

## Sermon by the Revd Andy Rider, 14 February 2021

*May the words of my mouth & the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord my rock and my redeemer. Ps19.14*

The gospel reading today is Mark 9 verses 2-9

*2 After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. 4 And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.*

*5 Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” 6 (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)*

*7 Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”*

*8 Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. 9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.*

I love this passage and have meditated on it many times, I've preached on it a few times too.

The first thing hits me in this story is that we should expect to see visions of Jesus, to meet with him in our

prayers, dreams and bible readings, to encounter Jesus personally is a normal experience for those who follow him. Peter James and John followed Jesus and were afforded a real 'glimpse of glory'... they saw something that day of his divine nature.

The second thing that hits me is that hanging out with Jesus only increases the possibility of seeing signs of heaven on earth, and that is something we all want... It is after all, what we regularly pray for  
*'Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven'*

Mark 9 is just such a vision... Moses and Elijah; the two great old testament heroes stand respectively for 'the covenantal traditions of the law and the prophets' - their presence with Jesus signifies the fulfilment of all God's promises and purposes, the culmination of God's plan for his people - Jesus is Messiah, the promised saviour who will usher in a new age... the age of the resurrection...

Some have said this is an echo of Daniel and his friends in the fire... actually it is the other way round Daniels fiery experience points ahead to this event, it shows how death is not the end of all things but rather an opportunity for God to show his power.

In Mark 9 we see our own destiny, that through the death and resurrection of Jesus we shall be with him... it is as Paul writes to the Colossians in 1.19-20

God's great plan coming together:

*19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Jesus, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Mark 9 points us to our union with Jesus in both the present and in his glorious future. It's what our faith and hope are built upon and right now the world needs to have faith and hope in something more real, powerful and transcendent than our politicians, scientists or health service, as marvelous as they are.

But before I finish today, I believe there is something else in this passage specifically for St Peters...

Last April I finished 17 years of ministry at Christ Church Spitalfields and began a new job - leaving was a huge wrench and it has been an emotional time, fear, sadness, loss and anticipation all swirling around in my heart!

I expect many of you at St Peters have had a similar experience, fear, sadness, loss and anticipation with Julia moving on and you beginning the journey towards a new incumbent!

Just look again at today's passage:

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*5 Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." 6 (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)*

This is one of the greatest moments in history, bigger than Woodstock, the Apollo missions, the royal wedding, the election of Obama ... this is huge Jesus seen in his glory!

Just three men out of all the world invited to witness it, James John and Peter the future leader of the early church and guess what?

They get it wrong... they want to paint a picture, carve a fancy reredos, design a fresco, build three tents to capture the moment and hold tightly to it for prosperity...

They are looking backwards just at the moment when Jesus is inviting them to move forwards...

Imagine the gospels without this story, the sacrificial death of JC and the gift of his resurrection life is not diminished in any way,

But we would be deprived of a vision of what could be...

I genuinely believe God put this passage in today's lectionary to be read in your service as a warning and an encouragement to you...

A warning not to look backwards, not to try keeping a tight hold on what has been...

But an encouragement to move forwards, with a vision of what might be, knowing that all things are complete in Jesus that he alone should be our vision

In our daily personal lives

And in the shared experience of 2021 at St Peters as you seek his leading and prompting and fulfilment in what lies ahead.

Mark 9 is there in Marks gospel to call us beyond ourselves fueled by the faith and hope that comes from knowing Jesus personally and knowing that whatever

life throws our way - our destiny is safe with him... our destiny is with him.

I'd love to pray for you

*Lord Jesus,*

*We know that you have plans for St Peters and that these plans are good.*

*I ask now that you will by your Spirit, help the church family to share responsibility for the life of the church, to grow in faith, to love one another, to care for those in need, and to reach out and welcome in newcomers.*

*This I ask for the glory of your name and the extension of your kingdom.*

*Amen.*