

The Promise of God -
God, who is for all time

Last
before Lent

Mark 9. 2 - 9
2 Kings 2. 1 - 12

This is a rather curious story, from about 850 BC, about Elijah and Elisha.

And it ties in with the Transfiguration from Mark 9

As Jesus was transfigured on the mountain two figures appeared with him:
Moses and Elijah.

"Hang on!" you might think.
We are not supposed to try to contact the dead.
Spiritism and necromancy are forbidden.

But, as it happens, these two, Moses and Elijah, have question marks over their deaths.

In this story of the end of Elijah, he does not die, he is taken up into heaven.

So, if he is being whisked up, out of time and space, on his way to eternity, there is no reason why, in God's scheme of things, he shouldn't call in on Jesus on the way.

Fanciful?
But it fits the biblical description of events.

Moses, we are told, did die, Deuteronomy 34. 5 but it says that the LORD buried him, and to this day, no-one knows where his grave is. And also, when he died, his eyes were not weak, nor his strength gone. He was no longer there, but they never found his body. So like Elijah, was Moses taken up alive into heaven?

And there are more parallels.

This story of Elijah's end,
is a story of transition.

Old Elijah's mantle (his cloak) is left,
and picked up by young Elisha.

Young Elisha repeats Elijah's last miracle
in front of witnesses.

And is acclaimed:

"The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha."

Elijah continues the ministry of,
and is greater than that of,
his master Elijah.

Moses, when he was taken by God,
passes on his ministry and leadership to young Joshua.
Deuteronomy 34. 9

*Now Joshua, son of Nun,
was filled with the spirit of wisdom,
because Moses had laid his hands upon him.*

And just over the page - Joshua 1. 5

the Lord says to Joshua

"as I was with Moses, so I will be with you."

So Moses and Elijah were pioneers
on the Old Testament story.

Moses - symbolising the Law

Elijah - introducing the age of the Prophets.

But each was just an instrument of God introducing another stage in the unfolding of the Salvation History of the Old Testament.

And God's work was carried on through them, through others, throughout the passage of time.

I am going on about his, because it is a pattern of God's working, part of God's nature, that we see recurring all the time.

In 13 or 14 weeks' time we shall be remembering particularly the Ascension of Jesus.

And you will notice how remarkable similar are the two stories of Jesus and Elijah, taken up into heaven.

And Jesus, before he was taken, commissioned his disciples to carry on his own ministry.

"Teach them to do what I have commanded you"
and *"You will do even greater things than I did"*

So these stories, the death of Moses, Elijah taken up into heaven, Peter James and John witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus.

They are not just marvellous miracle stories. Certainly not a bit of Science Fiction. They tie together, and make a sort of sense that is tantalising just outside our grasp and yet clearly so very important.

So what does this say about God?

He is the God of eternity
outside the limitations of our time and space
and certainly beyond the limitations of our understanding.

But he has acted again and again
in our world, in our space and time,
in the lives of human beings like us.

And he calls people like us
to work with him
in revealing and proclaiming his glorious truth
to an unbelieving world.

So this great story
is something we are invited
to be part of.

He is the God of all time,
and that includes our time, here and now.

What does it say about Jesus?

Jesus was revealed to be, uniquely, the Son of God,
to be himself, part of the Divine God-head.

He was revealed by prophecy,
by his own deeds and words,
and by transcendental revelation

as the glory of heaven
breaks blindingly in to our existence.

***And what does it say about the Church,
and us, you and me.***

It says, that until God's mission is complete,
and Jesus has returned
to establish the kingdom of God in heaven and on earth,

until that day,
God appoints people. and more people,
to "take on the mantle" of ministry
which is the full authority and power,
given to Jesus, passed on to us.

We are called to share in the whole work of Jesus.

A loving, forgiving, grace-filled life-style.

A powerful, anointed, godly healing and reconciling ministry
and the presence of God within us,
revealing his glory in the world.

That work, in a still fallen world,
is a challenge, a sacrifice,
and sometimes follows the path of disgrace and defeat.

It is a call that is offered, not imposed.

To be called by God to be and to share this
is the greatest honour and blessing.

That's what this means
for you and for me, for the church.

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Setting the Scene

How many here are football supporters
or do you watch the football on TV?

Now imagine a game - at the start it's a bit messy
and the other team scores a goal.
but as the first half goes on
it becomes clear that your team is the stronger
you are winning all the tackles
getting nearer to goal
and then - your brilliant striker
puts the ball in the back of the net
just before the half-time whistle blows.

If your team carries on the same way in the 2nd half
you will win a great victory.

Then - half-time interviews -
the manger says - yes we are the stronger team
yes - it's all going our way -
and the final result will be -
that our striker will keep giving the ball to the opposition
and we will suffer a total defeat.

How do you feel? "NO WAY!"

But that is what has just happened
to the disciples of Jesus.

S2/3 Morning Prayer, 19th February 2012

They have just found out that their striker - Jesus is the best ever - he is the Son of God.

And Jesus says -
that the way we are going to play the rest of the game is not to win - but to give in.

And that he - the Son of God - their Champion is going to suffer and die.

Peter says - "NO WAY!"
And Jesus tells him off. This is how it has to be.

All that is in the previous chapter.

Have they got it all wrong?
They need some encouragement.
And that is today's story.

Just Peter James and John,
with Jesus on the top of a mountain.

And something happens - which they will never forget.

Something happens to Jesus - he becomes bright and shiny as bright as the sun at mid day!
Two people appear with him - Moses and Elijah from the OT and they hear a voice from heaven

This is my Son, whom I love.

Listen to him.

And Moses and Elijah disappear into a cloud.

It is not just a vision - it is real - they were there.

S3/3 Morning Prayer, 19th February 2012

This is to help them to accept
what many Christians still find difficult today
that God's way is not to fight to win.
It is how you live that counts, even if you do not win.

When I was a young lad
I was given an autograph book.
And some wise adult wrote in it
(Elaine Storkey's father-in-law!)
*"It is not whether you win or lose that counts
but how you played the game"*

I didn't understand that then.
It is hard to accept even now.

But here we are, just about to enter Lent
and we will follow the story of Jesus
as he moves towards the cross.

The path Jesus had to walk
led to suffering and death
but he did it sinlessly
in obedience to his Heavenly Father.

He resisted the temptation to use his power to win.
God's way is more subtle.

So today's thought - Jesus is the Son of God.
But to go his way may mean suffering and defeat.

More later

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[Birthdays and presentations](#)

[Testimony time, Collection.](#)