

## **Sermon for Sunday 15 February 2026**

### **Next before Lent**

**Exodus 24: 12 – end; 2 Peter 1: 16 – end;  
Matthew 17: 1 – 9**

### **Glimpses of Glory**

Yesterday morning, as I sometimes do, I joined the Saturday walking group. As you know, after weeks of rain, it was a glorious dry windless day. The sun was shining so brightly through the woods that it was quite blinding. We watched steam rising up through the trees where the frost on the ground was turning to vapour. There was such a strong contrast between light and shade. Everything felt more alive. The birds seemed to be singing louder. I stopped to listen, to feel the sun on my face. It was as if everything was transfigured by the strength of the sunlight. As if God himself was somehow closer. One of our fellow walkers said she felt blessed. As the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins put it:

“The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil”<sup>1</sup>

Many of us I’m sure have moments when nature draws us closer to God or reminds us of His presence. But in our Gospel reading today it is Jesus Himself who is the source of light. Peter, James and John are privileged, for a short time, to see Him as He really is in all His glory as the Son of the Living God. The brightness, followed by the words from God the Father, reduce them to absolute fear. They fall to the ground. This is surely something they must have remembered all of their lives.

So, why did this happen? And why at this point? Well, Chapter 16 of Matthew’s Gospel begins with some Pharisees and Sadducees demanding a sign from Jesus as to his identity. They are testing him again. Jesus refuses to give them one and returns to the disciples. But it’s clear from their conversation that they do not yet understand everything that He’s saying to them. Soon after

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<sup>1</sup> From ‘God’s Grandeur’ – GM Hopkins

this Jesus asks the disciples who they think that He is. Peter replies, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16: 16). From this moment on, Jesus begins to teach them that he is to suffer and die and to be raised again on the third day. Then he tells them that any who wish to follow him must also deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. (Matthew 16: 24).

Peter, James and John, who, unlike the Pharisees really do want to follow Jesus, are then privileged to see this extraordinary and for them overwhelming sign of Jesus’ identity as he is transfigured before them. And we, as later follows, are also privileged to “see the light” in both senses of the word as we read Matthew’s description. We’re told the disciples also hear the voice of God the Father – “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased. Listen to Him.” (Matthew 17: 5). Specifically, they are to listen to what Jesus is saying about his suffering and death. It’s as if God the Father and the Son want them to be sure beyond any doubt about

Jesus’ identity as God, even as He suffers and dies. But Jesus tells them not to speak about what they have just experienced until after His resurrection. For now, he knows that it is the path of suffering that he must tread. The glory must remain hidden.

Going back to yesterday morning and the glory of the sunshine in the woods, I wonder if you have had special moments like this? Moments when God seems nearer than usual? For myself, I wonder, since God is behind and within all of Creation, why I don’t have this awareness more of the time. Perhaps these moments are just gifts – given to encourage us on our journey just as the much more significant and overwhelming moment of transfiguration was given to Peter, James and John. Perhaps I’m too preoccupied – just too busy getting on with life, to stop and notice. Or perhaps it’s lack of faith. Peter, James and John were privileged to see Jesus in His glory just after Peter had declared Him to be the Messiah.

I wonder if this Lent might be a time for switching off and letting go? For literally switching off some of our devices and being open to those transformative glimpses of glory.

Meanwhile we can all, perhaps recall moments in the past when we have sensed the light of Jesus' presence and be grateful for them.

And we may also, in some way, need to be willing to hear the message of Jesus that to be a follower, to share in His glory also means sharing in his suffering. As Jesus said "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 16: 25).

Amen

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