

SERMON

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What have been the most transformational moments in your life? Those pivotal moments and events that have left you forever changed. Maybe it was the birth of a child or standing on top of a mountain. Maybe it was an amazing holiday or meeting a partner. Maybe it was your baptism or confirmation or being filled with the Holy Spirit. We all have moments in life that make us draw in breath. It's as if we're seeing life through a new lens, as if the curtain's being drawn back.

Our gospel reading today is one of those moments for Peter, James and John. Life seemed to be going so well for them in so many ways. They could have never imagined that they, ordinary, unschooled fishermen, will be chosen to be followers of Jesus and his friends. All the things that they'd seen him do, from the amazing miracles of turning water into wine, to feeding the vast multitudes, and all those people that he'd healed and set free, and his radical teaching, well, it was just upside down. But, it was so right. And, what's more, they got to join in and be part of it all. They pretty soon realised that Jesus was no ordinary man, that he was the long-awaited and foretold Messiah, that he'd come to save them and just sort it all out. But now, Jesus was talking about dying. Surely, this couldn't be right. Perhaps they'd got it wrong. Perhaps he wasn't the Messiah after all. But, with their flagging faith, Jesus took the three of them up a high mountain.

We're not sure what they thought they were going to do up there. Perhaps they thought they were going to have some quality time with Jesus on some kind of outward-bound spiritual retreat. But, what happened next, none of them would've expected. There on the mountain, they had a life-changing moment, a moment that made them draw in breath, that made them see life through a new lens. It was like the curtains had been drawn back. Right there, right in front of them, Jesus' appearance changed from the inside out. His clothes shimmered glistening white, whiter than any bleach could get them. And there, there were Elijah and Moses, deep in conversation with Jesus. Any doubts they were having about Jesus being the Messiah soon faded. Jesus was the real deal, the Kingdom of God personified in action. This was the law and the prophets being brought together in Jesus.

Elijah and Moses, who prepared the way, were now handing over the baton for Jesus to finish the job he'd left heaven to do. It was as if they'd caught a metamorphosed glimpse of Jesus, the Jesus that was to come. But, this wouldn't be the only time for John that he would see Jesus like this. Jesus appeared to him in an even fuller way, in a vision when he was exiled on an island. And, we read about it in Revelation 1, 'I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe, with a golden sash across his chest. His head and his hair were as white as wool, white as snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace.'

And, his voice was like the sound of many waters. And, in his right hand, he held seven stars. And, from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword. And, his face was like the sun shining with full force'. It was like they'd glimpsed the butterfly that was to come after it had been hidden in the cocoon of the cave. And, bless Peter, he was so shocked that he bumbled around, really not knowing what to do or to say. You know, maybe he suggested putting up tents for everybody because he wanted to prolong that amazing moment. Or maybe he wanted to hang his experience on something that he already knew, like religious festivals. But, just then, a raging cloud began to spread all over them and it enveloped them. And, God's voice suddenly spoke to them and said, 'this is my most dearly loved son, listen to him'. Well, if they doubted what Jesus had said before, they didn't doubt him now. Even though they didn't understand everything that he said. And then, they looked around and it was only them and Jesus. Now, that must have been a really awkward, but awe-filled hike back down the mountain. It wasn't until Jesus' death and resurrection that they understood what he'd meant when he said, don't say anything to anyone about what you've seen 'til after the Son of Man had been risen from the dead. Jesus gave Peter, James and John just what they needed. He knew them inside out. And, Jesus gives us what we need.

So, what do you need from Jesus today? Where is your faith? Are you flourishing? Are you just keeping going? Is your faith floundering with all that you've experienced and all that you've gone through? Jesus wants to meet us right where we are in our faith journeys. Thankfully, we don't have to climb a mountain to encounter him. Through the Holy Spirit, we can encounter Jesus anew and afresh, right here today.