11-17 February 2024 The importance of witness and telling

Mark 9: 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.

**Bible notes**

Six days after he’s taught them about his mission, three of Jesus’ disciples are given a glimpse of his past and future glory. The word used to describe the complete change that comes over Jesus is the word from which we get metamorphosis. The words recall Daniel 7:9, indicating that Jesus is glorious indeed, since in Daniel the words used are the ‘Ancient One’ (a name for God) rather than the Son of Man.

This account of the transfiguration is told entirely from the disciples’ perspective: what they saw and how they reacted. They see Jesus and two towering Old Testament figures – Elijah and Moses – talking together. While these two could represent the Law and the Prophets, the sweep of Israel’s story so far, it is more likely that they are seen as the ‘deathless ones’, those who Jewish-inspired hope associated with the coming of God’s kingdom. This becomes clear in verses 11-13.

Peter starts rambling because he’s scared stiff and doesn’t know what to make of it all. One thing’s for sure, this is not a time for erecting tents! It is possible he thinks that the suffering has been by-passed and the glory has unexpectedly arrived for good. It is God who clarifies things. In the cloud – a common image of his presence – God’s voice restates for the disciples what was said only to Jesus at his baptism (1:10-11). The one they’ve followed for the past year is so much greater than everyone who’s come before him – even the Old Testament giants present on the mountain. He is God’s Son. So the disciples should listen to everything he says. God wants them to pay particular attention to what’s just been said about how Jesus’ messianic mission involves rejection, suffering, death and resurrection.

**Reflection**

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Why was it that Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus in the transfiguration? Were they there to represent the Law and the Prophets? Or were they the ‘deathless ones’ who pointed to the resurrection to come? What does all this tell us about how God is revealed to the world in this season of Epiphany? How do we take this story and land it in our lives today, and the lives of those around us, indeed of the whole world that needs to hear the good news that God has come?

Questions for reflection

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* What stands out for you in the story of Elisha and Elijah?
* When have you caught a glimpse of the glory of God?
* How do this week’s transfiguration stories challenge or encourage you?

## Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

**A prayer of thanksgiving**

God of our setting out and of our arriving,
we rejoice that, wherever we go, you go with us.
When we journey together, you bless us with fellowship.
When we journey alone, you bless us with courage.
When we journey in the footsteps of others, you bless us with gratitude.
When we journey to new places, you bless us with faith.
And when we make our last journey, you bless us with the knowledge that we are safe within your
eternal love – thank you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## **A prayer to end the Bible study**

We go out into the world in peace
as links in the chain of faith;
may we be brave witnesses,
sharing through word and deed
the revelations we have received.
**Amen.**