

The Transfiguration
19-02-2023
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Exodus 24: 12-18 Moses on the Mountain – God's Glory

Psalm 2 God will send his anointed

2 Peter 1:16-21 Peter is an eyewitness of Jesus' divinity

Matthew 17: 1-9 Jesus is transfigured on the Mountain

Introduction

Today, we celebrate the feast of the Transfiguration. On this day we remember a supernatural event in the life of Jesus. The appearance of Jesus changed dramatically, he became dazzling white, and he appeared alongside the historical figures of Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets. This event was witnessed by only three of Jesus' closest friends, and he even told them to keep quiet about it, until after he had been raised from the dead.

In the bigger picture of our Church Calendar, today is the last Sunday before the beginning of Lent. This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. This Wednesday we begin a penitential time, a solemn time, a time to reflect, as we prepare for the Celebration of Easter.

So today, on the day of the Transfiguration, and as we prepare to begin our Lenten observance, I would like to look at how the scriptures call us to:-

1. Give Glory to God, and to
2. Listen to Jesus

Giving Glory to God

So firstly today, let us look at the scriptures and how we are called to give glory to God.

In our first reading today from the book of Exodus we hear, in part, the story of Moses going up onto the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments. It talks about the Glory of the Lord settling on Mount Sinai. It talks about the

appearance being that of a devouring fire on top of the mountain. The ancient Jewish people knew from the Scriptures that God was to be worshipped and given glory. In Psalm 2 today we hear:-

¹⁰ Serve the Lord with awe, and govern yourselves in fear and trembling: lest he be angry, and you perish in your course.

For Christians we hear in the New Testament, how all this glory, that is to be given to God, is to be given to Jesus. In the reading from Matthew's Gospel today we hear, again on a mountain, in the voice coming from the cloud:-

'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!'

It echoes Psalm 2 in verse 6, ⁶ I will announce the Lord's decree, that which he has spoken: 'You are my son, this day have I begotten you.

As Christians we believe that God is the creator of everything, and we are made to worship the creator. The creator God has not left us wondering about how we can give this glory. God has sent Jesus so that we might know the way to God, and who to give this glory to.

Of course, the first Christians were all Jews. Jesus was the Messiah they had been expecting, but in the New Testament we hear how Jesus is so much more than they had expected. Jesus wasn't just a good teacher, or miracle worker, or another prophet, of whom the Jews had known many. The first Christians came to realize, eventually, that Jesus was God. And Jesus came with many signs and wonders, so that those first eyewitnesses could understand who Jesus was.

The foremost event though, in Jesus' physical time on earth, is of course his death and resurrection, and how it accomplished the way for us to be reconciled with God. Jesus told the witnesses of the Transfiguration not to tell anyone until after the resurrection. Jesus' divinity, is to be primarily understood in terms of Jesus' death and resurrection and what it means for us, but the transfiguration is another event that points us to who Jesus is.

So, the Transfiguration, this supernatural event in the life of Jesus, was for those first disciples, but it is also for us. The Transfiguration helps us to understand who Jesus really is. So that as we seek to worship and give glory to God in our lives, it is Jesus to whom we turn.

Listening to Jesus

So, if Jesus really is God, and God is to be worshipped and glorified, what does that mean for us now, 2000 years after these events in history occurred.

We are told in the Gospel reading today, that we are to “Listen to Jesus”.

But what does it mean for our lives? Well, it will mean different things for different people, but if we accept Jesus’ divinity, and if we accept how his death and resurrection allows us to live in a right relationship with God, listening to Jesus will be something we prioritize in our lives.

Listening to Jesus begins primarily by knowing what has been recorded for us in the Bible. We should be seeking to hear the scriptures day by day, if we want to hear Jesus speak to us. Those first disciples hung on the words of Jesus. Crowds came from near and far to hear Jesus speak. If we are to hear Jesus today, we need to be immersed in the scriptures so that we will know what Jesus is saying. If listening to, or reading the bible is not a part of your daily routine, then you should seek to make a change so that you can listen to Jesus in your life.

We also listen to Jesus, by being around others who are following Jesus in their lives. That’s why worshipping and praying together is such an important activity. Imagine if the Church decided that we were no longer going to gather together. I actually can’t imagine it, but I’m sure it would be catastrophic for people getting to hear the “Good News” of Jesus. As human beings we are communal creatures so if something is the basis for our very being, that is hearing Jesus in our lives, then it makes perfect sense that we gather together to do it.

There are of course many ways we listen to Jesus in our lives. Listening to Jesus, needs to be something we set aside time for intentionally, so that we can hear what Jesus is saying to us, and so that we can then live our lives accordingly.

Listening to Jesus is good for us. If we listen to Jesus, we will be drawn closer and closer into the presence of God in our lives.

We are created by God to live for God, and in doing this we will find our true meaning and purpose in life.

Conclusion

The transfiguration of Jesus is an event in history that serves to point us to who Jesus really is. Not just another person, but the very presence of God. As Christians we have come to the realization that there is only one God, as the Jews believed, but that we know that One God, in the Trinity, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I pray that as we think about the transfiguration today, we will be helped to know that it is Jesus who we are to give Glory too, and it is Jesus we are called to listen to in our lives.

And that as we give glory to God, and as we listen to Jesus, we will be filled with the awe and peace that only God can give us.

Amen.