

Joint Service

February 19th 2012

Mark 9 : 2 – 13

The Transfiguration

Slide 1

The reading that we have just heard tells us about an extraordinary event in the life of Jesus. It is a complex scene and raises many questions.

This morning I would like to concentrate on three things. I want to look more closely at the actual event of 'Transfiguration', what it meant to the disciples and what it means for us and for our lives today.

Slide 2

Right at the beginning of the reading Mark tells us in verse 2:

There he [Jesus] was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

The book of Daniel mentions clothes as white as snow when describing a vision of God. In this account Jesus is "“clothed” in divine glory". Jesus is not a mere prophet or mystic. The voice from heaven, as at his baptism, declares:

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This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!

The disciples are given divine revelation and invited to accept the authority of Jesus as **The** Son of God and to "Listen to him!"

So what did all this mean to the disciples?

This account of the transfiguration of Jesus is full of allusions to Old Testament passages and symbolism, such as the one mentioned earlier, which would have been very familiar to the disciples.

The presence of Moses and Elijah would not have been lost on Mark's readers who would have expected an 'Elijah like' figure to appear to announce the imminent arrival of God's kingdom. Indeed some thought John the Baptist was Elijah reborn.

Moses who was, in the words of one commentary, "the great founder of Israel's religion, the one to whom God gave the law, and the greatest of all the great figures of the OT", promised that God would send a prophet "in the final period before the appearance of the kingdom of God."

Despite all of this the disciples still don't really understand the full implication of this event in showing the significance of Jesus.

Elijah and Moses were men who had been blessed by meeting with God.

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Exodus 34 tells us of Moses meeting with God on Mount Sinai and returning to the people with his face radiant:

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD.

The book of 1 Kings Chapter 19 tells us of Elijah meeting with God.

Slide 5

The LORD said, Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by. Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

This passage concludes with the words:

The LORD said to him

If Old Testament Prophets were able to meet with God, and in the case of Moses have their physical features transformed, it should be no surprise that when Jesus draws closer to God the disciples witnessed a truly astounding transformation.

So what about us, what does all this mean to us?

Let us now look at how Luke describes the same event:

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As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

'As he was praying'. Four small words which take us a little closer to the significance Jesus' transfiguration has for us.

In prayer Jesus draws close to the Father and on this occasion this resulted in his glory being demonstrated to those with him.

Along with the disciples, as mentioned earlier, we are invited to accept the authority of Jesus as **The Son of God**; moreover we are commanded by God himself to "Listen to him!"

We often underestimate the power of spending time in prayer. Through prayer we are privileged to draw closer to God and allow ourselves to receive His Glory.

Psalm 34 has these words for us:

Slide 7 – leave on to end of sermon!

Look upon him and be radiant
and your faces shall not be ashamed.

We were never called to be perfect; we are called to receive God's righteousness which will, if we open our hearts and minds to him, transform us.

We may not walk away with our faces or clothes actually glowing but I am reminded of a time when following a service in St Stephen's Church I felt I had been blessed and drawn particularly close to God in a time of prayer and reflection. I left the church feeling as if I was walking several

feet off the ground. The following morning I went to meet up with an old friend who immediately asked what had happened to me as she could sense something very different.

If my friend, who is not a church goer, could sense that there was something different, imagine how God can use us to encourage those seeking him for the first time, and those seeking to deepen their relationship to Him.

If the disciples needed to study scripture, how much more do we need to read our Bible so we can begin to understand the signs given to us by God in our daily lives? God often uses scripture when he wishes to communicate specific truths to us.

Similarly, if Jesus realised the importance of spending time in prayer, how much more do we need to spend time in prayer and reflection in order to draw closer to God and be transformed by God.

I pray that we will all draw closer to God in prayer and Bible reading so we are open to his transforming power and are enabled to become more and more Christ like.