

Theme: - The glory of Jesus.

The glory of Jesus was demonstrated at Jesus' transfiguration, which took place on a mountain. Many people, including me in the past, saw the transfiguration of Jesus in isolation; when we do that we lose the real significance of the event. The transfiguration was a moment of proof of what Jesus said about himself, and all that others said about him, of his teaching, preaching, and healing; that he was and is the Son of God. So, this morning we're going to follow the events that led up to, and culminated in the transfiguration of Jesus.

Our reading starts with the words, "Now about eight days after these sayings." Now although we are not told which sayings St Luke is referring to, it is reasonable to conclude that he is referring to verses 18 to 27 just before our reading, and after the feeding of the 5,000.

Verse 18 tells us that Jesus, and just his disciples were praying alone, when he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am." "They answered, 'John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen.'" But Jesus then asks, "But who do **you** say that I am." And Peter answered, "The Messiah of God." Jesus then ordered them not to tell anyone, because he had many things to accomplish before the authorities caught up with him, and to broadcast that he was the messiah would cause the authorities to act before he had completed his mission.

Now after telling them not to say anything, he then told them that he must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the religious authorities, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. But events after this time would demonstrate that none of the disciples actually understood precisely what Jesus was saying, they still had an image of a military conquering hero who would drive those Romans out.

Then in verse 23 Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." Jesus had outlined what a true disciple is. He said that a true follower was somebody who denied themselves took up their cross daily and followed him. So, what does that mean? Before, we can answer that question we need to think about what Jesus did while he was here.

For example, we know that he cared about other people, and was always prepared to help other people in whatever way he could, no matter who they were. We also know that he spent a lot of time teaching us about the true nature of God. So, as a starting point, taking up our cross and following Jesus would seem to imply helping other people no matter who they are whenever we see a need, and teaching other people about the true nature of God by the words we say in general conversation, and by the things we do, and that to me seems a good place to start.

Then Jesus said, "Because those who want to save their lives will lose it." Here Jesus is implying that people who think only of themselves, and care little or nothing for other people will lose their lives, because there is no place in heaven for such selfish people. But those who give, or lose their lives, for the sake of Christ, or for the sake of other people, will save their lives, because there is a place in heaven for such caring people. And Jesus went on to say that where is our profit if we gain the whole world, but in the process forfeit our lives! Being rich is not a problem, it is what we do with our money which is important. He then added, "Those who are ashamed of me and my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed." There has been times in my life when it would have been appropriate for me to say that I was a Christian, but I didn't.

Then in verse 27, the last verse before our reading, Jesus said these words, "But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they will see the kingdom of God."

Now those last words of Jesus just beg for an explanation, but instead of giving an explanation, Jesus waited 8 days and then taking Peter, James, and John with him, went up a mountain to pray.

In the Bible we are told that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Abraham offered his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to God on Mount Moriah. Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives, Acts chapter 1 verse 12. Mountains are also places of prayer, and it is on mountains that many significant encounters with God take place. In 2 Peter 1:18 Peter will refer to his experience of the transfiguration as being on “the holy mountain.”

In verse 29 of our reading, we are told, “And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.” In Exodus chapter 24 verse 17 we are told, “Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord, was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain.” These are two separate experiences of God, although separated by thousands of years, their similarity is compelling, both Moses and Peter, James and John had seen the kingdom of God. It is now that we know the answer to verse 27 just before our reading when Jesus said that some standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God, because it was at the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain when Peter, James and John saw the kingdom of God.

Then, “Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” Jerusalem will be the place of Jesus’ death, but it will also be the place of his resurrection; events that will reveal his glory. The Transfiguration gives these three privileged disciples, Peter, James, and John a preview of his glory.

Now Moses, through God, was the man who gave the law to Israel, and Elijah was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets; so, there has to be a reason why Moses and Elijah came to the mountain to see Jesus, and for the three of them to hold a conversation, speaking of his departure.

We of course will never know what was actually said, but I would like to think that God had asked them to go and see Jesus at this critical time and to give him real encouragement for the enormous task in front of him, of giving his life for the sins of the whole world, which he was about to embark on.

Just before I was twenty one I had gone fishing in Wales with my dad, and when we got back there was an official letter for me on the kitchen table. When I opened it, I found that I had been called up into the army, and had to report to my unit in a few days’ time. When I told my father, who had himself been in the army during the war, he gave me encouragement, which helped me for the next 2 years of National Service, which I served in Germany. Good parents encourage their children.

In verse 32 we are told that although Peter, James and John were weighed down with sleep they did manage to stay awake and see his glory and the two men who stood with him. Now just as Moses and Elijah were leaving, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. But Peter’s idea is ignored, and Luke describes Peter as “not knowing what he said,” but Luke doesn’t tell us why he thinks that. But Peter is portrayed elsewhere as a man of action, and may have thought that something should be done to commemorate this historic event, but that is pure speculation.

However, while he was saying that, a cloud came and overshadowed them, that is, so dense that it was impossible to see anything, and they were terrified as they entered the cloud, or as the cloud enveloped them. The cloud was the symbol of the presence of God. In Exodus chapter 24 verses 15 to 16, Moses went up mount Sinai and a cloud covered the mountain, and the glory of the Lord settled on it. In the second part of verse 34 we are told, “And they were terrified as they entered the cloud,” because they understood the cloud to contain the presence of God. In Exodus chapter 33

verse 20 we are told, “For no one will see me and live.” To look on God’s face was to die, and the three disciples were terrified in case they saw God’s face and died.

In verse 35 we have, “Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my chosen; listen to him!” This is reminiscent of when Jesus was baptised and a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

Throughout this chapter, the question has been, “Who is this?” Now God has provided the answer. Jesus is God’s beloved Son.

After the voice had spoken, and the cloud had evaporated away Jesus was found to be alone. Whatever happened it was now over, and the disciples only had the memory of it, and we are told that they never spoke of it at the time, but clearly they did eventually speak of it because St Luke knew of it.

God’s command to us is listen to Christ, his beloved Son whom he had chosen, which we do when we read the bible, read the sermons which are placed on our web site, and read Christian books, because these, and other ways, are the ways that Christ speaks to us today.

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