



Matthew 17:1–3

17 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Reflection

(Today's reflection is given by Craig Tubman)

In 2004 I spent three months living in Glasgow, Scotland. In my time there I got to travel around sections of the highlands. The only problem with Scotland is that for most of the year it is covered in mist and cloud. There are incredible mountains and vast hills. Deep green pastures and crystal clear running rivers. Yet for most of the time, you've got a line of sight of about 200 metres because the weather has closed in.

I remember one day out on the Isle of Skye we were driving around and seeing very little, due to the weather. Then in the

afternoon the mist and clouds lifted and we got this ever so brief view of the incredible countryside. Beautiful green hills, interrupted by crags and rocks that stuck out like pieces of broken corn flakes, and a loch that reflected the glory of its surroundings. Then within twenty minutes the weather had closed back in and we drove back home in the mist but for that brief moment we glimpsed its beauty. This is the experience that three of the disciples have in today's passage. Not with the beauty of the Scottish Hills, but with the glory of Jesus himself.

Matthew marks this event as being six days after Jesus' revelation that he is the Messiah. On that day Jesus had also dropped the bombshell that as Messiah he would be betrayed, handed over and crucified and

on the third day rise again. Added to all of this he declared that those who wanted to be his followers must deny themselves, take up their own crosses and follow him.

I take it that after six days this new clarity of Jesus' mission is still settling in and the disciples are no doubt still in shock as to what this all means and whether Jesus was speaking figuratively or literally. It's at this time that Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a mountain.

I assume the mountain spot was quiet and out of the way of the throngs of people who had been seeking Jesus out for healing or for accusation. But the mountain top setting for this event has a little more behind it. In the Old Testament God's greatest revelation of himself came upon a mountain top,

when Moses experienced the presence of God and received the Ten Commandments as recorded in Exodus 19–20. It is one of the great moments in salvation history. After rescuing his people God gives them a framework for understanding their nation, their lives and their role as his people.

Now Jesus leads the three disciples up the mountainside for what will be the second great revelation of God. And what a revelation it was! We are told that Jesus was transfigured. The word used is *metamorphoe* – which means a change in form or being. It's where we get the English word 'metamorphosis'. Matthew records this change in form in terms of light. Jesus shone like the sun and his clothes were dazzling white.

Like the mist lifting in the Scottish highlands Jesus lifts his anonymity and gives Peter, James and John a brief glimpse at his true self. Grandeur, purer, more powerful than they could have ever imagined. I take it that if these disciples were still doubting whether Peter had got it right when he called Jesus the Messiah; their doubts have now been silenced.

But added to all of this, Jesus is there talking with Moses and Elijah! What are we to make of the seeming return of two men who had been dead for centuries? What's the significance of this? Well, both were key Old Testament figures – Moses was given God's law (at that first mountain) and Elijah represents the prophets who foretold of God's coming king. Some even consid-

er Elijah the greatest prophet because the Scriptures tell us that he never died, but rather was taken up to Heaven.

So here we have represented the Law and the Prophets and they are talking with Jesus as if they know him. Jesus has been teaching his disciples, the crowds and the religious leaders that he is bringing the fulfilment of all that was written in the Old Testament and here the three disciples get an actual glimpse of this.

As strange as this whole experience is, it represents a deep generosity and care from Jesus towards his disciples. Now is a time of increasing persecution, Jesus' arrest and coming death is looming and to help his disciples Jesus gives them a glimpse of his legitimacy as God's Messi-

ah, as God's Son, their King and Saviour.

It's really easy to miss the true majesty of Jesus. After all he was not clothed in worldly glory, he was a humble carpenter, a teacher with no formal credentials, but behind and in fact driving his humility, was his divinity – he was the Son of God in the flesh. The Son of God who was there when the universe was set in place, the Son of God who was there with the Father as Abraham received the promise of future redemption, the Son of God who was there with the Spirit as the Israelites fled Egypt. When the humble carpenter from Nazareth claimed that through him we could be part of the kingdom of God, he wasn't making those claims as just another religious leader, as just another visionary or history maker. He was God in the flesh,

extending the invitation and salvation that all humans needed from our God – you and I included. That is who Peter, James and John saw with clarity that day.

It's so easy for the haze and clouds to fall upon our own view of Jesus. For us to spend weeks, months, sometimes years driving through life aware of Jesus but blind to his true power and beauty. If you are a follower of Jesus, you must know that the one in whom your faith is placed is the ruler of this universe. His power is greater than you can fathom, his kingdom is eternal, he has secured a place for you in it and he calls you this day to be a light to that kingdom now, in whatever place he has you.

Jesus was marked by humility but don't for a second associate that with a lack

of power or doubt over his authority. His very power was marked by a willingness to reconcile us to God and that cannot be matched by any boss, parent, politician, or CEO.

Think & Pray

Just as the disciples glimpsed Jesus' true divinity, take some time today to consider your view of Jesus is. Have you unintentionally made him smaller than the God of the universe? Have you forgotten his power, his promises and his patience with you as His Spirit works in your life? Have you started wandering away from his words, his commands or his call on your life? Have you given your faith a back seat to the seemingly greater vista of your employment, your comfort or the opinions of friends?

Today is as good a day as any to recapture the wonder of the Son of God. To see him for who he really is. To take joy in his work done on your behalf and give him the love, the worship and the trust that he deserves.

Why not bring these things before God now in prayer?