



Sunday, 3 March 2019 – Sunday next before Lent
Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Readings: Exodus 34: 29-end and the Gospel St Luke 9 28-36
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Looking from a different perspective

Mountains create a statement on the landscape that draws our gaze. Both in Exodus and in the Gospel of Luke mountains feature. For us to understand the impact of the events that occurred on those mountains, let's see what it was that drew the gaze of the Israelites and the disciples. We'll start with Exodus. We heard that Moses came down from Mount Sinai bringing with him the two tablets of the Covenant, which he had received from God. The covenant embraced not only the ten commandments but also provided a pattern for daily living with daily faith. On coming down from the mountain Moses face shone like the sun having been in the company of God.

God's glory v worldly darkness

Holding those thoughts, let's leap forward to Luke before we can join this all together. We heard that Jesus ascended a mountain to pray to God and there he was transfigured before his disciples in all his divine glory. Keeping company with God is to be in the presence of his dazzling purity blocking out all of the world's darkness from our sight. Moses shared that glory and purity because of his faithful understanding of God's will. The Israelites, however, lacked the necessary comprehension and were afraid of the brightness of God's purity reflected in Moses face so, each time he returned from the mountain Moses was obliged to veil his face. He, therefore, became the Israelites spiritual go-between and mediator with God. The more Moses led them through the wilderness towards their goal of the Promised Land, the more they gradually put the covenant into daily living helping them to focus on God.

Keeping faith simple

With the passage of time, the Covenant became subject to human interpretation and failed to be the dynamic way of living faith that God had originally desired. In his life and ministry Jesus crystallised everything directing us to focus on just two commandments. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. The Mosaic commandments remain but if you love, as Christ loves, then all of the others will fall into place. Discipleship that puts God's love into action changes lives, dynamically. On the mountain, God's Son became the living embodiment of these commandments, as testified by the appearance of Moses and Elijah being the epitome of the law and the prophets. The disciples, however, were utterly bemused as to what the appearance meant, as indeed, they often failed to grasp the meaning of Jesus' ministry and

mission. Only by journeying with Jesus, watching and listening did they develop discernment to see beyond the ordinary and become alive to the extraordinary holiness in their midst. In short, as the Gospel said, they stayed awake and so saw his glory.

Wrapping up the background

Moses and Elijah foretold that Jesus would embark on his own Exodus - his departure from his daily mission - and journey towards his goal of Jerusalem. The enduring aim of God's covenant with his people would come to fulfilment in the sacrifice Jesus would make to redeem the world from sin's deadly grip. Only then after the resurrection would the disciples fully comprehend the covenant's meaning and its full implications. That's the background, now what are those implications for us today?

Getting to the heart of the matter

This Sunday we are poised to begin our own Exodus, journeying through Lent once more to contemplate Christ's sacrifice in the passion narrative. To be reminded that on the night Jesus was betrayed, the disciples fell asleep, their minds closed to further learning and communication with God leading to desertion. In spirit, we will stand at the foot of the cross. At the point of Jesus' death, the veil of the temple was torn in two symbolic of setting faith free from human constraints. No more need for human go-betweens. In his death, resurrection and ascension Christ conquered all that prevents our access to eternal life by becoming our mediator and advocate before his Father in heaven.

What's in it, for me?

In his covenant God, the first and last of all that is good, put us first by giving his Son for our salvation: he loves us that much! In the resurrection light, the disciples recognised the eternal truth of God's covenant embodied in Jesus Christ and they responded. They stepped out of the shadow of the mountain and in the fullness of Christ's light moved forward in faith making disciples of all nations. In Christ, we too have a godly pattern for living through which the glory of God can be revealed to others, when discipleship leads to active service. Faithful disciples grow active churches.

What can I do?

The disciples stayed awake and saw Christ's glory. During Lent, here at St Andrew's it's right that we should ask ourselves again "Are we living in the shadow of past mountains or awake to the possibilities of Christ's glory working through us today?"

Amen.