19-25 February 2023 Matthew 17: 1-9

I witness

Read the passage from Matthew. It is written below.

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his

brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves.

And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone

like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly

there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if

you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one

for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking,

suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the

cloud a voice said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am

well pleased; listen to him!’ When the disciples heard this, they

fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came

and touched them, saying, ‘Get up and do not be afraid.’ And

when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself

alone.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them,

‘Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has

been raised from the dead.’

**Bible notes**

In the chapter before this, the Pharisees and the Sadducees have tried to test Jesus, Peter has identified him as the Messiah and Jesus has begun to explain to his disciples the way of the cross. There is irony in that what happens next would surely count as a glorious ‘sign from heaven’ (16.1) – but the transfiguration is not a miracle to convince sceptics. The mention of ‘Six days later’ is perhaps an allusion back to the story of Moses on Mount Sinai. Jesus’ face shone like the sun – Moses’ face was also described as shining (Exodus 34.29). There was a cloud covering the mountain. Two figures stood alongside Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Moses can be seen as representative of the Law and Elijah of the Prophets, meaning that the two fundamental strands of Jewish tradition are represented. Some people feel that the offer of Peter to build three dwellings or shelters (akin to the sukkah built for the festival of Sukkot) is a bit absurd and a sign of his impetuosity. The Gospel of Mark goes so far as to say that he did not know what he was doing (Mark 9.6). Peter did offer to do something, however, and that was an act of devotion. Perhaps his spiritual style was much more action-orientated than that of the other disciples! Peter, James and John hear the voice from heaven, which repeats the words spoken at Jesus’ baptism, adding the imperative, ‘Listen to him!’ As the way of the cross draws ever nearer, they need this instruction more than ever.

**Reflection**

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

Have you had any experiences, seen anything, that made you feel God was close to you or you to God? A sunrise, perhaps, or an especially beautiful moment somewhere? Can we encourage one another simply by telling our stories?

**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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| woman praising |  |

**Questions**

* Can you think of a moment when you felt close to God?
* How might you share the power of such a moment with others?
* Are there things or experiences that help you to feel close to God but might not suit everyone? Why might that be?

**Prayer**

Adapt to your local context.

**A prayer of praise and thanksgiving**

O Morning Star,
we thank you that we can be completely changed by you.
We thank you that you have called us to yourself
to be transformed and made whole.
Thank you that we can draw aside and
spend time in your presence,
worshipping you and praising you for your love.
You transform us day by day.
You draw us closer to you,
so that we can shine bright and be your children of light.
O Morning Star, we praise you!
**Amen.**

**A prayer to end the Bible study**

Awesome God,
your glory shines all around us.
Help us to use all our senses to know how close you are.
Give us words to tell everyone that you are there for them too.
**Amen.**

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