

## SERMON – PASTOR GREG

11.02.24

**TRANSFIGURATION.** Mark 9:2-9. *Jesus was transfigured before them, His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anybody in the world could bleach them. Let us pray.*

**EPIPHANY.** On January 6<sup>th</sup> we celebrated Epiphany- the manifestation of God's love for all the world. On the first Sunday of Epiphany we celebrated the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we heard these words: *This is my beloved Son, with him I am well pleased.* Then we heard how Jesus was sent out into the desert by the Spirit of God to be tempted by the devil. The season of Epiphany ends today with the Transfiguration account and again we hear the words: *This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.* The five or six weeks of Epiphany mirror our journey on earth: baptised, tested, tempted and then- one day- we too will be transfigured/transformed/we will be metamorphosed. One day!

**SIX DAYS.** Our reading begins: *After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain.* After six days? Jesus had healed a blind man, Peter had confessed Jesus as the Christ and then Jesus had told them that he would be killed and that all who dared to follow him must be prepared to give up all that they had- including their very lives! And it was six days after this shocking word that Jesus went up to a high mountain. But as I read "*after six days*" I am also reminded of Exodus 20 and the Sabbath Day commandment: *In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and HE rested on the seventh day.* Rest is vitally important to us all.

**PETER, JAMES AND JOHN.** The three leading disciples. Peter a fisherman who became a fisher of men. James and John- they wanted to sit at Jesus right and left in positions of power and authority. We think John is the writer of the Gospel of John and Revelation but we know that James was the first of the Twelve to be martyred for following Jesus Christ. (Acts 12:2).

**MOUNTAIN TOP EXPERIENCES.** Surely we have all had them- physical or emotional or spiritual and maybe they were on top of an actual mountain. When I think of mountain top experiences I think of Mt Sinai, Mt Carmel and Mt Zion as well as my own personal experiences- not the least watching my children be born! And as good and wonderful as these are what would our lives be like without those valleys of darkness!

**MOSES AND ELIJAH.** How did they know that it was them? Surely only as the Spirit of God enabled them. In the same way we can only know Jesus as the Christ as the same Spirit of God enables us (1 Cor 12). Moses and Elijah- the Lawgiver and the Prophet who both had their own mountain top experiences. Moses on Mt Sinai where he listened, spoke with and saw God. Where he received the gracious and holy will of God as summarised in the Ten Commandments. Elijah had his mountain top experience on Mt Carmel where he challenged and defeated the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah. Great heroes of the faith. Do you remember their ends? Deuteronomy 34:5: *And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. He buried him in Moab, the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is.* Who buried Moses? Surely it was God Himself- buried or taken to heaven?

And Elijah? 2 Kings: (As Elijah and Elisha) *were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.*

Moses- the great prophet and giver of the Law- the Law which the people of God were to keep perfectly. Moses challenged the people of God and the people responded: *We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey.*

Elijah- the prophet who also called for a decision by the people of GOD: *How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him!*"

**THE GLORY CLOUD.** Jesus, Elijah and Moses. Peter, James and John and then: *A cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud.* God had led His people out of slavery by a pillar of fire at night and by a pillar of cloud in the day (Exodus 13: 21). Ezekiel records the terrible day when God abandoned the Temple due to the wickedness of the Israelites: *Ezek 10:3: Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the LORD rose...the cloud filled the temple and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD...the glory of the LORD departed.* But there was a promise that the glory of the LORD would return to the new and perfect Temple (Ezek 43).

**EVELOPED OR OVERSHADOWED?** Our reading says 'enveloped' but in Luke 1:35 it is translated as 'overshadowed': *The angel answered (to Mary), "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."* Do we desire to be enveloped by God? Do we seek to be overshadowed by Him?

**ONLY JESUS.** God gave Moses the Law so that the people of God would remain holy even as God had declared them holy. God gave Moses the sacrificial system so that their sins might be atoned for- again- so that they might remain the holy people of God. God called Elijah to challenge the false prophets of the day and to challenge the people of God- calling them to repent and believe in the ONE TRUE GOD. But it was not enough. The very nature of every human being had been corrupted by the sin of Adam and Eve. And so God who so loved the world sent His One and Only Son: *"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen and keep on listening to him". Suddenly when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.*

The LAW is good and holy and it still has a part to play in our lives. But it cannot save us. The PROPHECIES are good and holy and they still have a part to play in our lives but they cannot change us. One Jesus can save us and only Jesus can change us.

**METAMORPHIS.** We know this word from our school days- how a caterpillar changes into a butterfly. But it is word also used in Philippians 2: *He made himself nothing, taking (morphé) the very nature of a servant.* And it is the word used in our reading which is translated as TRANSFIGURED.

**TRANSFIGURED.** Jesus had warned of his coming death. Jesus had warned of the cost of following him. And to give them strength and hope and faith to endure all that would come their way God gave them a glimpse of the fullness of Jesus the Christ- the Eternal Son of God (Col 1:15 and Hebrews 1:3). We are rarely given such visions but we are given the very body and blood of Christ in the Holy Sacrament- we are *called to live by faith and not by sight* (2 Cor 5:7).

**AND LASTLY?** What Peter, James and John saw is our future: 1 Cor 15: *Listen, I will tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed- in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed...to bear the likeness of the Man from heaven- Jesus Christ.* This is our future- thanks be to God. Amen.