

The transfiguration      Mark 9:2-9, 2 Corinth 4:3-6

I think that most of us have had the experience of Opening our mouths and saying something when the best thing would have been to keep quiet.

You wish the ground would suddenly open up and swallow you to save you the embarrassment of that ill-chosen word at the wrong moment.

Just before the event we heard about in our Gospel reading today Peter had spoken up on behalf of the Disciples. He said they believed that Jesus was the Christ, (Mark 8:27-33) the Saviour, God had promised to send.

When Jesus started to warn them that his being Saviour meant He would suffer and die.

Peter took Jesus aside and told Him:

**"No, no that isn't how it should be!"**

Jesus had to rebuke Peter. "Get behind me Satan" That may appear very harsh. But unwittingly Peter was voicing the temptation that Satan had used in the wilderness to lead Jesus astray. Jesus could not use worldly methods to become God's King.

Jesus continued to teach them. "Not only will I die", but if you want to follow me you must be ready to deny yourself and take up your own cross and follow me. Following Jesus isn't cheap - **discipleship is costly!**

Let's remember who is telling this story.

Mark's Gospel was regarded by the early church as Peter's Memoire of Jesus' ministry. How honest Peter is about his faults. He is telling this story against himself. He told the world about his private conversation with Jesus and his need to be rebuked by Jesus. Peter had learned Humility in Jesus' School of life and his honesty is so helpful to us.

What was Jesus' attitude to Peter in the days that followed? Was he frosty and cold because of Peter's blunders. No. Amazingly 6 days later Peter is amongst the group of three who were chosen to follow Jesus up Mt Hermon. Jesus doesn't write Peter off.

What an encouragement to us! Jesus does not write us off because of our mistakes. We are embarrassed by our social blunders and the times we get it wrong but the Lord our God looks at our hearts. Jesus looked

into Peter's heart & saw a man who was loyal + willing to learn. He sees into our hearts too and He looks with love in his eyes. If we want to know what God is like, look at Jesus.

The disciples' assumptions of how the Kingdom of God would be established had been stood on their heads. They probably still didn't understand what Jesus had been saying about His being killed and rising again. They would not be able to understand until after the resurrection. But Jesus knew they needed reassurance that it would work out alright in the end.

Does this relate to us and what is going on in our lives at present? Things don't always work out in line with our prayers, our hopes and dreams. There are disappointments and setbacks. Like the Apostles at times we don't understand what is going on as we face the challenges and change in our daily experience. We have to learn to trust Our Lord Jesus through the trying, difficult and painful situations of life. We need reassurance too.

If we had been on snow-capped Mt Hermon what would

we have seen? There were just Peter, James and John with Jesus on the Mt. The disciples were following Jesus because, though they were confused at times, Jesus had the words of Life. Though He was God Himself come from heaven that was not obvious to a casual observer. Jesus had left the glory of heaven behind. He was born as a man, to share our humanity; to become our saviour.

On Mt Hermon

**Jesus was changed - Transfigured.**

**Jesus & his clothes shone dazzling with light.**

**Elijah & Moses also appeared & spoke with Him.**

At Christmas we sing

**"Veiled in flesh the Godhead see."**

For a few moments on the Mountain the veil was lifted and the three Apostles beheld Jesus glory.

In the Old Testament there was a practice to establish physical monuments to remind God's people of his interventions, of his faithfulness and power to save. Abraham built altars to mark the places where he had met with the Lord God. Jacob erected a pillar at Bethel to mark the place where he had met God in the

dream of the ladder and the angels. Joshua took twelve large stones from the bed of the dried up river Jordan and made a pile of memorial stones to remind them that The Lord had dried up the Jordan to allow the people of Israel to cross the river safely.

Peter saw this moment as precious and wished that he could prolong it. Peter was not going to miss an opportunity to mark this amazing revelation on the Mt. "Let's put up 3 shelters". Did Peter want to establish that Jesus was as important as the OT heroes Moses & Elijah? A cloud enveloped all six - the Old Testament cloud of God's presence and God's voice spoke.

**"This is my Son whom I love, Listen to Him."**

God the Father spoke to interpret the meaning of the vision, the physical revelation.

Jesus was not an equal with Moses and Elijah. He was Emmanuel God with us.

**What was the purpose of the transfiguration?**

**What could it mean?**

Luke's Gospel tells us that Moses & Elijah spoke with Jesus about the **departure** he would bring to fulfilment

at Jerusalem. In the Greek "departure" is Exodus. On the motorways in Greek Cyprus slip roads for leaving a motorway are marked with a sign "Exodus". The book of Exodus in the Old Testament tells us How God used Moses to lead the People of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. Jesus unique role was to lead His people out of slavery to sin.

Jesus had set his course for Jerusalem. He had committed himself to God's way of saving his people. He went willingly but we know from His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane that he was dreading the ordeal to come.

The Lord our God sent Moses and Elijah to that mountaintop to encourage Jesus and affirm Him in the way He had chosen, the way of the cross.

How would Jesus make his departure? Would it be like Moses whose death is not mentioned in Old Testament? Would it be like Elijah who was taken up to heaven by a chariot of fire?

**No. He would be lifted up on a Cross; a humiliating, painful & shameful death.**

**He would rise from the dead  
to demonstrate his victory.**

**During 40 days he would teach His disciples  
and then ascend in glory to reign as King**

The transfiguration on the Mt was also an encouragement for the disciples, Jesus' three leading Apostles. Jesus refused to give signs to those who demanded them but He did give signs to confirm the faith of believers. What they witnessed at the transfiguration gave them something to hold on to.

They had heard the voice of God say, **'This is my Son!'**  
**(v 7), and they had seen his glory (v 3).**

And knew that they had to **"Listen to Him"**.

What they had seen and heard would stay with them as a continual source of encouragement.

We should not be surprised if at times the Christian life is not easy. Jesus and John the Baptist both suffered. All the Apostles suffered. We too face difficulties and frustrations as individuals and families [health, work, finance, relationships]  
We face problems as congregations.

When difficult times come it's helpful to remember our past experiences of God's love and care.

To remember times when we experienced God's help and felt that God was close is a deep encouragement.

Like Peter we remember our own "Mountain Top" experiences? BUT we are not meant to stay there on the Mountain top - those shrines never got built. The disciples had to go down the mountain with Jesus and take the road to Jerusalem and all that implied. They had chosen to follow Jesus and they were ready to die for Him.

They were learning in practice to show the self-giving love of Jesus in every situation. Like them we need to move on in our faith to keep growing in our trust and obedience as we follow Jesus.

PRAYER

Thank you Father for all the Encouragements you give us along our journey of faith.

Help us Lord to listen to your beloved Son and to trust and obey Him. May we be ready to take up our cross day by day and follow you in whatever situation you call us to live out our lives. Amen.