

Sermon 14 February 2010 — Transfiguration

Luke 9: 28-36

Picture this: it is raining ... still. It is grey, and moist, and soft.

Music is playing; candles are flickering; people are praying, reading, drawing, looking out the window.

It is a day of prayer at Holy Covenant.

Nikolai has been here since 6am. I have popped in and out — 7am, 3pm — for prayer.

My body is stilling, not racing so much. I meditate; still; breathing; open; aware; lost in another place; reflecting on transfiguration; and only later praying for others.

These images arise

and questions:

what is hidden and what is revealed by light?

where does heaven meet earth and what bridges the two?

Mystery:

the silence of God breaking through.

Today is Benjamin's baptism so I address these words to him:

Dear Benji,

How shall I tell you of this? How shall I explain the mystery of transfiguration and transformation?

You know some of it already for you are formed of egg and sperm, two cells united, doubling, doubling again ... and on ... and on ... in the womb of your mother; floating in watery fluid, nourished by your mother's blood; content, until at birth you are separated and have to breathe alone, the waters parted; transformed from those two cells continually dividing into who you are today. Benjamin David Quinlan — a beautiful mystery still unfolding, a glimpse of the divine yet very much tied to earth.

Jesus too was very much of this earth. He wept, he cried, he loved. He too was hungry and thirsty and tired. He too grew, physically and in understanding.

But on this day, on that mountain, something happened, something came out of his prayer so, like Moses, his face shone — not unusual in theophanies — his face shone and he was speaking. He was communing with ancestors, Moses and Elijah, speaking of his exodus, his leaving, a new beginning in the centre of power that is Jerusalem.

There was a cloud and a voice, 'my son, the beloved, the chosen one, listen to him ...'

And it was gone. A whisper echoed from his baptism, but more, listen to him.

Why didn't they tell anyone? Was it real or imagined? and does it matter?

Transformation is possible, so is breaking through to the other out there and in the depth of my being.

This episode comes not long after Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah,
not long after Jesus' rebuke
Not long after Jesus talking about his coming suffering
Now here we are, up a mountain, praying
and something happens
transfiguration
transformation
the veil is thin
the other breaks through

'God preserve us from vision too explicit
from compulsion to tell more than can be understood.'
says Ruth Bidgood, p138 'Lost in Wonder' Ester de Waal (?)

Ann Lewin writes:

Prayer is like watching for the Kingfisher. All you can do is
Be there where he is like to appear, and
Wait.

Often nothing much happens;
There is space, silence and
Expectancy.

No visible signs, only the
Knowledge that he's been there
And may come again.

Seeing or not seeing ceases to matter,
You have been prepared
But when you've almost stopped
Expecting it, a flash of brightness
Gives encouragement.

Make space; be open to transformation,
the more,
linking past, present and future
closeness of the more of God.

Jesus took Peter, James and John and went up the mountain to pray.

You are here, making space to pray.

Yesterday 25 people soaked this place in prayer.

Today Benji is to be baptised.

Listen, do you hear the 12 words?

You are my beloved,
my chosen one
in you I am well pleased.'

Times like this can change us.

Are you ready?