

Sermon for Holy Trinity Geneva on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026 The last Sunday before Lent

*Texts: Exodus 24.12-end; 2 Peter 1.16-end; Matthew 17.1-9*

## **Glimpsing Glory**

We are about to start the holy season of Lent which begins with Ash Wednesday next week. It is a solemn time and one which we are encouraged by the church to observe faithfully and with rigour. I'll be speaking later in this sermon about ways in which we may prepare to do this.

But today, just before Lent begins, we are given a glimpse of something else which is radically different. We are given a glimpse of the glory of God both in the Old Testament and Gospel readings today whilst in the Epistle, the writer reflects on Peter's own experience as an eyewitness to this revelation, an experience he shared with James and John.

Today I want to explore the significance of this for us particularly in the context of the Lenten journey which we are about to begin and for our ministry as disciples of Christ.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 17.1-9, Mark 9.2-13 and Luke 9.28-36) which in itself is a mark of its significance. Each of these gospel writers record how Jesus took three of his disciples, Peter, James and John, up a high mountain by themselves and there he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became dazzling white. The term 'transfiguration' literally means a complete change in form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state' and this is what these disciples witnessed. What is more, they then saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus and heard a voice from heaven proclaiming, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him". The disciples are overcome with fear but Jesus comes to them, touches them and tells them not to be afraid. When they look up, they see only Jesus there and we are led to understand that the moment of transfiguration has ended.

So what is the Transfiguration about? At one level it is a revelation of Jesus to the disciples as the eternal glory of the Son, the second person of the Trinity, a revelation which was usually hidden or veiled during his earthly life. The presence of Moses with Jesus signified that Jesus was the fulfilment of the Law, whilst the prophet Elijah represented the fulfilment in Jesus, of the prophecies contained in the Hebrew scriptures.

It is moment of profound importance and one which was to inspire the three disciples in their later ministry even if at the time, they were unable to grasp its full significance. It's as if, when faced with an onion with all its many layers, they could only take in the outer ring and were unable to glimpse the deeper layers of meaning which lay with the Transfiguration of Jesus.

For us as well, it's important that we come to understand the Transfiguration of Jesus has different layers of meaning and significance, each of which it is important that we glimpse and try to engage.

On one level, through the Transfiguration, God reveals to the three disciples, the reality that Jesus is His own son, the Messiah. It is the fulfilment of all that the history of God's people had pointed to and the prophets has foretold.

However, like those layers of the onion, the Transfiguration of Jesus also helps us to glimpse other profound truths as well. It gives us an extraordinary insight into the nature of God. It reveals to us what this means for us as we start to see the path Jesus will follow. The Transfiguration also enables us to see more clearly, what our role and calling is as disciples of Jesus. Let's look at each of these in turn.

First of all, we glimpse in the Transfiguration, God's overwhelming love and commitment to us – His creation. It is a revelation of pure love, which shows us the nature of His love for us which embraces us. Whoever we are, whatever state we are in and whatever we have done or failed to do, God is right there beside us. "We have glimpsed His glory". And we have glimpsed His glory right alongside us in our lives.

Next, the Transfiguration of Jesus will show us what the living out of God's love for us means as we look at the path that Jesus subsequently follows. For Jesus will take on the brokenness, the pain, bitterness and anger of our world and our fractured human relationships and by entering into the very depths of this pain, will transform through His love.

Then the Transfiguration shows us as disciples of Christ to be channels of the hope which Christ brings through the glimpses of glory that through God's grace, we too may come to radiate in our own lives.

But the other lesson we see both from the Transfiguration of Jesus and also from the experience of Moses of which we've heard today, this love of God can only become a reality in our lives and in the lives of other people if we engage with the world not if we try to avoid its pain.

For Moses is called by God to ascend Mount Sinai so that he may receive the tablets of stone bearing God's law and commandments. He ascends the mountain on this mission, leaving Aaron and Hur as his deputies to lead the people of Israel and to guide them in his absence. We're told that the glory of God covered the mountain and that on the seventh day, Moses was drawn into God's presence. He is instructed how to prepare the Ark of the Covenant, how to introduce the priestly worship and sacrifice and God gives Moses the two precious tablets of the covenant. It is a moment of glory and a vision of what the perfect relationship of love and commitment between God and humankind might look like.

Yet no sooner has Moses started to descend the mountain, holding the precious tablets of the law and covenant, when he hears strange sounds of revelling. As he hastens down, he realises to his absolute horror, that the people in his absence have

given up on him. What is worse, they have given up on God, persuading Aaron to make for them a golden calf which they have started to worship instead.

In his fury, Moses dashes the tablets to the ground, crushes the golden calf they have to powder, and mixing it with water, forces the Israelites to drink it. He orders the Levites to slay those who have taken part in this sacrilege. But he then stands with the people, pleading with God and interceding for them in a priestly role that God will forgive them and restore them.

In a similar way, immediately after the Transfiguration, Jesus will descend from the mountain and on the way, will reveal to the disciples, that the way ahead is the Passion and Cross. There are no short-cuts. Jesus will have to face the pain, evil and suffering of this world in all their depths so that the love of God may enter all these areas currently trapped in the darkness of our human sin and stubbornness to bring us redemption.

So we are seeing two points in the aftermath to the Transfiguration and to Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai which directly affect us. The first is that we see the depths of God's love for us in Jesus, his Son who has come to live alongside us to reveal to us that love. The second point follows directly from this and is encapsulated in the response of Moses as leader of God's people. Jesus, like Moses, will take on the role of priest interceding for the people in the depths of their sin and muddle. Through the Cross, will enable them and us to be reconciled to God and to become the holy people, whom we are called to be, dedicated to the Lord.

As his disciples, we too are called to be agents of his transfiguration in our own lives, enabling those living in darkness, pain, sin and muddle to glimpse a future of hope, rooted on God.

Lent is a good time for us to contemplate how we too, in Christ, may become agents of transfiguration both in our individual lives and together as a church community here in Geneva. On Ash Wednesday next week, we will be setting off on our Lenten journey. As with all journeys, be they long or short, it's important for us to prepare well in advance. So, this Sunday, as we reflect on God's love for us as He showed to Moses and through the Transfiguration, let's start to think and pray how we will use this Lent. What are the graces we are seeking from God? Who or what will guide us as we set out so that we don't stray from the path? What will be take and what will strengthen and nourish us on our journey? And what do we pray that we may become as agents of transfiguration in the world to help others glimpse the glory and the hope which Christ brings as we move from Lent to the joy of Easter?

**Amen**

**Canon Daphne Green**