

## New Perspective

We have come to the mid-point of our series entitled 'Living with Jesus'. We have seen Jesus call his disciples as they went about their everyday life, just as he calls us in our everyday life, saying 'Follow me.' Jesus has asked his disciples, just as he also asks us: 'Who do YOU say I am?'

The disciples have been living with Jesus for some time in the lead up to this question. They have heard his teaching; they have watched him pray; they have seen him heal the sick and walk on water; they have seen him feed five thousand people and calm a storm; they have also heard the Pharisees criticise him. So when Jesus asks the question 'Who do you say I am?' Peter seems quite confident in replying 'You are the Messiah.' All the signs point to the fact that Jesus is the one who has been long-awaited by the people of Israel. The one who would come to set them free.

Just after Peter's declaration, Jesus begins to talk about his suffering and death, something for which Peter rebukes him. Peter doesn't yet understand that Jesus is not going to be the sort of Messiah that he has been expecting. He doesn't yet see that Jesus is going to be a suffering servant Messiah.

And so we come to the events which we have heard about today. Nothing of what the disciples knew about Jesus can have prepared them for the events which took place on the top of that mountain. Here are three ordinary men, Peter, James and John, being given a glimpse of Jesus in all his heavenly glory, and hearing the very voice of God affirming that this is his own dear Son! Their response to this extraordinary experience is, understandably, very human. First of all they are absolutely terrified. They don't know what to say, although Peter (perhaps typically) feels the need to say something and spring into action building shelters, rather than just allow himself to experience this new perspective of Jesus. Don't you find that is true for us sometimes too? It's hard, sometimes, to be still and just BE with God.

We would probably all like to see what Peter saw, to have a vision of something heavenly here on earth. We assume it would clear away all our doubts; that it would make us as passionate for Jesus as Peter was. This was a pivotal moment in Peter's experience. It is firmly connected to what Peter already knew about Jesus and also to what lies ahead. Only Peter, James and John were there, on that mountain top, presumably because Jesus regarded only them, at this stage, as ready to encounter him as God's son.

Also, Jesus was already grooming Peter for leadership, so it was right and necessary that he should get this insight into Jesus' significance. The encounter is also firmly connected to what Peter is about to experience. In the account of these events as written in the gospel of Luke, Jesus, Moses and Elijah are talking about Jesus' death. Peter is allowed this insight into Jesus to prepare him for the traumas that lie ahead. Thus this extraordinary new perspective of Jesus in all his glory holds together Peter's past experience with what is yet to come. And although Peter doesn't understand the full significance of what he has experienced, nevertheless, he trusts Jesus enough to follow his instruction not to reveal what has happened at this time. All of us need to be open to whatever God chooses to show us.

When God reveals something of himself to us, he does so according to what we are ready to receive. And he will do it in order to prepare us for what lies ahead. That's why it's so important to build up a trusting relationship with him, believing that we can leave ALL THINGS in his hands. There may, of course, be the temptation to try to stay at the place of revelation. It is, after all, a very reassuring place to be when we learn something more of God. We feel very close to him in those times. But the Christian life cannot always have moments of transfiguration. Jesus shows us insights into himself so that we can move forwards. Peter had to leave the mountain and travel with Jesus to the hostility of Jerusalem. And so Jesus travels on with us also, along the paths of our everyday life, there to reveal himself to us as we are ready. And to guide us every step of the way. It certainly IS an adventure, following Jesus, but it is the way which leads, according to Christ's promise, to life in all its fullness.

Amen. May God bless to us this message from his Holy Word. And to HIS name be the glory and praise.

I'd like us to take a moment for quiet contemplation now. From wherever we're sitting, let's try to focus on something in the building that we wouldn't normally focus on. And as we look from this new perspective, let's open our hearts and minds to God. It may be that God will give us some new insight into himself; or the person of Jesus; or something that we're struggling with at the moment. Or it may be that we just take the opportunity to be still in God's presence. God doesn't always reveal himself when we expect him to, so let's just be still for the presence of the Lord.