



**Sunday, 23 February 2020 – The Sunday next before Lent**  
**Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey**  
**Readings: 2 Peter 1: 16-end, St Matthew 17: 1-9**  
**Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

### **Who dares wins!**

Have you ever watched the TV series *SAS: Who Dares Wins*? Whether you have or not, 'who dares wins' is a really good title for this Sunday, the Sunday next before Lent:

- Do we dare to walk the way of the cross with Jesus prayerfully?
- Do we dare to seek inspiration from God's Holy Word that it might speak to us in challenging ways?
- Do we dare, before seeking the relief of Easter, to watch one brief hour with Christ in unity of hearts and minds to grasp the enormity of his suffering and what it means for us today?

### **Faithful suffering anyone?**

It really isn't essential to watch anything more than the first minute of the programme to understand what it's all about. Each programme begins with a snapshot of the participants undertaking all sorts of gruelling challenges, while one of the Directing Staff says "You will suffer!" There's no camouflage in that message! Today's Collect reflects the same that if we are to be selfless, faithful disciples of Christ we will suffer when we make a stand for him in a selfish world but he will strengthen us for the task if we ask.

### **Stay or walk away?**

In the TV series each successive task that the participants undertake becomes ever more challenging. There's also, an undercover agent who reports to the DS which of the others are failing mentally or physically until they are dismissed or give up and walk away. By contrast, today's readings show how Jesus never gave up on his disciples preparing and strengthening them for active service irrespective of their abilities. Such is good news for us as in each generation, people matter to Jesus but, like Judas, we have the choice to turn our back and walk away.

### **The right man, in the right place, at the right time**

In the Gospel we heard God speaking directly to the disciples repeating the words he had spoken at Jesus' baptism. Had the disciples been in any doubt that they were following the right man, God confirms "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In that moment Jesus is transfigured: his face shone comparable to the brilliance of the sun reflecting the glory and radiance of the kingdom beyond this world, from whence he came. Jesus does not camouflage his message either for his closing words on the mountain were "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." His words presage suffering and, as we know, only a short while after the Transfiguration he was nailed to a cross, challenging everything the disciples had believed. Think also of the agony of God turning his back on his beloved

Son with whom he is well pleased and Jesus' anguished cry from the cross, "My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?" The Son of God born to be the Son of Man came to suffer and die. Again, why? God limited his almighty power to enable Jesus to bear the weight of the world's sin and conquer it, so that those who repent and follow him can be redeemed.

### **Stop acting, start listening**

In the Epistle, Peter in old age shortly before his own death reflects on his life of active service. He who was an eyewitness of Jesus' "Majestic Glory" recognises the preparation that Jesus had given him and his fellow disciples before the crucifixion in order that they could make connections after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. I wonder did Peter wince or smile remembering his early attempts to do the right thing in faith often getting it hopelessly wrong. On the mountain he babbles to Jesus Should we be here with you and Elijah and Moses? Do you want me to make some shelters for you?" It's at that point that God interjects and speaks "This is my son, listen to him!" Stunned at hearing God's voice the disciples fall to the ground. Sometimes, we can be so intent on having good ideas that we forget to be still, to pray, listen & hear if what we are doing is God's idea.

### **Eye-witnesses are credible witnesses**

Peter's message is very much for us today because he wrote his letter, and I quote, to "Those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." He explains, we're not following plausible myths but the fulfilment of prophecy written in scripture. Nor are we following our own interpretation of scripture but are given insight and inspiration by the Holy Spirit. Being attentive to this insight pierces the darkness of our unbelief bringing us to light and life strengthening our faith.

### ***Courage mes brave!***

Knowing from the Gospel that Jesus suffered and died, means that he has shared all that we experience in life and death. When the weight of the world is on our shoulders, our comfort is knowing that he did rise again and that he calls us to follow him and share his triumph. And it is this very message with which Jesus inspired his disciples saying "Get up and do not be afraid."

### **So, are we winning or walking away?**

Discipleship is not a solitary existence for in every way Jesus our Redeemer goes before us. Together, as a church through prayerful preparation, seeking inspiration from the bible, underpinned by Christ's sacrifice of broken body and shed blood we unite to support each other. If we trust his words then we too will be like the disciples, who on rising from the ground ceased to see the terrors of life and saw no one but Jesus. During the season of Lent, it's a good discipline to challenge prayerfully how faithfully we are daring to follow Christ in thought, word and deed and dare to ask him if we are winning or walking away?

Amen