

TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 32. August 04, 2019. Proper 13

This Tuesday is the Feast of the Transfiguration, which as it usually falls on a weekday, is often overlooked. The event comes shortly after Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ, which it confirms, and just before the turn to Jerusalem and the culmination of Jesus' Ministry in his Passion, Death and of course, his Resurrection. So it's a pivotal point in Jesus' earthly career.

Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a mountain where he is 'transfigured' and begins to radiate light; Moses (the Law) and Elijah (the Prophets) representing the Old Testament appear and are bathed in his glory. God says: "This is my Son, my Chosen" confirming Peter's Confession

And then he says, "Listen to him."

It is a 'passing-the-torch' moment: the Old Testament has been fulfilled, it's purpose fully revealed and from now on it must be read in the light of Christ because Jesus changes the meaning of everything. What happens next, I think, bears this out.

His followers immediately start squabbling among themselves about who's going to have what position in the Jesus' Kingdom. James and John's mother in effect comes and asks him, "What's in it for my sons?"

You see, they're still reading Jesus through their understanding of the Old Testament, in terms of earthly kingdoms, crowns, thrones, armies, power etc. And they as his followers expect that sort of earthly reward. And that's because they don't yet know the end of the story.

We all know what happens when they get to Jerusalem. What they think is going to be a brilliant revolution turns into what is from their perspective a total disaster - Jesus is arrested, tried and tortured, condemned to death and executed, and they essentially abandon him, they deny him and flee. It's all over.

And then Jesus is raised from the dead - that's what the Transfiguration was pointing to - and they finally begin to get it, they finally see - but that seeing is only possible in the light of the Resurrection.

In fact, for a Christian, everything is to be made sense of in the light of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection. The Transfiguration, God's confirmation of Christ's Sonship, reminds us that His Life is the key to understanding not only of all that has come before, but the meaning of the very universe: His Passion, Death and Resurrection are not just isolated events about which we are expected to believe certain things, they are the lenses through which we must view all things, including ourselves, because each of us is living out his or her own story which, like Christ's, will end in our own passion, death and resurrection, and we will never understand the meaning of any of it until we see it in that light.