

The Last Sunday after Epiphany - Transfiguration
11-02-2024
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

2 Kings 2: 1-12	Elijah taken up to heaven
Psalms 50:1-6	God is Lord over the Earth, He will judge all people
2 Corinthians 4:3-12	Jesus is alive, in us.
Mark 9: 2-9	The transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain

Introduction

Today in our church calendar we have a day set aside to remember the Transfiguration. A supernatural event recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, which helped the first followers of Jesus to understand who Jesus really was.

Let us firstly, look at the transfiguration and what it tells us about Jesus. Secondly let us look at how mountaintop and valley experiences will be present in our lives. And let us conclude by looking at what the transfiguration might mean for our lives.

Transfiguration

So let us first look at the transfiguration itself. It is a strange supernatural event. The first disciples already knew and were following Jesus. No one doubts that the first disciples of Jesus knew him.

They saw Jesus, walked with Jesus, ate with Jesus.

They may have misunderstood who he was at times, but there was no doubting their dedication to seeking to follow him. We see through the gospels how the revelation of Jesus unfolds.

So why might they have needed the Transfiguration? I believe God was giving Peter, James and John this experience to help them.

God wants us all to know Him. God wants us to Accept the Hope and Love offered to all humanity in Jesus. The disciples knew the stories of Moses and Elijah. They knew that they represented the Law and the Prophets which were God's revelation to the Jews in the Books of the Old Testament.

I believe Jesus was given this metamorphosis, and placed beside Moses and Elijah, so the disciples could know that Jesus was God. But we then see how Jesus told them not to tell anyone about it until he had risen from the dead. It must have been very hard for them to understand. But the most significant thing about Jesus' mission on earth in human form is his death and

resurrection. The transfiguration, as wonderful as an experience as it must have been to witness, was not meant as an end in itself, but rather to point the disciples to who Jesus was.

This Mountaintop experience was given to Peter, to James and to John not only to enhance their faith in Jesus, but to help in passing that faith on to us.

Mountains and Valleys

Those first disciples of Jesus had that Mountaintop experience, but they also had challenging experiences. Times we might call valley experiences. We know Peter denied knowing Jesus 3 times. It's hard to imagine how Peter would have felt when he heard the cock crow, knowing that he had denied even knowing Jesus. And then the disciples faced the death of Jesus. How harrowing that must have been for them.

We will all have Mountaintop and valley experiences in our lives. It has been said that the Mountaintop experiences provide us with inspiration and vision, but it is actually the valley experiences, whilst difficult, that can at times, provide us with opportunities for real growth in our lives.

We first need to have a mountain top experience that Jesus is God, so that when we face the challenging times, we might be enabled by God to grow through them.

One mountaintop experience from my youth was going to an event held in North Queensland called Dycon, which was the name they gave to the Diocesan Youth Conference. It was an opportunity to be encouraged by great Christian speakers, and an opportunity to share in praying and being open to the Holy Spirit. It was at one of these conferences that I was first guided to praying in tongues.

A valley experience I had was with one of the construction companies that I worked for, where I really didn't fit in with the way they did things. I ended up leaving the company as soon as I could get another job, but I grew through it and it drew me back to the call to full time Christian Ministry.

We will face positive and negative events in our lives, however without the mountaintop of who Jesus is we might not grow well through the valleys.

Our own Transformation

Just as the first disciples of Jesus were impacted by the transfiguration, our lives are also to be impacted by the realization of who Jesus really is.

Jesus didn't just want people to know about him like we know about historical figures, like say Captain Cook was the first European who charted the East Coast of Australia.

Jesus came and called for disciples. Jesus wanted people to follow him.

In the retelling of the Transfiguration God's voice came from out of the cloud:-
'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!'

It says when the cloud came over them, they were terrified.

If we really know who Jesus is, we will want to follow him. Just like the first disciples.

From our reading from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians today we're reminded that we are made for God, God is not made for us.

⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.

As followers of Jesus our lives are to be transformed so that the lives of others might also be transformed.

Conclusion

Just like Jesus was Transformed, we too are called to be Transformed.

In his book "Surprised by Joy" CS Lewis described his conversion to Christianity in this way :-

"In the Trinity term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God ... perhaps the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England."

Sometimes God uses mountaintop experiences in our lives to help transform us in our Christian journey. At other times our growth is slow and steady through regular commitment, and we may not even notice ourselves changing. The thing for us though, is to be ever mindful of our relationship with God through Jesus. So that whether we are experiencing Spiritual highs, or devastating lows, or just cruising along, we will to be ever conscious of how Jesus is transforming our lives.

So that we not only know and accept Jesus into our lives, but that our lives are transformed as we follow Jesus on life's journey.

How transformed are you feeling today?

Maybe the upcoming Lenten season might be a good time to allow God to transform you. Amen.