the rules of Middle-Eastern hospitality, they would be required to remain until the host wished them to leave.

Few of us are privileged enough to have such a close, intimate experience of God. Few of us encounter directly the glory and power of God. It may appear like a fairy story, or the sort of marvellous experience that only happens to other people. But the experience of God in these epiphanies need not be so dramatic – God is to be found in the stillness and quietness of your own prayers, in the Eucharist, in the routines of your own daily life. God is to be experienced in the dark and the quiet as well as the bright mountain top, and that experience of God, with all the comfort, all the reassurance it offers is no less valid.

But what draws me to this episode is not the dramatic. At the end of the great experience, Jesus, Peter, James and John came down from the mountains and returned to the plains and the city. After the glorious vision, their glimpse of heaven, they had to return to their daily lives, however humdrum, however ordinary, and they had to get on with the job in hand – being Jesus’s disciples.

Through encountering Christ in person, many in the towns and villages of Galilee, in the city of Jerusalem were changed, transformed, renewed. Many more in the diaspora and the cities of Greece and then Rome who never met the man were changed, inspired, revitalised and now we – we who are removed from the action by immense time and distance – are changed, invigorated, challenged and moved by the man who stood besides Moses and Elijah.

The Eucharist offers us a Transfiguration, a metamorphosis, it offers us the bread and wine that is to us the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. If you like, the Eucharist is our mountain-top experience in the meeting point between normal human and God Almighty.

And after the Eucharist... well, you just have to come down from the mountain, go home and get on with the job in hand – making the Yorkshire Puddings, and being Jesus’ disciples. Some of us went to hear John Bird, the founder of the Big Issue, speaking at Oxford Playhouse this week. A question was put to him from a chap called Richard in the audience about what a middle class non political person could do to change the world. His answer took in the small ways that individuals can notice others, help others, make life easier for those around them and get involved in local communities. If a village has 10 people who do everything, just think what that village could achieve if 20 people worked together.... And in colourful language he ended his answer, “Richard, get off your arse!”

The key thing you see, is not necessarily what happens on the mountain-top, as wonderful as it may be, but what that Transfiguration experience does for us the other days of the week.

We follow a Jesus who is not just for Sunday best, and not restricted to those who think themselves worthy of being a Christian, but we follow a Jesus who came to earth with the sole purpose of saving us all, regardless of how good or bad we think we are. His power changed those around him and continues to do so today.

We come together Sunday by Sunday for the Eucharist and receive food for the journey, and the saving healing transforming power of God in Christ. And then, like Peter, James and John we have to go back into the real world and get on with it.

“This is my Son, the Beloved... Listen to Him.” Amen.

Felicity Scroggie