

Readings:

Luke 9.28-36

2 Peter 1.16-19

Introduction

There we have just heard our first reading, the version from Luke telling us the story of Peter, James and John on the mountain top with Jesus, Moses and Elijah.

To give it a little context: this is 8 days after Jesus had told the disciples about how he will go to Jerusalem to die and then rise again three days later.

Jesus was about to start the last phase of his journey to the cross, but before he did that, he wanted to get confirmation and affirmation from God.

So he takes his most trusted friends with him to pray.

It is while they are praying that this dramatic event occurs.

There's thunder and lightning and talking clouds.

Is this drama something that we aspire to, search for in our spiritual lives?

Has anyone else yearned for this sort of dramatic experience with God?

I know I do sometimes.

I think, wouldn't everything be so much simpler to get my head around if I had this big sort of tangible experience to set me straight?

Like the road to Damascus experience for Paul.

But that isn't how things work, is it?

These sorts of experiences do happen, but rarely, even to saints like Peter.

So instead of listening to the story and dreaming of the mountain top experience we miss out on, instead let us think about how this reveals to us who Jesus truly is.

Transfiguration literally means a change in appearance, and this change is the revelation of Jesus' true glory to the disciples with him.

The revelation of his true splendour.

That, along with the words of God reveals Jesus' true divinity.

Sermon

The reading from Peter is from his second letter.

In this passage he is trying to explain to the reader why they should listen and believe his testimony.

He reminds us that he was an eye witness to the events on the mountain.

Of course, Peter didn't act entirely appropriately on that mountain top.

Firstly, the three disciples who had gone up to the mountain to pray with Jesus were very sleepy.

Can we think of any other episodes when the disciples doze off whilst they're supposed to be praying with Jesus?

The Garden of Gethsemane. They must have had the same blessing as I do of being able to fall asleep anywhere...!

The three of them are startled by a flashing light – the word on the Greek describing Jesus' dazzling clothes is the same one for lightning.

They are awoken here to see the divinity of Christ, whereas in the Garden of Gethsemane they are woken to see the humanity of Christ.

As I'm sure you're aware, language is fluid.

Words and phrases and terms change their meanings over time, or quite suddenly.

Woke, the past tense of wake, is one such word.

Woke has also over the last year or so come to mean *being aware*, specifically with regard to racism and social injustice within certain communities.

It's a usage that I'm sure some of the younger members of the congregation will be aware of.

Or those of us like Sarah and I who watch too much Daily Show...

It's pleasing when a very modern understanding of a word can be applied to a text 2,000 years old!

Peter, James and John didn't just rouse from their dozy state; they *woke* from their state of ignorance as well.

When you put these two episodes together: the disciples being *woke* to Jesus' divinity and humanity, you realise that they have witnessed first-hand the mystery that is at the heart of our faith: how Jesus is both fully man and fully God.

That is the point of the story of the transfiguration, and that which Peter reinforces in his letter, to reveal to us who Jesus really is.

Once we have had this great truth revealed to us, what are we to do with it?

Our response is to hear then what it is God is telling us and all humanity through Jesus.

"He is my son, listen to him!"

It isn't always easy to hear Jesus though, is it?

There are so many distractions in life that get in the way, other noise that complicates matters.

It's like trying to listen to Test Match Special on longwave instead of DAB; you get all the static as well which makes listening to Boycott's moaning tricky.

Have any of you ever experienced walking a prayer labyrinth?

I'm a huge fan, as you may have noticed a couple of family days ago when I drew one out in the crossing of the Minster!

The thing about labyrinths is you're always moving forward – there are no dead ends or trick paths – but that doesn't mean you're always getting closer to the middle.

Sometimes you get quite close to the centre, to your destination, to God and can practically reach out and touch it.

Sometimes though you're skirting around the outside of the labyrinth, facing away from the centre, out on the edge.

This can represent our life with God.

We may feel that on our journey there are times when we are closer to God, closer to the middle.

Able to hear clearly the message being given to us.

Likewise, there may be times when we feel we are skirting around the edge, when it is harder to hear God's word in our lives.

The thing I find with labyrinths is I'm often impatient to get to the centre.

Of course, when I eventually do get to the centre, it doesn't feel particularly different.

It's almost as if God is saying, dur, what were you expecting? Did you think I wasn't with you already, all the way around?

It's then that I realise that God's presence is in the whole of the journey.

As I walk the labyrinth back out, I realise that there are times when I feel particularly close to God and can distinctly hear his word, like Peter, James and John were on that mountain.

At other times, I feel like I'm on the edge, but regardless, God is still travelling with me.

That is what I pray we all take away this morning:

The resurrected Christ is with us throughout our journey, whether we are on the mountaintop acknowledging Christ's glory, or on the edge, in the darkness.

He journeys with us and is the only one we should listen to. Amen.