

St John the Baptist, Catford

2 Kings 2:1-12

Psalms 50:1-6

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Mark 9:2-9

Last week we heard the Prologue to John's gospel, and thought a bit about how the eternal came into time in Jesus's incarnation; and this week we see Jesus transfigured, dazzling three of the disciples, Peter, James and John, with His glory.

'His clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.'

I'm afraid this always reminds me a little of those old adverts for Daz with Danny Baker. I think we're safe to assume that Jesus's whites would have passed the Daz doorstep challenge.

We know from Exodus, that even Moses could not see God's face, and yet we do see Him in the person of Jesus, and that is made clearer than anywhere else in His transfiguration on the mountain top.

While Peter, James and John see Him, a cloud then overshadows Jesus, Moses and Elijah, and God proclaims, as He also did at Jesus's baptism, *'This is my Son, the Beloved.'*

Mountain tops were often seen as the place where people got closest to God, as Moses had too. They are seen as the liminal space between the things of the earth and the things of heaven; between the here and now and eternity.

And both of those things meet in the person of Jesus, just as the human and divine also come together in Him.

So, seeing Jesus transfigured on the mountain top, dazzling white, is really an illustration to the disciples, who were often slow to understand, of precisely who Jesus was.

And yet, it's not quite so simple as just showing Him to be divine by having dazzling clothes. It's also a reminder of Jesus's humanity: God doesn't need clothes, but in Genesis made them out of skin for Adam and Eve before they were thrown out of Eden.

And, while for Jews Elijah returning is still seen as a sign of the second coming, because he didn't die, but

was taken up straight into heaven, and can therefore pass between the two; no chariot of fire comes for Jesus. You would think that the greatest demonstration of Jesus's divinity would be to see God take Him up into heaven.

But no, He still has work to do, for which He must descend back into the valley of humanity.

For while Jesus is glorified on the mountain top, His true glory is on the Cross.

And I'm guessing the reason we have this reading just before Lent is because in Mark's gospel it is one of the last things that happens before Jesus's entry into Jerusalem.

In a way, it explains, or reveals, in advance the meaning of what is to happen very shortly afterwards.

For us as Christians, we see Jesus's glory not in His appearing as a king, though the dazzling clothes make Him appear as a king of a kind, but in God taking on the full depths of what it is to be human, including the worst pain; and in the resurrection and ascension we in turn see our flawed humanity taken up into heaven to be divinized, made one with God.

If Jesus had gone the way of Elijah and been taken up into heaven from the mountain top, we could not have gone with Him.

But by suffering the worst of human sinfulness on the Cross, we see both His divinity, because only God

could willingly offer Himself for all of humanity, but it also makes it possible for us to be raised with Him.

For us to be transfigured.

For us to shine with the healing that He brings us, and with the hope that we have of becoming the men, women and children we are made to be.

We cannot grasp the fulness of this in our earthly life, but we can grasp glimpses of God's glory and of His vision for us, and the transfiguration of Jesus is possibly the clearest example we find in scripture.

While as descendants of Adam we are all sinful, by God becoming one of us in Christ, the clothes that Adam was given to hide that sinfulness are transformed into the glowing garment that Christ wears. And by descending again Jesus does not

leave us alone, staring on at His glory, but beckons us to join Him.

And if we accept that invitation then we cannot avoid suffering too, and indeed we join in with Christ's suffering through our compassion for others, but we also join with Him in His resurrection, through which all of us are healed and restored, and through which we will all ultimately dwell with Him in His glory.

And the Transfiguration of Jesus gives us a foretaste of that glory, as it crosses over into this life, just as we prepare to deny ourselves and to enter a holy Lent so as to be with Him on Golgotha.

Amen