

St Marc Grenoble  
Sunday 14th February 2021  
2 Kings 2: 1 - 12  
Mark 9: 2 - 9

**Listen!**

Today is one of those days in the lectionary, where I just don't know where to go first - we are spoilt for Biblical riches! If we were together in church, I'd be asking you to share what struck you about these two readings - they are both absolutely fascinating, and there is just so much to talk about.

The Gospel reading from Mark, talks about what we commonly call 'The Transfiguration'; perhaps a more modern word would be 'Transformation'.

When my son was small, about 40 years ago, there were some popular toys around, which were called 'Transformers'. At first sight they appeared to be an ordinary toy, like a car; but, by pushing a button, or moving some parts, they 'transformed' into something far more interesting - like a robot.

You could say that the 'ordinary' hid the 'extra-ordinary'. And, in a way, that gives us a bit of a clue, to today's Gospel reading.

But, before we get stuck into that, I cannot resist a brief look at the Old Testament reading, from 2 Kings. And the story about Elijah and Elisha.

Elijah, as you probably know, was one of the foundational prophets - men (and sometimes women too) whom God used to pass messages on to His people. Elisha was his 'bag carrier', or apprentice.

These messages were often not good news! God used prophets to warn people to change their ways - or face the impending consequences.

Being a prophet was a tough job, because what they had to say on God's behalf, often invoked direct reprisals on themselves. So it not only took people of great integrity and faithfulness to do what God told them, but also people of incredible determination and courage, to be reliable so that they did not 'bend' God's message, to make it more acceptable to the recipients.

This story about the end of Elijah's life (on earth), and how the 'mantle' (literally) of his work was passed to his apprentice Elisha, is a beautiful, exciting cameo, which leaves us with an interesting element of mystery.

But, let's go back now to Mark's story of Jesus taking three of his best friends - disciples, apprentices - for a 'quiet day' up a mountain - 'after 6 days' - so was this a 'sabbath'? (N.B. Pastors and leaders sometimes forget they need sabbath too.)

It is usually thought that they were on Mount Horeb, which is just North of Caesarea Philippi - on the borders of present day Syria and Lebanon; but it could also have been Mount Tabor, which is between the Sea of Galilee and Nazareth. Both are high mountains in the region.

At the top of the mountain, we're told that Jesus was transfigured - or transformed - before their eyes!

We're told Jesus' clothes shone, with a whiteness no laundry could match - a sure sign of Jesus 'extra-ordinariness' showing something highly unusual was going on here. [In the days when I sold soap powder, this was the goal of every detergent manufacturer! One of our straplines was 'Not a stain in sight, and shining white!]

Even more startlingly, we're told that the three disciples saw Jesus in deep conversation with Elijah and Moses.

Not surprisingly, they were terrified; and, as happens to some people when they're frightened, Peter couldn't stop talking - he suggested making three booths or tabernacles - something like tents - so that Jesus and the two prophets could 'hang-out' there together.

Then, (v.7) we're told a cloud appeared, and covered them; and a voice came from the cloud 'This is my Son, whom I love - Listen to Him'

This is often referred to as the Transfiguration, or Transformation but I wonder who was transformed more, Jesus? Or the disciples??

BREAK OUT Groups (small rather than large) 3/4/5max 10 mins  
Please appoint someone to feedback for your group N.B. There are NO wrong answers!!

Three questions:

- What 'jumped out' at you from these stories?
- What was so special about Elijah and Moses?  
(How did the disciples know who they were??)
- What does the 'cloud' remind you of? (Whose voice was it?)

RETURN

Ask for 'brief feedback' from each group.

So we left Jesus, with Peter, James and John as they were overshadowed by the cloud at the top of the mountain and a voice - God's voice - made it clear why they were there (If they were in any doubt!). Definitely an epiphanaic experience!

Can you imagine their emotions as they walked down from the mountain?

Jesus instructed them not to talk about it 'Until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead. Of course, they didn't understand, at the time, what He was talking about - but they certainly would have done later.

It's interesting, isn't it: we often do not fully understand God's instructions to us; but that doesn't mean we should ignore them. The reason will usually become clear later.

This was a truly dramatic moment for those 3 disciples - a clear revelation of Jesus' relationship with God the Father, and of His 'Messiahship'. But the necessity of Jesus' forthcoming suffering was also made clear, even if they couldn't fully understand it at the time.

They had a clear message from God, but although they were left with things they didn't understand yet ... they would later!

So we've had a feast this morning, I hope you haven't got indigestion!

What does all this have to say to us? - Here are three thoughts I've come up with, to ponder; and I'm sure you'll come up with some of your own:

- We must make space in our lives, (especially during Lent) for God to reveal himself - and be open for Him to speak to us.
- Special times with God are truly wonderful; but we must keep living our faith even in the tougher times too - He is still with us.
- We shouldn't expect to understand everything about Jesus all at once - it will probably take a lifetime ... and beyond. The more we explore scripture the clearer the picture will become for us.

So, now, as I close; **Let's pray**

... and ask God to transform us, and our love for Jesus in the week ahead and as we, hopefully, spend a little more time meditating with Him, in the week's ahead, during Lent ... **Amen**