Stowe 2nd March

Luke 9: 28-36 The Transfiguration

Ash Wednesday is the start of lent, a time for us to reflect and focus our lives anew on Jesus. We think of how He resisted the temptations in the wilderness, and how He went on to die for us and rise again. And our Gospel reading helps us with these lent reflections because it is the revelation of who Jesus really is.

Jesus was about to head to Jerusalem and the cross, and before He does that He goes up a mountain with Peter, James and John to talk with His father, God in heaven. We cannot be sure what Jesus prays about but I think its probable that He was asking for the Father’s guidance and blessing on his journey to the cross and what would be so painful and difficult for Him.

Jesus had already asked the disciples who they thought He was, and Peter famously replied the Messiah, and now the 3 disciples see this is so, they see a miracle similar to what happened to Moses, as we heard in our reading from Exodus, for when Moses used to talk with God his face shone very brightly. Luke writes that Jesus’ face changed as He talked with His father, and his clothes become dazzling white, we might translate this as like the glistening of gold in the sunshine. Jesus is radiant and shining with the light of God.

Elijah and Moses appear and talk with Jesus, another amazing miracle. Moses is the great law giver of the Jewish people and Elijah is the greatest Jewish prophet. For Jesus is the fulfilment of the law and the prophets and the 3 disciples see this with their own eyes on that mountain top. The gospel tells us that the disciples are tired and sleepy but they wake up and Luke writes ‘when they were fully awake, they saw’ the glory of Jesus, they see with their own eyes that Jesus is divine, the Messiah, the fulfilment of all the laws and the prophets.

So perhaps the challenge for us this lent is do we see the glory of Jesus, do we see who He really is? He is the fulfilment of the laws, all the Old Testament laws are fulfilled in Jesus and He said that the 2 most important laws are to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbours as ourselves. That is how we are challenged to live this lent and for always. Jesus is the fulfilment of the prophets – He is the Messiah, the Saviour of the world who the prophets foretold would come and He brings salvation through His death and resurrection at Easter. Are we truly awake in all areas of our lives to who Jesus really is? And what that means for us? Jesus, the Messiah, offer us forgiveness, reconciliation with God, joy in this life and an eternity in God’s kingdom. Do we live our daily lives knowing that this is our reality?

Then we read a cloud descends over Jesus, Moses and Elijah. All through the Old Testament the presence of God is associated with a cloud. Moses met God in a cloud. A cloud filled the temple after Solomon had built it. And the Jews believed that when the Messiah came the cloud of God’s presence would be in the temple (Exodus 16) And from this cloud the voice of God is heard speaking, saying ‘This my beloved son, my chosen one, hear him’ God declares, like at Jesus’ baptism, that Jesus is His son and that the disciples should listen to Him.

Now at this time Jesus knows what is ahead and He has already started to prepare His disciples for His death, and the appearance of Moses and Elijah and God’s voice in the cloud must have felt affirming and encouraging even, both to Jesus and His disciples. Jesus never acted without praying to His father first and as he approached Jerusalem his humanity must have shrunk from what was to come and the sacrifice He was going to make, and God answers Him with words of love calling Him beloved.

The disciples must have felt confused and unhappy as Jesus started preparing them for His death, and they may not have understood the bigger picture of salvation but here they see with their own eyes Jesus’ divinity, and Luke’s account reveals that to us today. As followers of Jesus, while we reflect on all that happened at Easter, we can be secure in the knowledge that Jesus is the son of God, divine and our Saviour whose death and resurrection saves and frees us for all eternity if we follow Him and focus our lives prayerfully on Him.