**Sermon: From glory to glory…**

**Readings: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 (The Message)**

# Mark 9:2-9 (NRSV)

# Preacher: Rev Mike Loach

(**slide 1**) I’m sure that some of you will know that clergy can get a little too excited by a colourful stole! A favourite from my collection is a purple one that is inspired by our Gospel reading for this morning. On one side, it depicts the scene of the transfiguration, with Jesus standing alongside Moses and Elijah, with Peter, James and John kneeling in awe at the heavenly scene that has unfolded before them. Yet, on the other, it shows a very earthly scene of what Jesus and the disciples must face if they are to descend back down the mountainside.

Now, you would probably think that something was amiss if I didn’t take the opportunity to show you a few snaps from my pilgrimage to the HolyLand at this point! (**slide 2**) Part of the journey for most pilgrims takes them to Mt Tabor, the site of the Transfiguration and for many of those who travelled with Jill and I, it was one of the most memorable and moving experiences of our time together. This was partly due to the speed at which cab drivers approached the narrow, winding cliff-edged route to the top, but also for the sense of how the disciples must have felt with what must have felt like the whole world beneath their feet and Jesus revealed in all His glory.

The scene of the Transfiguration is a scene of change. (**slide 3**) At first glance, this change is of the figure of Christ and His immediate surroundings as the disciples witness His clothes transformed to a dazzling white and the voice of God speaking from a cloud. (Durham Cathedral) Yet, a thought that has often come to me when reflecting upon this event is whether the change could in fact be located in the disciples, rather than in Jesus. Could it be that taken away from the busyness of the world, the cultural influences, and the expectations of those who followed Jesus, the disciples are now able to see Jesus in a new, remarkable way? Might it be that without the lens of worldly influences, perhaps for the first time, they can actually see the real Jesus?

Obviously, this is just a possible interpretation, but I think this reflection reveals something that we’re all very guilty of – our failing to notice the everyday presence of God in the world around us. (**slide 4**) Such are the relentless demands to engage with the latest fads and trends, to be slaves to our phones and computers, to know the latest news and gossip, and to bow down at the altar of busyness, that we can easily lose sight of the glory of God that is so often shining brightly all around us.

This failure to recognise what is of God in our world is also recognised by St Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians. (**slide 5**) Paul comments on those who have failed to notice the truth in Jesus’s teachings, observing that… “*They’re stone-blind to the dayspring brightness of the Message that shines with Christ, who gives us the best picture of God we’ll ever get.*” And it’s not just in Jesus that we find a vision of God’s glory, but also in the created world as well and also in each other. If we accept God as creator and each other as beings made in His image, then we have another view of God’s nature and purposes, something to be glorified and honoured.

Sadly, our attitudes to God’s self-revelation in Christ, in Creation and in each other rarely reflect the respect and praise that should naturally accompany them. Distracted by our own self-importance, we fail to notice God all around us. (**slide 6**) We cannot see the true wonder of God’s creation because, too often, we have instead pledged our allegiance to what we have made. The vitality of life, the majesty of mountains, the tranquillity of quiet waters, the wonder of the stars and seas and changing seasons all point beyond us, but so frequently we cannot see past a camera lens, a balance sheet or a bucket list.

Our blindness to the inherent worth of God’s creation is leading to tragedy for all life on this planet and most of us are only just beginning to notice our own culpability. Very few of us have been willing to step back from normality, to shake off the destructive habits of a lifetime and to recognise the change that is required if we are to not only identify the glory of God in creation, but, further, be willing to work for its restoration in every heart and mind. (**pic 7**)

The disciples came to recognise God on the mountaintop, but despite their joy in this moment, they were willing to go back into the world to make God’s love known. The same is required of us – it is not enough to wonder at the glory of God’s creation, we too must also descend from the mountaintop and get our hands dirty in the business of caring for the whole of creation.

This Wednesday signals the start of Lent, a season of renewal and change. Traditionally, we’re encouraged to identify an item or two that we’ll try to go without – chocolate, snacks, alcohol (not this year!) – in order to develop self-discipline and establish a sense of right ordering – putting God before all else – but I’m rarely convinced that such gestures achieve much. (**pic 8**) This Lent, Chester Diocese is asking us to take a slightly different approach and think about changes that we might make to our daily lives to help the environment recover from the harm that we have inflicted on it. You’ll hopefully have seen the 7 pledges on the newsletter, and I’d like to encourage every one of us to think about specific changes that we might make to protect and preserve God’s creation.

Jesus made it very clear that the greatest command is to love God and love our neighbour, and if we really want to be true to this, we must act NOW to safeguard its beauty, uphold its diversity and protect our brothers and sisters around the world whose homes and livelihoods are threatened by our greed.

This is not someone else’s problem; we are all responsible for the mess we now find ourselves in. (**pic 9**) If, like the disciples on the mountainside, we can recognise even a small part of who Jesus really is, then we are compelled to follow His command, to honour what God has lovingly created and to work for the good of all our brothers and sisters in every part of the World.

Amen