

No one except Jesus¹

2 Peter 1:16-21; Exodus 24:12-18; Matthew 17:1-9

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Occasionally, we can look across a room and be bedazzled by the person who would *surely* be the love of our lives, forever. OK, perhaps rarely – and for some, never at all. On a spiritual level – it is perhaps even more rare. Most people, (and I'd don't want you to feel left out because I emphasise *most people*,) never have that moment on the mountain. It is rare.

Perhaps that's why we like to hear about other people's epiphanies. Their 'wow' moments can be ours – just for a little while.

Matthew had more than that in mind when he recorded this story. This is a significant moment – not just for James, Peter and John but for all of us. It is not just a 'wow' moment. There are some profound messages embedded in this reveal. It changed them and it changes us – forever.

First, they see Jesus as they have never seen him before: Lit up like a beacon; impossible to turn away from ... and then he is joined by Moses and Elijah. It is like God is writing in giant Texta – “Look!! Moses led you out of Egypt and passed the baton to Elijah to take you into the promised land! Look, at **Him**, Jesus!- the one who will take you further than you have ever been before. Follow Him.”

Then we see the human response – the need to build an edifice...but God interrupts human arrogance to really spell it out...”This is my son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased. Listen to Him”

Frankly, he couldn't make it any clearer, right? But perhaps there is a more subtle message – you can't put faith into a box, a tent, or a shelter... “I am here, right in front of you and everywhere”. If they build a temple, it will be up on the mountain – how will that help them when they go back down the mountain, back into everyday muck? Back into life's messiness?

And anyway, why on a mountain? Do you have to be elevated to be closer to God? No, the point is, they took time out. They left busy-ness below and went where it was quiet: to a place where they could listen for God.

Epiphanies/mountain top experiences don't usually happen in a traffic jam.

¹ Inspired by a sermon from John Williams at the induction of Rev Karen Paul 12 Feb 23 at Narooma

They happen when there is quiet and time to think. It happens when all the other stuff you are doing stops – for one reason or another. You may be in an emergency waiting room or a hospital bed. You might have missed the bus and stand alone in the shelter. For me. It was in free fall, left behind by a truck and not yet collected by an army half-track. Alone in the desert.

Unless you expect God to whack you with the wisdom stick, the best hope you have is making time to pay attention. That why daily devotions are important. That's the purpose of the rosary. To make space.

And then what do we expect? Sure, we talk about the still, small, voice...the niggling knowing that is our usual God experience but every now and then, for the lucky, it is a powerful and profound (and yes, even frightening) experience. That could also describe romantic love but for that, you don't fall on your face in the dirt. (at least I hope not) The unmistakable voice of God can be terrifying.

Jesus reaches down and touches them and tells them, "do not be afraid" and when they look up...and they saw no one - except Jesus. Not a crowd of saints or deities - Just Jesus. The One in which all are captured.

As we are walking down the mountain, we are descending into Lent. Jesus instructs them not to tell anyone what they have seen – not until He has done what he has to do. It stands to reason that this moment of glory won't make sense until we see the full picture: without what has to come next, who will believe them?

Vince Amlin said his writing teacher told them never to tell people about what you are writing. As soon as you share it, it loses a little of its magic – it lessens the urgency and you may never finish it. Better to keep it secret. Letting your work be animated by the mystery you are holding onto.

So too, with first love. Keeping it private makes it all more thrilling. Amazingly, people will say you are glowing. The comparison does not escape me.

No doubt what the disciples experienced energised their mission. We hear it later in 2 Peter, where the words pour out:

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice

came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.²

In the meantime, they must learn to live in the in-between time – which is what we do. Peter, James and John brought light down the mountain and held it within themselves until it was time. And then they shouted the good news from mountains to valleys.

We are sitting on the precipice Lent about to descend into the time that leads from darkness into light. Just as we live in an in-between world, waiting for the light. When we reach the end of this journey, we'll lift our heads out of the dirt – and see no one, except Jesus.

² 2 Peter 1:16-18