

## **Sermon: 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2008:**

### **Come and listen to him:**

Mountains a big part of our landscape and life journey. We only need to look to the west to see the Great Dividing Range. A collection of Mountains which stretch from up in Queensland through to Victoria. Plus mountains always seem to pose a challenge to us and we feel that we need to climb or drive to the highest point to take in the vista.

Mountains feature in many cultures as important focal points in their religious observances. The Old Testament alone speaks high places where false gods were worshiped and where Elijah challenged the priests of Baal and called on God to show his awesomeness. Today in many places around the world you see Temples, Churches and Mosques on mountains and hill tops – high places. We here at St Thomas are on a high place here in Port Macquarie. But are we just here physically or are we on the high place spiritually as well?

Also throughout military history the army which held the high ground had the tactical advantage over their enemy. In the America Civil War the battle for Gettysburg is a good example of this. The Federal troops held the high ground and in the end won the day.

It is not surprising that mountains are important in God's story also. For it was on a mountain that he visited Moses with the burning bush and a mountain to which God called Moses when he gave him the ten commandments. Moses was on the mountain 40days and radiated the glory of God when he returned to the valley.

Mountains also have significance in the natural for they are seen as a challenge to be climbed and conquer. Hence the many attempts to climb Mount Everest or similar places.

Some months back Kerrie and I called in at the Bald Rock NP near Tenterfield and climbed to the top of the rock, the rock being a small mountain. There was a degree of difficulty in the climb, yet when we arrived at the top the view was awesome and awe inspiring, the view was 360 degrees and showed Gods creation in its splendor plus just sitting at the

summit allowed one to feel God's presence. I am sure that many here can recall similar times during their journeys.

So it is not surprising that it is to a mountain that Jesus invites three of his Disciples as described in our Gospel Reading for an experience that was to be an important part in their teaching and preparation for the ministry that was ahead of them. In our life's journey we too experience mountain top experiences of the emotional kind, the birth of a baby, the Baptism of the child, promotions at work, a good health report and many more.

It was not a simple journey just as our daily walk with Jesus or through life is not always easy, it can be a hard road at times. Yet Jesus still invites each of us to journey to the mountain with him and it is up to us to accept the invitation and journey with him.

In our passage we see Jesus and three of his disciples, Peter, James & John, climb to the top of a mountain. Jesus who wanted some time alone for a time of private prayer went on ahead of his disciples.

It was then as he prayed that Jesus is transfigured before them and appeared to glow with a white radiance as the shikana Glory of God descended on him and so he appeared as a Ghost. Thus the transfiguration also serves to confirm that the suffering Jesus will endure is not incompatible with his Glory, the Glory that is his following his resurrection. The unearthly white glow emanating from Jesus cloths alludes to the resurrection and the white garments that characterize the righteousness in the resurrection.

Imagine the response of the Disciples; they were full of fear and trepidation. It would have been a frightening experience. Here was a person they had just walked and talked with now appearing as a Ghost. As the disciples looked on they saw the images of Moses and Elijah appear beside Jesus and pointing in Jesus direction. Moses and Elijah represented the OT Law and The Prophets, the two divisions of the Old Testament, suggesting that what they stood for is now being fulfilled in Jesus.

Jesus had stated earlier in Matt 5: 13 – 20 that he had come to fulfill the law and the prophets and the appearance of Moses and Elijah confirm this.

Thus in witnessing this, the disciples were allowed to see Jesus in his own glory as they were given a glimpse into the divinity of Jesus. When the people saw Moses come off Mount Sinai he radiated God's glory, what the disciples was Jesus radiating his own glory.

Not knowing what else to do Peter offers to build cubicles for Jesus, Moses & Elijah for he wanted to hold onto the moment and keep it for all time. How often when we have experienced a mountain top experience have we wanted it to last forever? I would venture that it would be so most of the time, for mountain top experiences are joyous times following a great achievement or a time of personal growth in our walk with God.

