

'My Son'

11 2 18

Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
give us to grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory.

Our text may be found in today's gospel – Mark chapter 9 and part of verse 7:

'This is my Son, the beloved: listen to him!'

Last week, the exciting truth, affirmed in the opening chapter of John's gospel: that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us'. There, at the heart of our faith, the idea of the love of God for Man expressed in his Incarnation. That God meets us in the flesh in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ.

And, today, we have Mark's account of the Transfiguration, of Jesus going up a mountain with Peter, James and John, his clothes changed into a dazzling whiteness and there meeting Moses and Elijah. Then, the cloud of the presence of God descending and, from the cloud, the Shekinah, and the voice of God saying, 'This is my Son, the beloved: listen to him!'

Well, if last week was exciting because the message was that, in Jesus, God became flesh and blood like any one of us, then this week is also exciting because the message is that Jesus is God's Son incarnate, that Jesus fully embodies what it is for God to be God and, as Paul writes in the opening of our epistle for today, Colossians chapter 1 and verse 15: **'He is the image of the invisible God'**.

And my question: if Jesus is the Son of God, then why did some folk not recognise the fact ?

And, of course, some did. The shepherds; the wise men; Simeon and Anna not to mention Mary and Joseph. Then, there were the twelve disciples; Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist; the many people that Jesus healed and those they loved, who asked Jesus to heal their loved ones. There were those who came out of the towns into the countryside to hear Jesus preach like the 5,000 that Jesus fed with five loaves and two fish. There was the tax collector, little Zacchaeus, who dared to climb up a sycamore tree to get a good look at Jesus and then dared to climb down again and invite Jesus to eat with him. There was Nicodemus who at night came to speak to Jesus and later brought the myrrh to anoint Jesus' corpse taken down from the cross; Joseph of Arimathea who got permission to take the body down from the cross and have Jesus buried in his unused tomb. There was one of the thieves crucified alongside him and even the centurion in charge of the crucifixion who declared that **'Truly this man was God's Son.'** (Mat 27 v54)

But then again others did not. And I wonder why. Why did so many folk in his home town of Nazareth fail to recognise Jesus as Messiah when he was with them

in their synagogue – perhaps because they knew his family and couldn't accept the boy who'd grown up among them was special – after all, a prophet is never recognised in his own country. Then, there were the Pharisees who clashed with Jesus over their interpretation of the Torah – they slavishly following the letter of the Law while Jesus was informed and inspired by the spirit of the Law. In Jerusalem, the scribes and the priests, Sadducees, who could not accept this outsider from Galilee could be the Messiah. Zealots, nationalists fighting for independence from Roman rule, thought Jesus too soft and accommodating to be God's Messiah while Pilate, the Roman the governor, did not consider Jesus guilty of the charges of insurrection brought against him but was silent about whether or not he was God's Messiah.

So what do we have ? As ever a choice. There is no compulsion to believe. The evidence is there for you to make up your own mind. You can't make someone love you but you can give them the space to do so if they want: the choice is theirs, is ours, mine or yours. So what will you choose ?

'This is my Son, the beloved: listen to him!'

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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