

Last Epiphany

March 6, 2011

Rev Ken Wratten at St. Stephen's

Exodus 24:12, 15-18 Moses went up to Sinai, covered by a cloud; the presence of God.

2 Peter 1:16-21 Eyewitness of His majesty.

Matthew 17:1-9 Jesus was transfigured.

- Proof positive of Jesus' divinity
- Reassurance for the difficult times
- A model for us

PROOF: Well, now there is no room for doubt. Impetuous Peter had blurted out his confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus had been leading these twelve disciples for almost three years, waiting for somebody to connect the dots, and somebody finally did. Someone figured out that Jesus was more than a great teacher; more than a gifted prophet; he was divine. Now it was impossible to miss; teachers and prophets, even on their best days, never glow brighter than the sun. They are not announced by a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my son, the beloved; with him I am well pleased; Listen to him." The transfiguration was an experience of Jesus' holiness shining through his humanness. Jesus' Godly side had transformed his human side. He could be seen for who he really was.

What mountain top experiences have you had of Jesus' divinity? I have seen people experience amazing healing from illness; others have received blessings that are so unusual that they have clearly come from God. I have prayed to Jesus and felt comfort when my life was feeling out of control; I have experienced love from other Christians that feels rooted and sincere and unconditional, based only on our shared love for Jesus Christ. What experiences have you had that are proof positive of Jesus' divinity?

REASSURANCE: The transfiguration served a second purpose. Jesus had spent three years preaching to the crowd about the Kingdom of God. But now his time had come to turn his travels and his thoughts to Jerusalem for what would culminate this earthly ministry. When Peter stated his new awareness that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus began telling his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, and to suffer torture, and to die there. Imagine how they must have felt to hear that prediction. After having been given a vision of God's realm and their place in it; after the joy of realizing that Jesus might actually be the Messiah that the Jews had been waiting for; this was all going to end?

Only six days after his conversation with Peter, Jesus invited him and James and John to go to that mountain top. Why those three? I think Jesus wanted to give reassurance to his closest friends that the difficult events that would happen in Jerusalem were not the end. They could always look back on the transfiguration, as Peter did in today's reading from his Epistle, for assurance that Jesus absolutely, positively was God's Son.

The mountain top experiences you and I have in our life are also meant to provide reassurance for the “valley days” that are also part of life in this imperfect world. Consider the mountain top experiences you have had; remember them; and hold onto them for reassurance on the “valley days”.

A MODEL: Finally, the transformation included Jesus giving us a model for our own lives. Jesus’ Godly side had transformed his human side. That is what discipleship is about for us. That is what it means to become Christ-like. Paul told us in 2 Cor 5:17, “From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

Paul said in Philippians 3 that NOTHING is more important than knowing Jesus, and putting him first. Everything else is rubbish by comparison. The reason for putting Jesus first is that His Spirit living in us transforms us. Putting Christ first allows God-in-us to break through our humanness, and reveal who we are meant to be. We are continually being transfigured from what we had once been to what God calls us to be.

The season of Epiphany draws to a close. Throughout Epiphany we have been looking for experiences of God being made known in the world. May we all experience God’s presence with such power that other people will see God’s light through us. May we hold in us the proof of Jesus’ divinity; the reassurance of our faith in him; and the knowledge that his transfiguration is a call for us to accept nothing less than our own transformed life in faith. Amen.