

## **Transfiguration (Transferred), Year C**

*Mark 9.2-10*

A very, very, very sizeable majority of historians, not all of them practising Christians or even believers to begin with, believe in the existence of Jesus. Believing that he existed isn't the chief concern. Who he was and what he did is where they start to diverge! Many will emphasise his existence and some of his teaching. Others will tentatively admit that there's more than meets the historical eye with events like Good Friday and Easter – that there might be something there... and a brave few will acknowledge more than his life, more than his death and suggest that, yes, there is something to the historical nature of Jesus that lends extensive, weighty evidence to the events that take us some time to understand: like the resurrection, like the ascension, like **the Transfiguration**; that there's something to it that goes far beyond our first imagining.

It's like taking a microscope and using it to look at a boring speck of dirt and discovering that it's full of pattern, colour and interest. Never again will it be looked at the same way again; everything has the potential to be more than it seems.

The same thing happens elsewhere. Telescopes transform the night sky into a world of awe and power. A good actor can turn an apparently insignificant line into a profound and moving statement of beauty and truth.

Take those common experiences and move them up several notches on the scale of fact and experience. The story of Jesus' transfiguration describes what seems to have been an actual event, but an event in which the deepest significance of everyday reality suddenly and overwhelmingly confronted Peter, James and John. It's easy enough, even for those who are wondering about Jesus to accept his words of teaching. His actions of healing or feeding or transforming we can engage with and wonder and ponder. We can do this, because we can grasp Jesus; the Jesus born of Mary; the Jesus who gets angry and kicks over the tables in the Temple; the Jesus who challenges and rebukes the self-appointed moral guardians of Jewish society. We can get this Jesus, but the Jesus who is brilliant, white light? The Jesus who wears clothes that is the whitest of whites such that no, err,

um, *bleach* (?) could make: the Jesus of the transfiguration? How do we grapple with this event ourselves? How can we see in Jesus not just the man, but *God Incarnate*? And why should we? Jesus has already done marvellous thing after marvellous thing; he's fed the hungry, taught the eager, healed the sick. Surely we don't need to then go on and examine his divinity? Don't we already have enough?

Such an event can easily be dismissed (and I think that Peter, James and John knew this) as a hallucination, albeit a very odd one. And this can be done, mainly because most of us don't have experiences like this. But it has happened to some. And when it has, it is a hugely important and life-changing event. This is what happens to the three of them. Peter, James and John, right up until now fishermen from Galilee, were terrified; terrified by being in the sheer presence of God. James and John are overcome, slack-jawed in amazement or fear – take your pick. Peter starts babbling, blurting out the first thing that comes into his head. And it's probably the sheer, absolute oddity of his bumbling suggestion that is in itself strong evidence of the story's basic truth. Nobody, like having women be the first witnesses at the Resurrection, would invent a tale like this with such a comic moment, lowering the tone of the occasion in such a fashion. The curtain's been dragged back on reality as they know it and they suddenly find that the man they knew is still the same but now, like someone looking through a telescope, see him in a very different light. Their eyes are fully opened to inner reality of God's kingdom. The nature of Jesus is revealed; he really is the Messiah. He really is the one bringing in the new world. It's not a fantasy. It's reality.

But what are we to say in the face of all this? Can we look at the whole thing not just from a human point of view, but from God's point of view? With caution and humility, we might try. We might be able to see through the microscope or the telescope and look for a moment into a different reality, gasp with wonder, fall down in awe and see everything differently from now on. The world we live in has many layers, many dimensions and sometimes these dimensions, normally hidden, may appear in an entirely new light.

And it's Jesus, shining in brilliant light; shining, entirely caught up with, bathed in the love, power and kingdom of God, his entire being transformed in the way that music transforms words that are sung; it's Jesus who is our new reality. If you see the world through the lens of the gospel, you'll never see it the same again. And the way to see the world through the lens of the gospel is to listen to and obey the voice that says, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!'

Today we are on holy ground.

Right now God is here.

Right now Jesus is here.

Right now the Holy Spirit is here.

We're not just a community.

We're not just a family.

We're the people of God.

We're immersed in the dramatically unfolding events of the Kingdom of God.

We're being called to hear and to see our part in God's world.

We're puzzled, scared, saying all the wrong things...

But God's glory is creeping up on us unawares, strengthening us for the road ahead.

Revel in that glory.