

The Last Sunday after Epiphany – The Transfiguration
27-02-2022
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Exodus 34: 29-35 Moses face shines with God's glory after coming down from the mountain, but he covers it with a veil for the people

Psalm 99 The Lord is King, let the peoples tremble

2 Corinthians 3:12- 4:2 Do not veil your minds, but be open to accepting Jesus

Luke 9: 28-36 Jesus is Transfigured on the Mountain

Introduction

Today we celebrate a day called the Transfiguration. We hear a story about Jesus, shining on a mountain. This story was recorded so that those who heard it would clearly know, that there is a supernatural aspect to who Jesus is.

As we reflect on our bible readings today, I would like to look at two aspects of the readings:-

- Firstly, what does it tell us about Jesus?
- And secondly, what does it tell us about our own need for transformation?

About Jesus

So, what does the transfiguration tell us about Jesus?

Well, firstly it is a story about who Jesus is. Many parts of the Gospels are about what Jesus does. There are stories of his great teaching like we had last week. There are stories about the miracles that Jesus performs in healing others, to show of God's power, and to show God's love and care for us as human beings. These stories are about what Jesus is doing in his earthly ministry, but they also point to who Jesus is. Today's story points directly to who Jesus is. Jesus is not teaching or healing in this story, but rather something supernatural is happening to Jesus, so that we as mere human beings can be helped to understand who Jesus actually is.

Of course, as mere humans it would be foolish to think that we could fully understand all there is to know about God. In a discussion with Reverend Sue this week she pointed out a great learning that it is best to try to describe God with verbs rather than nouns as nouns can be limiting.

The Christian faith tells us that as human beings we cannot fully comprehend the enormity of God. But as Christians we can be assured of the way to God.

As Christians we believe that Jesus is God. The second person of the Trinity. This is something that has been acknowledged by the church and passed down to us.

Close your eyes, and imagine if you can, just for a moment that you were one of those three disciples on the mountain with Jesus. I think they must have been terrified. Look at the person beside you. How would you react if they started shining like the sun?

Jesus was transfigured to help the first disciples understand who he was.

And Jesus was transfigured before those first disciples, not only for their benefit, but also for ours, so that we too, can know that in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we can know the way to God.

In the Gospel reading we hear the following words in the voice from the cloud:-

‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!’

So, the Transfiguration points us to who Jesus is. Jesus is the way to God.

Our need for Transformation

We see throughout the New Testament how the first disciples of Jesus, in turn, had their lives transformed.

If we follow Jesus today, our lives will also be transformed. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to all who believed.

In our readings from Exodus, and from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians today we hear about a veil that Moses put over his shining face. Moses covered his face, not because of a problem that Moses had, but rather because of a problem that the Israelites had. Moses took the veil off his face when he spoke to God. But the people were fearful when they saw Moses’ shining face. Paul explains it to the Corinthians saying that Moses put on the veil to spare them from seeing God’s glory in his face, because they had hardened their minds (some translations say hearts) towards God.

Paul says that it is only in Jesus that the veil can be set aside. In other words, being a Christian is not just about knowing who Jesus is, but rather accepting Jesus, and accepting that Jesus is the way to knowing all of God's glory for us.

In Romans 12:1-2 Paul says:-

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

We are to let God's glory shine into our lives through Jesus. And when we accept Jesus into our lives, then a natural consequence of this will be that others will see the light of Jesus shining in us.

The transformation of those first disciples happened because of the time they spent with Jesus and the experiences they had with Jesus. This in turn led them to know that they could trust Jesus, and to know that Jesus was the way to God.

We are not necessarily going to have the same experiences as them, but we need to have a mountaintop experience of our own about who Jesus is, so that we too will be enabled to put all of our trust in Jesus.

One of my mountain top experiences was at a Diocesan Youth Conference in North Queensland. It was in the 1980's, just after a lot of Charismatic movements had begun in the 1970's. We were spending time in prayer and one of the leaders, a quite elderly woman prayed with me for the gift of tongues. It didn't happen at the time, but later in the night when I was praying on my own the words flowed, and kept coming out of my mouth. I was already a Christian, but this experience of God's presence helped me to grow in my faith.

We will all have different experiences through life. And not all will be mountain top experiences. In fact, the early church, which we see in the Acts of the Apostles, faced many challenges, that can often be described as "valley experiences".

An old saying describing life's experiences is that the Mountaintops are for vision and inspiration, but it is in the Valleys where the fruit is grown. This can be true of our own lives. Unless we accept the vision of who Jesus is, we may not grow through the challenges we face in life.

Conclusion

We weren't there 2000 years ago at the Transfiguration. In fact, only a very select few of Jesus' followers were with him. But this was one of their experiences of Jesus, that transformed their lives, and enabled and encouraged them to share the Good News of Jesus with others.

We have it recorded for us in scripture, so that we can also know the truth of Jesus' divinity. We can know that Jesus is the way to God.

As we follow Jesus, knowing that Jesus is the way to God, our lives will also be transformed. And they will be transformed so that others will see the light of Jesus in us.

Like those first disciples were willing and open to Jesus transforming their lives, I trust you are willing and open for God to continue to transform your life. Amen.