

March 2, 2025 – Revd Wim Kuiper
Anglican Church Arnhem & Nijmegen

Readings: Ex 34.29-end; 2 Cor 3.12-4.2, Luke 9.28-37

Peter's words in today's Gospel passage resonated again deeply with me this week. 'Master it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters.' I truly sympathise with that thought, unlike Peter, of course knowing that it does not work like that. This week, we commemorated the fact that the war in Ukraine has entered its fourth year and also after yesterday's events in the White House, hopes on a just and peaceful settlement in the near future are dwindling. Also this week, I listened to a reporter on the radio telling what he saw and heard from the desperate people around him in northern Gaza, returning to what once was their house and is now a complete ruin. Through my other job, I read a call for prayer from a school leader in the region of Goma in Congo, telling about the dire situation in the middle of violent clashes between rebels and the army. And I wondered how are brothers and sisters in all those very tough places are reading today's Gospel story. How will it speak to them in the midst of their present suffering? And there is that same question to us. How do we hear today about the light of God's glory revealed and made visible in Christ? When we are so much aware of the continuing brokenness of this world and of the brokenness in our own lives as well. Aware of the ongoing suffering in faraway places, but also by many around us, and perhaps also by ourselves in whatever way, at this very moment.

'Master it is good for us to be here. Let us put up shelters in your presence.' Yes indeed, wouldn't it be great to stay as close as we can get to that glorious light of our Lord Jesus Christ. To constantly have conversations with him, as he had with Moses and Elijah. To feel safe and secure, taken up in that light. To always feel God's loving presence in Jesus. But we know that all of this is not so easy as long as we are here on earth. It is not possible yet in such a complete sense. We have this hour in church on a Sunday, we can have our conversations with Jesus at times of prayer and we can catch glimpses of God's glory in all kinds of ways. But we still always have to go 'down from the mountain' again afterwards. Just like Moses in our first reading. Just like Jesus and his disciples at the end of the Gospel.

But this important story about the Lord's Transfiguration should still be also for us a strong source of hope. We are called to hold on to the fact that God's great glory continues to stand behind every human tragedy. That his glory, his uncreated and eternal light, has indeed entered the world in a new and radical way in Christ Jesus. A light that could not be overcome by the world, by all the suffering that is in it. By what his fellow human beings did to Jesus when he entered his passion shortly after this Transfiguration.

Knowing this, seeing this, deeply connecting our hearts and minds to that glory which is the light of Christ, does perhaps not immediately diminish the pain and hardship of human suffering. A suffering that is indeed very real for all of us, as it also was for Jesus himself and his disciples. But we have good reasons for hope given by the deeper layer of eternal reality that lies underneath it. A reality that even if it cannot always be seen clearly, goes far beyond what we see around us in our everyday life. Because the good news is that God hears the suffering of his people and continues to act in his own glorious way. He did so at the times of Moses and Elijah, at the times of Peter, James and John, and he does so in our times. At the fulness of time God sent his Son Jesus Christ, to come to earth as a fellow human being who deliberately went through suffering in a most horrible way, revealing God's eternal glory to us in his resurrection and glorious ascension into heaven. The glory of God in Christ is deeply connected to his own suffering, in solidarity with our suffering and the suffering of the whole of creation. And in him we have the promise that this suffering will have an end at some

point in time. For the whole earth at Christ's second coming and for ourselves, when we will enter that eternal light of God's glory at the end of our earthly life.

Peter, James and John were allowed to see Christ's glory at his Transfiguration, so that when they witnessed his passion and death they knew that these terrible moments were not the end of the story. That even these horrible events were somehow held within the infinite depth of God's eternal, loving light. We can live in the shelter of that same knowledge as well. Therefore, never losing the hope that comes with the knowledge of this deeper reality. A reality of the light of Christ which cannot and will not be overcome by any kind of darkness. The deep knowledge that the Holy Spirit continues to breathe through all the complex, painful experiences of human beings in this world of ours, which remains also God's world.

That knowledge gave Jesus the power to dispel the fears and doubts at Gethsemane and go through his torment and death at Calvary. God calls us again this morning to listen to his chosen Son Jesus, who continues to speak to us. So let us abide in that great light, that unconditional love of the Word made flesh. Let us continue to be the agents of this love by our words, deeds and prayers. Bringing the hope that we have received into a world that is so much in need of it. Amen