In response to Peter's offer and to add their awesome experience and trepidation a voice spoke from the cloud stating that "this is my son, whom I love, listen to him". This was God himself giving his stamp of approval to Jesus and uses words simulate to what he used at Jesus baptism;

*Matt 3 verse 17:*

<sup>17</sup>and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: with the added charge for the Disciples to listen to him, to listen to what he had to say to they and teach them.

Latter Peter attests to this in *2 Peter 1:16-18*

<sup>16</sup>For when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we did not follow any clever myths. Rather, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice of the Majestic Glory was conveyed to him as follows: "This is my Son, whom I love. I am pleased with him." <sup>18</sup>We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain"

Thus the transfiguration offers a peek into the future, but only a peek. For we still live in the here and now and that world where earthly power can cause strife for those who follow Christ, but cannot take away our future in him through the cross.

Jesus then came and lead his Disciples off the mountain back into the valley where the ministry was to take place, just a we must come down off our mountains back to the real world.

Thus whilst Christians do experience times on the mountain top, we spend a great deal of time in the valleys we have the comfort of knowing that in the midst of this suffering Christ is there with us. We just need to look up to him and he will come down with and be with us where we are at. However whether on the mountain top or in the valley we are called upon to listen to him, to listen to his words and teaching just as the Disciples with him.

So why listen to Jesus? Especially today and how do we learn from him? Jesus is God in the flesh, in John 1: 1 – 10 we read that the word (the word of God) became flesh and dwelt amongst us. He comes with the same message that the Law & the Prophets gave over the centuries. That is that God wants to restore our relationship with him. We do this through our repentance of our sinfulness as humans and acceptance of Jesus as saviour.

Jesus also came with the message of salvation and ultimately died on the cross as atonement for our sins. Today we have the same message and teaching of Jesus not in vocal mode but written for us in the Bible and we listen to and learn from Jesus by spending time daily reading of this word.

It is this regular exposure to the word that helps us to hear from God and to be strengthened in our faith for those valley times of struggle.

It is this regular exposure to the words of Jesus that convicts us and leads us to repentance and a restoration of our fellowship with God our Heavenly Father.

So do you hear Jesus? If so do you obey him? Or are you so caught up in the theories of mere men and women or even otherwise worthwhile Christian activities, like a Martha, that you miss that which is really needful, time listening with Jesus?

Luke 10: 41 –

*<sup>41</sup>The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha! You worry and fuss about a lot of things. <sup>42</sup>But there’s only <sup>£</sup>one thing you need. Mary has chosen what is better, <sup>£</sup>and it is not to be taken away from her.”*

So how much time do you give to listening to God’s word each day? I have heard some say you only need 7 minutes of bible reading each day, yet then

spend hours in front of the TV watching Desperate Housewives, of The Ghost Whisperer, or similar, others have suggested that you only need to read the bible spasmodically. Now some tv watching is not bad, I find it relaxing as I can switch off, but is what priority you give it and the time spent and what you watch that can show where you are at in your walk with God.

Jesus asked his disciples in the beginning and right through history until today, can you not spend at least one hour with me.

Mark 14: 37

*<sup>37</sup>He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? <sup>38</sup>Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Many today, even those claiming to be Christians, do not seem to be able to, or willing to make the time to obey God's command to listen to Jesus, yet we expect Jesus to be on call and give us 24hr service. Now I am not suggesting that we spend 24hrs each day in reading the scriptures, it might be a good thing to do, and it might be for a time of retreat, yet the amount of time we spend listening to God's word and the time spent on other pursuits shows our priorities and loyalties.

Today God's still says this is my beloved Son, listen to him for it is only through our acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Saviour his death and resurrection that we have our salvation and our hope of a resurrected life. It is only through the teaching of Jesus on the word of God that we know how we are to live as Sons & Daughters of God. I encourage you to listen to Jesus daily, have a right relationship with God, and find joy when he takes you to the mountain top and the strength to journey in the valley.