

Reflection for Sunday before Lent. Matthew 17: 1-9

Andrew Macwilliam

Life is often described as a roller coaster, full of highs and lows, of ups and downs. There are moments of ecstasy and fearful lows, but that is life, we learn to live with it. It would have been no different for the early followers of Jesus. At times they would have felt themselves to be drifting with the clouds at other times hit with the reality of poverty and hostility.

Jesus takes Peter, James and John and leads them to a high mountain. Why did Jesus pick these three we might ask? Were they being singled out as special, or was this simply random? That is a question to which we will never know the answer but certainly they will figure much in the post resurrection story. They go to a high mountain, a quiet place but also mountains were considered to be holy places perhaps because the gap to heaven is smaller. Then everything changes, the man Jesus, the man that they come to love and respect is changed before them. We are told his face shines like the sun, his clothes become dazzling white. Moses the Patriarch, Elijah the Prophet are there also talking with Jesus. Jesus becomes now linked to the past and to the fulfilment of the prophecies. Then the voice from the cloud, "This my Son, the beloved, with Him I am well pleased; Listen to Him!"

Peter, James, and John are completely overcome by this. They see Jesus, the man they thought they knew,,, in a completely different light. They see him now in the context of the history of their people. They see him as the fulfilment of the prophecy of Elijah. They see him now as the beloved Son of God. They are told that they and all people must listen to Him. They fall to the ground in fear and trembling. Jesus touches them and reassures them that they have no need to be afraid but that they must keep this to themselves until after the Resurrection.

They have faced extreme joy; they have been privileged to see Jesus for who He is. They have been party to something that no others have seen. To say that they would have been on a high would be an understatement. They are to face an immediate low when they reach the foot of the mountain, but this is not included in this passage, read on to find out.

We, ourselves must face good times and bad times, times when we feel really desperate. Times when we feel on top if the world. This is not new; it has always been so. We can be reassured that Jesus, too, has been there as well. He has experienced all these emotions, and he is with us now as we track the bumpy road of life. Jesus is there with us, sharing with us, carrying us along.

*Let nothing disturb you, nothing affright you,
All things are passing, God never changes.
Patient endurance attains all things.
Whom God possesses in nothing is wanting
Alone God suffices.*

St Theresa of Avila