

# WALKING WITH JESUS – THE GLORY

*(Exodus 34.29-35 and Luke 9.28-36)*

## Introduction

In our first reading we heard about Moses coming down the mountain having received and carrying the commandments. Did you know that, even in those days, they had adverts on Radio Israel? Here's one by Tabby the Tablet:

Have you tried out the five suggestions?

1. There is no God but God
2. Do not kill – except bad people
3. Do not make any idols. Even cows.
4. Do not smoke and cut down on caffeine.
5. Do not be intolerant of anything.

Have you got any suggestions? says Tabby the Tablet. Write in and tell me. After all, they're not carved in stone! Well, enough of that.

Moses was indeed carrying the commandments but that is not what that first reading wants us to focus on. There was something different about him – his face was radiant and gleaming to the extent that all the Israelites, even Aaron, were scared of him. Why was his face transformed? Because he had been in the very presence of God.

*Moses'* appearance was different. Jenny read to us about the change of appearance of *Jesus* - what we call his transfiguration. The reading was from St. Luke's gospel but Matthew and Mark have almost identical versions.

The main person in that reading is, of course, Jesus and we will come back to that striking and glorious feature of it. But let's look first at what we might call the supporting elements.

1. The cloud
2. The voice
3. Moses and Elijah
4. The conversation

## **The Cloud**

Verse 34 tells us that as Peter was suggesting building shelters (for want of anything else to say) a cloud covered them. In the Old Testament story of the exodus and the subsequent lengthy journey to the Promised Land you will remember that God's presence with them showing them the way was a cloud.

At various other places in the Old Testament we get the same idea – God's presence represented by a cloud. It's there in Leviticus, in 1 Kings, in Deuteronomy, in 2 Chronicles and elsewhere. So here the cloud is telling us that God was right there on that mountain.

## **The Voice**

In St. Matthew's gospel he tells us that when Jesus was baptised there was that voice – the voice of God 'This is my Son, whom I love, with whom I am well pleased.

So in *our* story we have God's voice again 'This is my Son whom I have chosen. Listen to him.' We need to note particularly those words, heard both at the baptism and at the transfiguration – THIS IS MY SON.

## **Moses and Elijah**

Here are two heroes of the Old Testament – only men, but men who were special to God. Moses, as we heard in our first reading, taken right into the presence of God so that his face shone. Elijah, in 2 Kings 2, is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. Those two heroes are back ‘in glorious splendour’ in the words of verse 30.

## **The Conversation**

Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus and verse 31 tells us what that conversation was about. It was about Jesus’ future on earth – the fulfilment of his life and purpose as a man.

This episode is a meeting of heaven and earth – Jesus in his glory as God’s Son – confirmed by those words from the cloud *This Is My Son* and the presence of Moses and Elijah in that glorious splendour (apart from the instance in the first reading) that was not theirs when they were on earth.

No wonder the disciples were stunned and incapable of sensible speech. Here was their Jesus, with whom they had lived and followed as man – a rather special man, but a man for all that, transformed into a heavenly being and talking with recognisable, but also transformed, special and remarkable people from their country’s history.

But they took it all in. St. Peter, in the first chapter of his second letter talks about Jesus’ second coming in these words:

“For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory saying ‘This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ We

*ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the mountain."*

Is the transfiguration of Jesus a foretaste of how he will be when he comes again in glory – much of the book of Revelation focuses on that ultimate experience? I think perhaps it is so.

I want to take you back now to **the conversation** between Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Do you remember what they were talking about in verse 31? Let me quote it;

*They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment in Jerusalem.*

In the passage immediately before that, which Jenny read to us, we find Jesus talking to his disciples about the very same thing, telling them exactly what was to happen to him on Good Friday, going on to say that his followers must take up their cross too.

He uses these words: *"Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory..."* And to three of those disciples he shows his glory in the very passage we have been looking at.

In the Gospels, as they record events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion and death, we have Jesus telling his disciples he is going to die and they simply cannot take it in but in the transfiguration story Jesus was preparing himself and being prepared by his Father for what he would have to face in the humiliation, the mocking, the scourging and the cruel, cruel, death that was to come to him on the first Good Friday.

This is the last in our sermon series *Walking with Jesus*. We have here a huge contrast. On the one hand Jesus, the resplendent *Son of*

God, affirmed by God and on the other the picture of the *human being* dying in agony on a cross.

In a small way that's what happens to us. Over our lives we are often - probably most of the time - up on that mountain where everything is glowing and beautiful and we want things to always be like that and stay like that.

But things change – perhaps the illness or death of someone we love, or a betrayal by someone we thought was a good friend, or whatever (you will be able to remember your own instance) and the mountain experience has gone.

Life has its ups and downs – here is a little poem about the good and the grim times:

*My life is but a weaving between my Lord and me,  
I cannot choose the colours he worketh steadily.  
Oft times he weaveth sorrow, and I, in foolish pride,  
Forget he sees the upper and I the underside.*

*Not till the loom is silent and the shuttle ceases to fly,  
Shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why  
The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skilful hand,  
As the threads of gold and silver, in the pattern he has planned.*

## **Ending**

Walking with Jesus! As we come to the end of the series and as we walk with Jesus through the ups and downs of our lives it is good to remember, as those three disciples did, the sight and experience of Jesus in his glory and as all the disciples did, that the big 'down' of Good Friday' was cancelled by the big 'up' of Easter Sunday.

So keep on walking with the risen, ascended and glorified Jesus and, if you have not yet started that wonderful walk, start today.

If you need to talk to someone about it just go up into the Londonderry chapel after the service. You will find two people there who will be pleased to help you and pray with and for you.