

Sunday 15th February 2026; Sunday before Lent, Benefice Holy Communion, Ampleforth.

Some words from Peter in today's Gospel, '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' Peter had just witnessed something amazing, the Transfiguration of Jesus that no other people had ever seen, the Lord in His full Heavenly glory! What he said is equivalent to you or I saying, 'I will put the kettle on for a brew for us all...!'

In today's gospel we are reminded of the Transfiguration of Jesus, which is often spoken of, as a 'mountaintop experience.' Have you ever had one of those? An experience not necessarily on the top of a mountain but a big event where you're on the pinnacle, on top of the world and everything has come together in just the right way?

Today's gospel has all those qualities about it. Jesus has taken Peter and John and James up a high mountain, and then things begin to happen. Jesus' face shines like the sun, His clothes become dazzling white, and then Moses and Elijah appear and start talking to Jesus.

Then things suddenly change a bit. Like what often happen on a bright sunny day on top of a mountain, cloud envelops all of them and a voice from the cloud says, "This is my son, the beloved. This one I am well pleased with. Listen to him." For Peter, James, and John on the mountain something is taking place beyond their understanding. When they hear the voice from the cloud, they realise this experience is so big, so overwhelming, so overshadowing, that they fall to the ground, and they're terrified. Maybe there are afraid for their own safety, terrified because they don't know what's going to happen next or maybe it's just so amazing and they can't comprehend or take it all in Maybe they are afraid because

this is a life-changing moment for them and life will never be the same again.

Their mountain top experience has suddenly become something very different - awesome and terrifying. Peter tries to comprehend his experience and says his what seem absurd words to Jesus. Peter wants to capture it and contain it. His mountain top moment was out of his comfort zone, and he desperately tried to return to something familiar, and he says he will make a tent, as he made his fishing nets. But he couldn't do control those few minutes where Jesus was transfigured to reveal His glory, he couldn't harness the power that was on display before him, all he could do was be humbled and afraid.

We would be the same, in the face of something so unfamiliar we would try and default to the familiar, in Peter's case a tent of hospitality. But do we try and do the same, default to something comfortable, controllable? Do we try and somehow put the glory of the Risen Christ back into a box, a tent, of our making to make us feel comfortable again? Is our faith like that, or our church or our denomination?

The truth is we can't and we shouldn't try. Once confronted and challenged by the glory of Jesus, we can either remain in fear on the ground and hide or take his hand and stand up and go with him down the mountain to do His work. That might mean breaking out from the constraints we try to put on Jesus and- whatever those constraints might be - our faith, our church, our denomination - our very selves - our comfortable complacency and self-satisfaction, to move beyond the maintenance to the mission that Jesus wants to call us to - and allow His power to live in us and be revealed.

Peter's response to the Transfiguration highlights the challenges faced by the church and each of us in our

journey of faith. In our worship and prayer, we may encounter a glimpse of glory, and we may want to capture the moment, preserve it, and keep it to ourselves, but we cannot. Neither can we keep things the way they are, and change may be necessary. The church has spoken of change many times, but the need for change and the type of change is something that cannot be done without Jesus. Change is for Jesus, by Jesus. So, what can the church do? What can you and I do? What here in your life in this church, in this Benefice, this community can be done so that the glory of God, that Peter, James, and John saw, is seen by all?

Perhaps the more significant mountaintop experience happens after the disciples hear the words, “this is my Son, listen to Him.”, when Jesus says to them, “Get up and do not be afraid”?

We are called to do the same, not to hide Jesus in a tent, or a church building, and not to hide in fear, but to get up act, live out the mountain top encounter and be inspired by it, and act with courage, as Jesus tells the disciples when hiding in fear, “Get up, and do not be afraid.”

He says those word to us as a command to be open to that Transfiguration moment, when Jesus reveals His glory to us and our church and we must be prepared to come down from our mountain, into our community and into the world, following Jesus who leads us and not be afraid.

Thanks be to God. Amen.