

THE TRANSFIGURATION NOW SHARED

Matthew 17:1-9

Jesus has both risen and ascended: Peter is calling his fellow disciples to action:

Hi everyone, and thank you so much for coming. James, John and I have been wanting to share with you all something that took place before we came down to Jerusalem, and which Jesus told us we shouldn't share until he had risen from the dead. That time has joyously come. It's why we are all here. Our perspective on what we then saw has changed with all that has happened, and we are better able to share the full implications of what we all saw.

I'd like you to think back before we came down here to Jerusalem with Jesus. They were strange times. Although I didn't show it, - (at least I don't think so) my thoughts were in turmoil, a premonition of a future without Jesus. He'd said he had to go to Jerusalem to be killed, but on the third day he would be raised. How could he let himself be killed! And how would he be raised? I'd said it could not be allowed to happen, and really got told off! Jesus always spoke plainly!! Sometimes I said the right things, - that he was the Christ, sometimes the wrong, - when he called my words of the very devil! So typical of me, - impetuous two footed Simon! He could read my thoughts. I meant well, just never always thought things through! I can see some of you nodding! I am better than I was!

Jesus seemed to be spending more and more time deep in prayer to our Holy Father.

We often just sat, watched, waited. Talked about the past, his miracles, what must be thousands who have been healed of divers diseases and maladies. Discussed our failings, but then we too had also healed, proved his words. So what was the point, the purpose, where were we all going? What was he leading up to?

And here is the experience that James, John, and I want to share. I'll start at the very beginning. We had been wandering amongst other things how Jairus' family might be getting along. James and John will certainly remember, - Jesus had just spoken to a young girl that had not long died, confident that she was only asleep, - and to our amazement she just got up, as if being asleep was literally all that was wrong! I don't know what caused her death, but she certainly enjoyed a sizeable piece of fish and bread with the rest of us! Laughing and smiling, -it was as though nothing had ever been wrong with her, - which is exactly the point Jesus was trying to make! "The damsel sleepeth!" How many times have those words rung through my thinking, and challenged my sense of awake! It still does!

However, while we were musing about the past Jesus appeared besides us, knew as ever what we had been talking about, indeed what I was thinking, and smiled! I felt his love.

He took the three of us with him up the mountain, we three that had seen him raise this girl from the dead. Brought back all those memories even more clearly. He was leading us again, but what was the intention this time? What was it we were now going to be shown? Jesus led the way, - that steady untroubled walk, full of purpose and surety, ever higher, never faltering. We were fit fisherman, but gradually our breath became heavier, not equal to his effortless step, not relieved by the stunning views that were emerging as we climbed ever higher towards the summit. As we chatted, he gradually moved ahead, turning now and again to tease us as to our progress.

We were several yards behind him when he stopped, just feet from the pinnacle. The wind was just catching his hair, blowing it gently against the background of the busy sky. He stood there, standing quietly with such an air of dominion and peace, absolutely at one with his Father. A shaft of sunlight lit his face, but then his face began to shine all by itself. He was shining more and more. It was incredible. I thought of Moses, coming down from the mount, having spent forty days and nights with God, his face shining so bright it had to be covered by a veil. But this was brighter! It was a spiritual glory that transcended his very flesh, and so strong that even his clothes were shining from the radiance within. The light was more powerful than the sun, yet it did not blind. Purity fathered its luminosity.

I instinctively put my hand up to shield my eyes, and through my fingers saw two others talking with him! Where'd they come from! My thoughts were spinning, I glanced at John and James - I heard their names, but nothing else, - it was Moses and Elias, they were all talking together!! - Oh to have heard what they were saying! The symbolism of their meeting rocked my thoughts, - Jesus, - the ever-present Christ, Moses, - bringer of Law, and Elias, bringer of Prophecy. All here together on the top of this mount! Past, present and future. But Jesus dominant, - the fulfilment of everything, the shining example of all good brought together in one man, and yes, this strange thought that came from nowhere, that I was unbelievably, his friend! We were his friends! I felt I didn't deserve him! But He had brought us up here! What did he want me to do? My wanting to act, do something, prove myself, took over once again.

Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. I wanted this fantastic symbolism of past present and future to be remembered forever, to make this mountain top their physical home. "If thou wilt" was followed by my plans, my weakness, - O what a big mouth I had, and still not learned! Oh listen, listen!!

And in that instant, while I was yet speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed us all. Once more our thoughts raced in revelation. We were being given a preview of heaven, the almighty presence of God, - the pillar of

cloud that led the Israelites out of bondage, the cloud that enveloped the chariots and horsemen of fire that took Elias into the realm of heaven unseen to the senses, that lifted Jesus from our sight. Was this a dream?

The voice that thundered to Moses, whispered to Elias, and had spoken to us through Jesus, now spoke through the cloud:

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”

The voice came from all round us! I can hear it even now! We turned our heads, bodies, trying to track it down. Was it just inside our heads? But we all three heard it, and the cloud was hanging over us, almost beckoning, and how could we not be afraid!! We sank to our knees, frightened men holding on to each other, way out of our depth, faces to the comforting ground because we could not accept what we had just witnessed in the air.

Jesus came down and touched us. Oh how comforting was that physical reassurance, and his words that he spoke: *“Arise, and be not afraid.”*

Dear friends, we had just seen God’s beloved Son in all his true splendour and glory! We looked up, and he was alone. The symbols of past and future had disappeared, leaving the present once more. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”. What we had seen had been a great revelation, but it was a present experience. I had wanted to commemorate the past and the future as well as the present, - but they were not relevant. They had had their time! We had glimpsed the present glory of Man, at one with God his Father, and that was all that mattered! The raising of Jairus’ daughter suddenly made sense, - the fullness and radiance of life was so real, no other outcome had been possible. This was what Jesus saw all the time! His vision of man’s life as present glory wiped out any past cause of death or future fear of dying! Life was of God! Unchanging in its spiritual glory. I can’t remember coming down the mountain, - the words out of the cloud were repeating and repeating, - “My beloved Son”, “well pleased”, “hear ye him” And what were the first words Jesus had spoken to us, - *“Arise, and be not afraid.”* Wake up your thoughts! Don’t be afraid to follow through their implications, realise and prove that God is pleased with His Son and by association pleased with all His children! Pleased with you and me! How could it be else?! Arise, and realise there is no reason to ever be afraid!

Now listen. Jesus asked us not to share this experience until after he had risen from the dead! I can see why, for who would have believed us? Did we believe what we had seen! Do you believe even now what I’m sharing with you, all its implications? So here we all are again. James and John stand here as my witnesses.

My dear brethren, we’ve all now seen the risen Lord, seen the proof that life is immortal. Take now our testimony, and the testimony of Jesus, Moses and Elias as further witness, that Jesus is indeed the risen Son of God, in whom is life everlasting. Now this is the gospel we must spread. “Hear ye him” was God’s demand, not just to us but to everyone.

“Arise, and be not afraid.” was Jesus’ demand, and again this is not just to us but to everyone.

He has indeed risen from the dead and now he has ascended, taken up in that same heavenly cloud beyond our earthly vision, but we know the Christ is still with us, here and everywhere, declaring man as the radiant child of God.

So, let’s lift up our thinking! Let us too behold and prove this radiant presence of the Son of God in our lives right now. For we, right now, have our mission set before us. We have been chosen, and all those that believe can share with us in his glory and behold the perfection of spiritual man in all his glory.

Our Master told us to tarry here in Jerusalem to await the promise of the Father. Let us do so now in full faith and expectation.

Brethren, this is now our great adventure! What Jesus wants us to fulfill.

We must listen, and obey God’s command, and then we know we need not be afraid to go forward.

God is pleased with us too, we are also His beloved children. This is after all, what the Gospel is all about!

So Come on! Let us now arise! Get up! Wake up! For we know we are not alone. We have no reason to fear, because the Christ is always with us.

Let’s enjoy our togetherness and bring the light and love of the Christ further into our communities.

Jesus shone. So must we.

Acts 4:33

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

Acts 5:42

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.