**LUKE 9.28-36 ASCENSION 3.3.2019**

Jesus trudged his puffing trusted trio of Peter, James and John up Mount Tabor, higher than Mount Dandenong, where they collapsed to sleep. Three years on, Jesus will trudge his trio to Mount Olivet, where the effects of too much Passover wine wafted them into hoggish slumber once more. Three years on, the sudden awakeners will be the thuggish Temple police with lights and cudgels, come seeking to erase the Light of the World.

Jesus had gone up the mountain to pray, to commune with God what was his destiny to be? At his baptism, the Holy Spirit descended on him while he was praying [Luke 3.21-22]. His selection of the twelve occurred after spending the entire night in prayer [Luke 6.12-16]. When Jesus was praying, Peter confessed his faith [Luke 9.18-20] Once again, before his arrest in Gethsemane, he prayed [Luke 22.39-46]. He died praying “Father, forgive them…Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit” [Luke 23. 34 and 46]. Our prayer should not be speaking mere words to God, but a seeking of the powerful and dramatic experience of God’s presence in our lives.

Suddenly, a blinding white light opened the disciples’ dozing, sleepy eyes, to see human Jesus seem to turn himself inside out to the full majesty of God, in, what was, a phenomenal altering. His dusty, Bedouin brown clothing was more dazzling than that which a good rub with old bar Velvet could ever attain. His facial features were transformed similar to those of Moses, who also experienced God’s glory on Mount Sinai. But, Jesus was now different to Moses; he was the very source of divine glory.

Then God sent Moses and Elijah, two heroes of the Old Testament, to Jesus, to steel him for his exodus from earth, his suffering death and resurrection into heaven, which would complete the work that they had once begun. The pair had come back to life to give full support to Jesus as he took the path to his unmerited death. Moses had carried off the almost impossible task of freeing the Children of Israel from Egyptian slavery, to lead them through Red Sea water into the wilderness, there to weld the disparate tribes into Israelites and on to the Promised Land.

Jesus would be a second Moses. As a young child, he ‘came out’ a refugee from Egypt with his parents. As a young man, he sought to deliver the Chosen from their Egyptian-like slavery to the killing letter of the old law, which sought salvation through fastidious keeping of religious ritual. In turn, Jesus led his people through the water of baptism to their promised inheritance, Heaven.

Elijah had been a roaring lion of a prophet, called the “troubler” of sinful Israel. Repeatedly, he challenged false religion, the sinful worship of false gods, to strive to bring folk back to the one true God of Israel. The presence of both Moses and Elijah proved that there is another realm beyond the grave, from which they had returned in recognizable human-like form.

At this display, the disciple triumvirate was agog. James and John, usually called “the sons of thunder,” were quieted. They let the majestic moment seep in as they sang a version of “Let all mortal flesh keep silence,” or “Be still, my soul.” Not so, impetuous, motor-mouth Peter. His song was “When in doubt, shout it out.” He just had to blurt out things he had not thought through. Jesus had just told his team that he must suffer and die. “No way!” Peter thought. “The passion can be by-passed. Jesus is in glory already.”

At this, Peter clipped on his Polaroid sunnies against the dazzling resplendence, whipped out his smart phone to post a static selfie of himself with the splendored Jesus, before he changed back to human again and blustered “Just hold it, Rabbi. Let’s keep this glory just as it is now. Let’s enshrine this whopper experience with three static dwelling-booths and by-pass the suffering cross.” Peter should have known by now that the appointed way of God for his willing Son, cannot be by-passed, but must be met.

Simple Simon Peter sought to compress the King of Kings into a box. The hostiles tried this on Good Friday evening. But it didn’t work for them, and Easter happened. Peter wanted to hang out with these giants of faith forever atop the mountain, to bask in their glory, but Jesus called his disciples back to the gritty, noisy streets and lanes of life on the valley floor, to go down to the clamouring call below, where, Jesus’ transfiguration on Mount Tabor will become his disfiguration on Mount Calvary.

Just as Peter blew his vocal Trump-like trumpet, a cloud enveloped the three disciples, and, from its dun darkness, God answered a question that Jesus had put “Who do people say that I am?” In a most dramatic attestation, God was with the three in the cloud and repeated his affirmation given at Jesus’ baptism “You are my son, the beloved,” by adding “Now, you three, listen to my Son, my Chosen One.”

Every Sunday, at Ascension Church, we should experience a little transformation, a little mountain-top experience through the fellowship of the Word, the wafer and wine. Like Peter, we may wish to enjoy the mountain top experience, then drop our pew-booklet back in the narthex rack, mutter “That’s that for the week. My, doesn’t that fool Walter go on. Now, for a quick uninvolved cuppa, then it’s home to watch the women’s footbrawl.” Like Peter, we may not want to go down to the valley, for, down there, are the waiting ranks of troublesome need and demand. Down there are the time-consuming ones, who will hear us out and then return to their golden calf of Tattslotto or TV betting.

The sole buoyancy given us may be that Jesus has gone down before us, and, you will find him down there at street level, carrying his cross. As truly transformed, transfigured souls, how will you reflect his glory in this coming week as Lent begins? How will you show outward witness and his word to all you will meet?