

Sunday Next before Lent: 2021.

Mark 9:2-9

I don't know about you, but for me this lockdown has been tough in so many ways.

One of the less than desirable effects of the lockdown has been me becoming a rather unwilling participant in the ever-growing band of scruffy citizens with something known as covid hair!

With no barber I have been left with one of two options, to battle with my unkempt (ever thinning) locks or brave donning my mothers old mixing bowl and chopping away at my tufts in the unlikely hope that I won't wake up in the morning and discover that the vicar of Peover is suddenly sporting a halfhearted Mohican!

Well, covid hair or not, there are often days when I get up, look in the mirror and think it's a good job I believe in God because its gonna take a miracle to make anything half presentable out of what is looking back at me!

The Transfiguration that the gospel story describes for us today is perhaps, truth be told more worthy of my attention. What the gospel brings us is one of the miracles of Jesus that in my younger days I never really understood if I'm honest. I mean it's much easier to get excited about a healing or water turning into wine at some party isn't it. Yet this miracle is unique among others in that this miracle is about something that is happening to Jesus himself.

'He was transfigured before them, his clothes became dazzling white in a way no one on earth could bleach them and with him appeared Elijah and Moses!'

So, what's going on, and what has it got to do with Peover, or the daft vicar's lockdown hair come to that?

Well, it's all about love. The Father's love for his boy, and it's all about you too!

God so loved the world that he gave his only son to the world as a tangible sign that the Father is forever wrapping his arms around his world and is showing us what life with him means here today and in the realms that are to come..

The Transfiguration of Jesus is a world-shaking moment when Jesus' identity is (as at his baptism) spectacularly revealed to everyone.

Have you wondered what it might be like to actually hear the voice of God? A whisper in the wind? Something you can almost feel like the roar of a waterfall? Or a sound that shakes you to the core like thunder exploding? Or when lightning claps around you?

Well, whatever it is you imagine, on that day in the gospel story the Father's voice echoed from the heavenly places across the planets and the stars of universe directly to the exact place where Peter, James and John stood looking up at the mountain where their Rabbi had been praying. And they hear "listen to him",

Wow! In this moment, the Father identifies Jesus as his son come directly to the hot dusty plains of the world to speak and live out the Father's message of light and transcendent love to a world that has struggled for so long in darkness.

I can't begin to imagine what Peter, James and John must have felt or done! Did they weep, did they fall to their knees, we don't know for sure. Whatever it was I bet they hadn't expected to experience that when they had sat with Jesus that morning sharing breakfast!

In this amazing moment we see a unique point in history where human nature meets God in the most amazing way and in that moment the order of the cosmos is changed forever. No longer is God distant and wrathful; He is here and its personal; love like none other known to humankind has suddenly come and everything has changed!

The mountain is symbolic in Judaic poetry often it means a place set apart, and in both the psalms and the gospels we meet those majestic images as the meeting place of the everyday and the eternal often. In this story however Jesus unites the message of the Jewish prophets with the living word of God himself becoming the connecting point, a bridge if you like between heaven and earth. It's a phenomenal and awe-inspiring thing!

So, what does all this mean for us here in Peover this morning?

Well, for me it speaks to me about grace. For me, this image is all about our calling to recognise Jesus as that bridge between heaven and earth, between us in all our earthly frailty and the all-powerful creator of the universe.

Later of course Jesus completes this image as he chooses to give himself to death on the cross. His arms stretched out embracing each and every one of us, revealing the creator's heart and calling us all into Gods eternal arms of love, no matter who we are, where we have been or what we may have done.

Are you feeling slightly blown away yet? There's more so brace yourselves!

It is also about the fact that in Jesus' transfiguration, as he is suddenly illuminated with light, we are being shown more about the gift God is giving us through Christ.

You see is not only that Jesus is changed by Gods presence of love, but also the fact that the disciples are changed through seeing Gods glory, his divine presence in Jesus too.

As Christians we are therefore included in that transformation story. All that Jesus did for us on the cross, his wiping away of the things that separate us from the Fathers heart. His coming back to life claims us out of the claws of death. And his ascension? Well, that reveals how one day we too will be lifted up us into heavenly grace and eternal life to be reunited with the God of love.

So, the real miracle of this special Gospel story is not necessarily that 2000 years ago a Rabbi's face and robes get all shiny on the top of some distant hillside. But that as people of faith we are shown that as a chosen child of God, if we come to him with an openness of heart, we will be wrapped up in Jesus' life-giving presence in an embrace that will never end.

And as we are being held, we like him will gradually be transformed into something amazingly beautiful too, we will become who we were designed to be, a person and a community who reflect the glorious sacred heart and love of our eternal God.

The point is that Jesus' presence in our lives can only lead to one thing; our own transfiguration, where his strength, guidance, grace, and love changes who we are more and more into the likeness of Jesus.

So, what is it that you see when you look in the mirror in the morning? I was flippant at the beginning of this reflection about needing a miracle to sort me out when I look in the mirror, because the truth is, it's not about my grey beard, wrinkles or ever encroaching baldness that I should be seeing, it's about whether or not the person looking back at all of me as I brush my hair or clean my teeth actually knows and is in love with God.

Our faith is one of change and pilgrimage. The fathers love leads us all to an inner place where one day we will learn to recognise that all the foibles and unique quirks that make us who we are as individuals are rejoiced over in the heavens, and that the glorious image of the creator dwells within each one of us.

So as you come to the mountain during your prayers this week try to remember this... that you are precious in God's sight, and when he looks at each and every one of you, he simply gazes upon the growing radiant reflection of Jesus in you and weeps with joy.

Brothers and Sisters, we are all going through a tough and challenging time right now.

But cling to the truth that as Jesus shone out that day on the mountain, in God's eyes your face is brighter than the sunshine of the day, even in the darkness, you shine more brightly than the stars of the night. And right here, right now whether you can see or feel him or not, you are all being wrapped in his loving arms, you are his beloved and he is with you. So have faith, have hope, and remember that you are loved. Amen.