

This is the Sunday in the Church year when we remember what we call the Transfiguration. This familiar story of when Jesus took the three disciples who were closest to Him, Peter, James, and John, up a high mountain where they witnessed Him become dazzling white and then saw Him talking with Moses and Elijah. It is quite an extraordinary story. The synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record it, and it is also referred to in the epistle 2 Peter.

So as usual when we read scripture, we need to ask some questions, what did this mean at the time, to the people who were there, what did it mean to the person who wrote about it, what does it mean to us, or what is God trying to tell us now and how does it apply to our lives?

To set the reading in context, Jesus has set His face towards Jerusalem, He and the disciples are making their way there and Jesus is beginning to teach them about what will happen when they get there. He is trying to prepare them for His death and resurrection. Understandably they are having a hard time understanding Him. Both because it is impossible for them to truly grasp – in their understanding the resurrection would be something that happened to everyone at the end of time, they had no concept of the Messiah going through death and being resurrected first. And secondly because of course they couldn't bear the idea of Jesus being killed and taken from them. In fact, just before the transfiguration, Peter had had the audacity to rebuke Jesus for saying such a thing. So, Jesus has determined to go to Jerusalem and fulfil His purpose.

In the Old Testament we know that high mountains were associated with meeting with God as were clouds.

As for the transfiguration itself, clearly what the disciples saw was the shekinah of God. God we are told is pure light, in Revelation it says that there will be no need of the sun because the very presence of God will be our light.

The Glory of God is usually represented as light throughout the Bible. Moses' face shone with the reflection of that light when he had been in God's presence, the light of the Glory of God filled the tabernacle. So here it is as if the veil between heaven and earth, eternity and the temporal world is pulled back and Jesus is standing in the pure light of the presence of God. And He is seen to be talking to Moses and Elijah. For the Jews, Moses and Elijah represented the Law of God and the Prophets who spoke God's word. Jesus Himself had said that He had come to fulfil the Law and the word of the Prophets. Perhaps for Jesus this meeting was an encouragement as He moved towards that fulfilment and the horrific ordeal that He was going to suffer.

For Peter, James, and John it was a confirmation, a revelation of exactly who Jesus was, as they were covered with the cloud, they heard God's voice reaffirming the word He spoke at Jesus' Baptism, "This is my Son whom I love" and adding the command, "listen to Him". What an incredible experience to have, a glimpse of what it will be like to be in God's presence in eternity! And then the cloud and Elijah and Moses were gone, and they were alone on the mountain with Jesus. As they walk back down Jesus tells them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after he had risen from the dead. Clearly, they did not understand what He meant because they continued to discuss amongst themselves what "rising from the dead" might mean. Mark of course as He is recording the event in His Gospel has the benefit of knowing exactly what Jesus meant.

But what does this story mean for us, what are we to take from it, how does it apply to our lives? Well, we have some clues in our second reading, from 2 Corinthians. In Mark's Gospel there were those who just could not or would not see who Jesus was. It didn't matter what He said or how many miracles He performed, the Gospel, the Good News was veiled to them. And now, just

as then, the god (small g) of this world, in other words the enemy, had blinded the minds of unbelievers. And we see the very same today, there are so many who just cannot or will not believe. In fact, when I look at what is going on in the world today, I am staggered at the extent of what I believe to be spiritual blindness. It even seems to affect the hearts and minds of many believers, who appear to see what is evil as being good and what is good as being evil. I guess I shouldn't be staggered, it says quite clearly in the Bible that this problem will get worse before Jesus returns. The minds of unbelievers have been blinded so that they cannot see the light of the good news of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. For us who believe however, God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness" has made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ! Well, that needs a bit of unpicking. This is how the Message Bible paraphrase puts it. "Remember, our message is not about ourselves; we are proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Master. All we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus.... It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful. We have the unbelievable privilege of having the very light of Jesus, the light of God inside of us. Jesus is the light of the world and He has commanded us to be the light of the world, He has called us to shine in the darkness. We can only be light in this dark world if we have His light in us, we have no light of our own. And to prevent us from any pride or boastfulness, the next verse goes on to remind us that we carry this precious treasure in the clay pots of our ordinary humanity. We are nothing special and yet He has chosen us – each and every one who chooses to believe, to carry His light, His very being within

ourselves, the glory of God Himself in us! So that we can reveal Him to the world.

We may not always feel as if we have the Shekinah, the light, the glory of God in us. We can be very good at hiding it, even from ourselves. But the more time we spend in His presence the stronger that light shines in us and through us. This is our purpose, to love God, to know His love in us and to reveal His Love, His light, His glory to the world. One loving action, one kind word of truth at a time. Maybe this Lent we can reflect on how our lives, who we are and how we speak, and act can better reveal the light of Christ, which by His Grace is in us, to those around us.