

Reflection for Wednesday 5th August – The Transfiguration (celebrated on 6th August) Luke 9: 28-36

The lectionary reading for the transfiguration of Christ this year uses Luke's gospel account. This mountain top transformation appears in Matthew and Mark too and each sets this scene soon after Peter's confession of Jesus as "The Christ, the Messiah". This scene also serves as another glimpse of what walking in the Kingdom of God might be like, if viewed in the light of the glory of God revealed in Christ here on earth.

Luke's gospel account differs from the others in that it is very much set in a background of prayer. Jesus takes Peter, James and John with him up the mountain to pray. Luke often emphasises the role of prayer at momentous occasions in his account of the life and ministry of Jesus. (e.g. Luke 3: 21-22 at his baptism; 6: 12-16 when choosing his disciples; 9: 18-20 before Peter's confession). In this instance it shows the importance of prayer in seeking to encounter and be transformed through the heavenly glory of God in God's Kingdom here on Earth.



It might be understating things to say that this scene of transfiguration is a bit strange. We are told that those that witness it were at times "terrified" but then I suppose meeting with the Glory of God "face to face" is likely to be "awful" in the true sense of the word. Look at the experience of Moses in meeting God. Perhaps Moses appearance alongside Jesus serves partly as a reminder of that. Moses' face was transformed, reddened and shining through the reflected light of a close encounter with Godself such that he had to wear a veil. Jesus here though is transformed not by reflected light but by revealing that he is the very source of God's glorious light himself. Furthermore, this scene emphasises too that such light needs to be witnessed and acted upon by others to be of Godly use and purpose. "This is my Son, my chosen, listen to him" booms God from the clouds and we might add, "so walk in His light and be transformed all the days of our lives".

The Greek for "transfigure" is "metamorphothe" from which we get "metamorphosis" which may be a better description of what happens to Jesus on the mountain top all those years ago. This magical happening appears to mark a radical change, like a butterfly from a caterpillar, to Jesus preparing him for the return to his people and for the continuation of his ministry affirmed in such a dramatic way by his Father God. In a similar way we should allow ourselves, as disciples of Christ, to be transformed by that glorious light ready to walk in the kingdom of God to perform the mission and ministry purposed and modelled by Christ here on earth. Are we always willing and ready to do that?

I was reminded of this recently as I tidied up after last Sunday's worship. I was standing in the chancel contemplating how strange things have become as we continue to strive to walk with God through Christ in these sometimes dark times. In a pause as I faced the high altar in the gloom, I suddenly found myself bathed in a pool of multi-coloured light. Looking up to its source, I saw the light of the sun shining through the image of Christ in the stained-glass window. Here out of the gloom came a reminder of the multicoloured glory of God revealed through his Son; for an instant I became part of that light, giving a real lifting to my spirit. I came away, perhaps not quite transformed or transfigured but at least with a new spring in my step and a renewed sense of hope and purpose to my part in the mission and ministry of Christ in these difficult times. An image of the Trinity and our participation in that also sprang to mind, alongside the refrain from the hymn "His light will shine for all to see, walk, walk in the light" which rattled around my head for the rest of the day!

I think all of this serves as a reminder to us, to be constantly open to letting the glorious light of Christ Crucified illuminate and light up every corner of our lives and consequently reflecting into the lives of others that witness it in us. That way we may continue to walk in the glory of the kingdom of God, revealed in the person of Christ, until at the end of time when we will all be bathed and absorbed into the full multi-coloured glory that is God's unending light, transfigured and transformed for all eternity. Amen.

Yours walking in His light,

Frank.