

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT [C]

Genesis 15: 5 - 12, 17 - 18

Philippians 3: 17 - 4: 1

Luke 9: 28 - 36

If you're ever able to visit Oxford and take one of the Bodleian Library guided tours around the Divinity School and Old Bodleian Library, when you enter Duke Humfrey's Library built in the 15<sup>th</sup>. Century, just stop and look up at the mediaeval wooden ceiling.

There are dozens of square panels painted with shields, and on the shields are the words: *Dominus illuminatio mea*.

*Dominus illuminatio mea* - the Lord is my light - the ancient motto of the University of Oxford.

And that motto is taken from the first verse of today's Responsorial Psalm. Then the Psalmist continues: "Of you my heart has spoken: 'Seek his face.' It is your face, O Lord, that I seek, hide not your face." Ps. 26 (27): 8

But I wonder if you - if I - truly seek the face of God in our lives?

Or are we like Abram who, when he thought about the Lord: "Terror seized him."

Gen. 15: 12

My gut feeling is that for most people - even us - apathy and indifference are the main emotions that surface when thinking about God; because they are a smoke screen for the fear they truly feel.

So how do we get from the terror Abram felt, through the slough of apathy, to the desire to: "Seek his face?" Ps. 26 (27): 8

As with life itself, it's a journey.

A journey from Abram's fearful encounter with the Lord God, through the prayer of the Psalmist, to that prayer being answered in the Transfiguration of Jesus to Peter, James, and John.

Then culminating in Paul's knowledge that his - and our - homeland is in heaven; and his longing to see Jesus, who will: "Transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body." Phil. 3: 21

John was one of the eye-witnesses to the Transfiguration of Jesus, but you won't find it written down in his Gospel.

Or is it?

Yes. In his own unique way right at the start of his Gospel in these words:

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." Jn. 1: 14

Eight days before the tremendous events of today's Gospel, Jesus had asked His Disciples who He really is, and Peter speaks on their behalf: "You are the Messiah - the Christ of God." Lk. 9: 20

Then: "Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. And he said,

"I, the Son of Man, must suffer many things and be rejected, and must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Lk. 9: 22

Then, eight days later, He: "Took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure - exodus - which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem." Lk. 9: 28 & 31

And: "The next day, when they came down from the mountain [He presses home this point to Peter, James, and John.] Listen carefully [Jesus says] to what I am about to tell you: I, the Son of Man, will be delivered over to human hands." Lk. 9: 37, 44 - 45

Before Resurrection, Jesus must suffer the agony and abandonment of the Cross before He passes into 'Eternal Transfigured Glory.'

Because as Peter, one of the eye-witnesses writes, we're saved: "With the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. [Who] was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake." 1 Pet. 1: 19 - 20

And this is right there in the conversation Jesus has with Moses and Elijah where: "They spoke about his exodus which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem." Lk. 9: 31 Here, with Jesus the carpenter's son from Nazareth, are these two men, now dead, who'd met with the Lord God hundreds of years before.

And: "As [Jesus] was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning." Lk. 9: 29

Then: "A cloud appeared and covered them, and [the Disciples] were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." Lk. 9: 34 - 35

The cloud, which in the Old Testament is the sign of the very presence of the Lord God. Because, unlike the Disciples we're not Jews and aren't immersed in their Scriptures - the Old Testament - as they were, we don't understand the full impact and implication of what happens on this mountain.

But the Disciples do; because when they: "Became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him." Lk. 9: 32

Here they are with Jesus whom they've known as an ordinary man, even though He has extraordinary power and eloquence; so how can He be the Living God, which His Transfigured appearance clearly shows?

No wonder Peter: "Did not know what he was saying." Lk. 9: 33 and just says the first thing that comes into his head about putting up tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.

The presence of Moses and Elijah who'd seen God face-to-face, Jesus in glorious splendour, the cloud, and the voice of God would all have resonated with the three Disciples that somehow, inexplicably, they were in the real, tangible presence of God.

This man Jesus was somehow God in the flesh.

But let's not forget that Jesus was talking to Moses and Elijah about His passing, or 'exodus,' to use the correct word.

At the Exodus from Egypt under Moses, God's people were saved from death by the blood of a lamb smeared on their doorposts.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, saved us through shedding His blood on the Cross so that we won't die an eternal death, but have eternal life.

This is why He's telling His Disciples, before and after His Transfiguration, that He: "Must suffer many things and be rejected, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Lk. 9: 22

This is why He takes the three Disciples up the mountain, and talks to Moses and Elijah about His 'exodus.'

Although He's God in the flesh, He'll have to go through Good Friday so that we can emerge with Him triumphant from the tomb on Easter Sunday.

We too must take that same journey with the Lord through Lent, and Easter, with repentance, prayer, and humility, to truly: "Seek his face [so that we will] see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living." Ps. 26 (27): 8 & 13

And we have the Lord's promise of that enshrined in Paul's words to us today: "The Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transfigure our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. So then, my dear friends, do not give way but remain faithful to the Lord." Phil. 3: 21 - 4: 1