

Gospel reflections for Sunday 23rd February 2020

[Matthew 17:1-9](#)

Following the three weeks exploring the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 17 provides another mountain experience with the transfiguration of Jesus. Transfiguration Sunday draws the season of Epiphany to a close and connects us to the season of Lent. Matthew focusses again on the identity of Jesus.

This passage follows a little while after the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' teaching of how Moses' law, once seen as a gift from God to his people, had been distorted into an excuse for condemnation. Jesus heads up the mountain with Peter, James and John. On the mountain, Jesus is transfigured, lit up like the sun and Jesus and these three disciples are joined by Moses and Elijah, two momentous figures of the Old Testament. What a mountaintop experience! Peter responds like so many of us, when we encounter something unexpected. Our first inclination is to *do* something, anything! Peter suggests setting up a dwelling. We don't know what Peter was exactly thinking but perhaps he wanted to stay in this place, to dwell in the moment.

Yet this isn't where the story ends, Peter is interrupted by God's voice from the clouds, echoing the words of Jesus' baptism. 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!' The disciples fall to the ground with fear. Jesus reaches out to the disciples with compassion, touches them and reassures them with the words, 'Do not be afraid'. When they look up they see no one except Jesus. No Moses or Elijah, symbolic of the law and the prophets. No cloud or voice from the clouds. Only Jesus.

It is quite significant that three of the gospels record that when the disciples looked up, they could see only Jesus. Jesus is God's own beloved son and it is to him that we listen. Jesus fulfils the law given to Moses and taught through the prophets like Elijah.

All eyes are now to be focused on Jesus. There is no one else to whom they can go or should go. There is Jesus only – No one else but Jesus! Listen to him! He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Listen to him!

So what does that mean for us today? Like the disciples, we are easily confused about Jesus' ministry. In a world that will push and pull us every which way and overwhelm us with its competing demands we can easily become side tracked. We can also find ourselves listening to the voices that are obsessed with being the best, doing the most and having it all. Yet Jesus has a different message for us if we will only listen to him.

Taking time to listen to Jesus will be different for each of us as we have different ways of listening and pondering its meaning. It might involve spending five minutes meditating using the [Sacred space](#) site at the beginning or close of each day. It could include a regular prayer time with your team after you have reflected on and discussed the Bible reading for the day. It may involve listening to a [Bible podcast](#) on the way to work or on a walk. As we listen to Jesus, we are reminded that we are not alone and we gain strength for the journey. We find peace in the demands that swirl around us and often the priorities become crystal clear. Only Jesus!

Blessings,

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