

 *St Paul's Anglican Parish of Ipswich*  
**SUNDAY SERMON**

*Epiphany 8 - Readings Ex. 34:29-35; 2 Cor. 3:12-4:2; Lk. 9:28-36*

*Delivered by Rev'd Stephen Monsieigneur on the 3rd March 2019*

Well, today is the last Sunday of Epiphany, a season that celebrates and rejoices in the fact that our God is a God not just for Israelites but for everyone, and we celebrate that we are called to bring that God into the world. A God of compassion and generosity, a God who does not want us to tremble in fear but be excited with joy at the divine presence. We celebrate that our God is; A God of love.

In a few days we will enter a wholly different season of the church calendar, the season of Lent. What does this mean?

Unlike Epiphany, Lent is a solemn period where we prepare for Easter. During Epiphany we discovered a God who calls for justice, who freely forgives even when it hurts, a god who desires to be in relationship with each one of us. Traditionally we prepare through Lent with prayer, repenting of sins, doing penance, almsgiving, and self-denial.

But Lent is not a time of sadness. Rather it is a time of hope as we are challenged just as Jesus was challenged, as Elijah and Moses were also challenged. We are boasted by that great exhortation from Paul in 2 Corinthians to act with great boldness because we have such a hope in Jesus! Strengthened by what we have learned in this season of Epiphany, we continue on our mission in the world having seen the glory of God and showing it to everyone, not veiling our faces or our hearts.

The meeting of Jesus with Moses and Elijah draws together the significance of the ministries of each man. Moses during the Israelites exodus from Egypt delivered to the people of God in the form of the Ten Commandments, a way to live that would draw them to God.

Importantly, Moses receives these instruction while in prayer and it is recorded that following this encounter with God, Moses face began to shine such that it created fear among those who witnessed it and he resorted to wearing a veil which he only removed in the presence of God.

Moses was chosen by God for a specific purpose, to lead the Israelites to freedom. Not just freedom from Egypt but freedom to know God through relationship. However the wearing of the veil maintains a separation between God and the Israelites.

Elijah through his words and actions saves the Israelites from the corruption of the nature worshipers of Baal, and thus demonstrates the true sovereignty of God.

Jesus too is illustrating his own exodus when he details his death and resurrection to the apostles. Seeing the transfigured Jesus is to see God But unlike the actions of Moses, Jesus does not apply but removes the veil and opens the door to a relationship where God is not hidden but truly present in our lives.

Paul details this in his second letter to Corinth,

*15Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; 16 but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another;*

Jesus draws our attention to the fact that being able to approach God is not of our doing but possible because it is God calling us to know divine glory.

Interestingly as Luke tells us, it is not the visions of Moses and Elijah that frighten the apostles but the Cloud that is God. The minds of the apostles remained at that moment like those of the Israelites escaping Egypt. They were fearful and covered by the veil that fear instilled. But God speaks to them and the veil is removed or at least parted so that they begin to understand something of what Jesus being the messiah means.

Some years ago, I used to fly light aircraft, a Cessna 172 in fact. During my training a lesson would cover theory before a flight during which the theory was put into action. I recall learning to stall an aircraft, that is to slow it down to a point that it would literally fall out of the sky. In performing this manoeuvre, the instructor would cut power and raise the nose in an effort to maintain height. The price of staying airborne was a loss of speed. Eventually the speed became so low that the wings no longer provided lift and consequently the aircraft fell.

I recall being quite anxious in the early stages of learning this manoeuvre, but seeing the relaxed face of the instructor was somehow reassuring and enabled me to persevere with the training, eventually to a point that I could perform the manoeuvre without fear myself.

For Peter, James and John the experience of seeing Jesus dazzling white with Moses and Elijah, hearing the voice of God saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" was I believe that seeing the relaxed face of the instructor moment in their lives.

I am amazed at how easy it is for us, blessed with hindsight and knowing the story of Jesus to still act as if we are hiding from God. As if somehow God having established a new covenant with us through Jesus, is somehow still distant from us. After all, how well do we integrate faith into all parts of our lives? How often do we actually include God in our considerations and decisions? How often do we simply except Gods presence in our lives?

A common thread that runs through todays readings is prayer. Each man, Moses, Elijah and Jesus were men of prayer. Through prayer they knew Gods presence.

It was through prayer the apostles heard the reassuring voice of God that open the hearts and minds of the apostles to realise they were called to Gods presence.

Lent is a time to do serious business with God.

As we head towards Easter, we should become acutely aware that it is our sin that led to the events of Jesus' death and resurrection. During Lent we remember why it is that Jesus had to die for us and we realign ourselves with God's good, perfect and pleasing will; not just for the six weeks of Lent, but permanently. However, moving forwards in the Christian life is difficult and requires Gods input.

We like Moses, Elijah and Jesus must be people of prayer.

Prayer takes practice.

There are many ways to pray, however there is always one aim of prayer, to transform us, to enable us to know the real presence of God in our lives.

So, as we fast approach the rejuvenating and transforming journey Lent, Let us pray that we too can rediscover Gods presence in our lives, that through prayer we might unveil our hearts to God further and allow him to move and change us more deeply.

AMEN.