

Mark 9: 2-10 (4 March 2012)

Student Service Grahamstown Cathedral

Have you ever been desperate for a revelation from God? Have you been faced with a difficult decision and sought God's guidance only to find silence on the other end? Maybe you have been in the depths of despair and just asked for a vision of God and seen nothing? Perhaps your faith is hanging by a thread and you are longing for God to be real to you? I wonder how many of us have yearned for an experience like Peter, James and John.

If only we could have a mountain top experience of God, witness Jesus in all his glory... his body so radiant that his very clothes become dazzling white. We may be tempted to feel that if we could have this experience then we could hold onto our faith and the face anything that life has to throw at us. Well, as we all know this experience was not enough for Peter, he denied Jesus three times before the end.

And what about the other nine disciples... have you ever thought about them? Why does Jesus reveal himself to Peter, James and John and leave the other nine out of the loop? I suspect that when Matthew found out, he would have been hurt that he missed out on this experience; perhaps Judas felt a twinge of jealousy for those in the inner circle. Sometimes we can feel inferior... we don't have the gift that Theophilus has, my faith is not as strong as Prisca's, I'm not a proper Christian compared with Mary.

Most startling of all, Jesus firmly instructs Peter, James and John not to tell anyone of what they have seen, until after Jesus has been raised from the dead. This is not the first time that we have heard Jesus instructing his disciples to keep his glory hidden. Scholars call this the messianic secret in Mark's Gospel. It is helpful to note that Mark is writing to Christians who were being persecuted, probably under Emperor Nero. Every time Jesus insists on secrecy after a healing, an exorcism, the transfiguration, Mark is reminding his audience that these things are not the whole story!

In fact, Mark devotes half his Gospel to the passion narrative, culminating in the crucifixion. In other words, Mark is writing in bold letters that suffering is part of the Gospel and by implication is part of the story of every Christian! The Markan Jesus is saying to us this evening that we should look for him, and find him, more in our trials, our pains and our suffering... but that's enough preaching from me. I have asked Georgie to share some of her recent Christian journey with us this evening, a journey not without pain.