

Sunday next before Lent: The Transfiguration – Exodus 24:12-end; 2 Peter 1:16-end; Matthew 17:1-9

We have only recently visited this Transfiguration experience, but today we are in the Sunday before Lent which points towards Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent – the journey we symbolically make with Jesus towards the cross.

Ash Wednesday is a solemn service – but also one of hope. It is a one worth attending – it helps us – and makes us think about death and mortality – the fragility of life – but of course the journey takes us through the darkest of days and out the other side into the most glorious of lights – the resurrection light of new hope and new beginnings – it mirrors if you like, the journey that we can all expect to face at some point in our lives – when someone dies – when a relationship ends – when a job folds – when we struggle with health – so many life experiences take us through this journey from dark to despair to light and on into hope of a brighter tomorrow – and if we are blessed with faith – a journey into the hope of an eternal tomorrow....

As someone pointed out to me – you can't have resurrection until you have death

So here we are witnessing again the Transfiguration. In Peter's second letter he assures us that it was no figment of their imagination – or an ancient myth – but an actual event. He says this: For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed.

The Greek word for 'transfigured' is 'metamorphe' – and we use that word, don't we, to describe a caterpillar becoming a butterfly – Jesus is 'morphed' then – dazzling white clothes and shining light is real...

This is a huge revelation moment – despite Peter wanting to get busy, this is a time of being – to bathe in the light and to just be. This is a real event – widely recorded – real live people being in attendance and witnessing the sight of people who are dead – Elijah and Moses – but who are actually alive and talking with Jesus. This shows us – if we have the spiritual openness to believe and the faith to trust – that there is a thin line between life and death – a very thin line and one that, when crossed, can reveal a glory we can only hope for until we experience it for ourselves.

But what a comfort to think that loved ones who have gone before are actually bathing in that dazzling light of Christ that Moses and Elijah were bathing in as they stood on the mountain with our Lord. What an encouraging and hopeful thought – one that Peter, James and John would have come away with, along with the confusion and bewilderment of course, but it was probably the encouragement from that amazing revelation that actually gave them the courage to go on to become the stalwarts of the early Christian Churches that Jesus ordained Peter to lead – and the conviction and trust to die for the cause in the end.....

We have a choice – we take this story and trust it with all our heart – that this aspect of life we live now is part of a more glorious journey to come – but that the glory of what is to come can be lived in a measure here and now through faith in the promises laid before through the life, death and resurrection – and transfiguration of Jesus – or we think it is all a myth and no more real than a group of children walking through a wardrobe into another world that makes for a good fairy-tale.

Either way – what we can say is that from that moment of dazzling light-filled transfiguration - for those faithful disciples – and for faithful disciples today – something changed and the journey of life took on a different meaning.

It leaves us with a pondering question of our own – what meaning do we want our own lives to take on as we begin this our Lenten journey of 2020 – perhaps coming along to the 10am or 8pm

Ash Wednesday service – receiving the ashen sign of the cross to remember where we came from and where we will return – will help you in your pondering.... Amen.