

The Anglican Church of St Philip's O'Connor, Canberra, ACT, Australia
Services on Sunday: Holy Communion 8am and 10am. Wednesday 10am

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Wardens: Chris Cheah, Janine Studholme, Devin Combs Bowles

Readings:

Exodus 24: 12-18

Psalm 2

2 Peter 1: 16-21

Matthew 17: 1-9

Have you ever climbed to the top of Mt Kosciusko? I imagine you felt every last bit of it!

Well, if we are correct in thinking that the mountain in our story today is Mount Hermon, then we will understand that the disciples Peter, James and John, with Jesus, had their work cut out for them, because this mountain is 2224 metres high.

It is presently the northernmost mountain in Israel and sits in of the Golan Heights; disputed territory. But, — of great strategic importance as it enables the Israelis to look down into Syria.

It is also said that this is the only **real** mountain in Israel — at 2224 metres it is about the same height as mt Kosciusko. (some say it is about 3,000 metres!)

The other interesting thing I found when I sought information is of course **SNOW** — (it is the only place for snow skiing in Israel.)

SNOW — I wonder if the snow played a part in the transfiguring of Jesus — The blinding whiteness compared to the cloud.

In Cabramurra many years ago I went with Don Francis (then Rector of Cooma); at first, I was blinded by the sun on the snow; then he skied away from me and was lost in the cloud that had come down...

As well as the similarities with Moses who many years before was on Mt Sinai and whose face reflected the glory of God there is a connection between Mt Hermon and Abraham — tradition has it that it was on Mount Hermon that God promised Abraham that he would give the land to his descendants!

Why do we think Jesus may have been on Mt Hermon? [and not Mt Tabor.]

Mostly because Jesus is said to be in the region of Caesarea Philippi only a few verses before.

It seems unlikely that Jesus and the disciples were at the top — but were most likely at a point

lower down — a number of high peaks.

Did physical circumstances, the awesome nature of the location (possibly the snow!) and the awareness of the disciples made this situation full of expectation and wonder and they perceived the gloriousness of God shining forth from Jesus, "He was transfigured (*lit. metamorphosed*) before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white."

Moses and Elijah are there talking with Jesus — they represent the law and the prophets — the summary of Israel's religious inheritance—

The cloud covers them — clouds are always the vehicles of God's glory "shekinah" and they hear the voice: "This is my son, the Beloved, with him I am well pleased; listen to him."

It seems Jesus had come here to pray (as we are told in Luke's gospel) and to resolve the issue of his calling—

Just prior to this at nearby Caesarea Philippi, Jesus had asked "who do *people* say the Son of Man is?" — and Peter had understood, but **NOT** understood his mission.

It seems that in this amazing event, Jesus found affirmation from **God**.

On hearing the voice, the disciples naturally fall to the ground overcome by fear.

I am reminded that we are on such easy terms with God in this modern age that we seem to have lost that sense of wonder which we used to call "the fear of God."

As we look to Ash Wednesday and Lent we are encouraged to look again at where we stand with God, ... our smallness — in God's presence!

There is a lovely touch here — that although overcome by the fear and immensity of the event, — but Jesus **comes, touches, and says** "Get up and do not be afraid."

We may fall in fear before the greatness of God **BUT** it is Jesus who

comes

touches

speaks

and raises us up.

And when they looked up, they saw no-one except Jesus himself, alone.

Coming down the mountain, Peter, James and John are asked to keep quiet — to tell no-one **UNTIL** the Son of Man has been raised.

explain

This was affirmation for Jesus in his mission and for Peter, James and John as they begin a new phase of their journey with Jesus.

Now knowing that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah — we too begin that journey to the cross in Lent.

Through the wilderness of confrontation and discovery —

Rethinking what it means to live the way of Christ.

The way of:

Penitence —turning to God.

Prayer

Fasting

Worship

Study of scripture

Works of mercy —giving to mission
and —caring for each other.

Here is Jesus on the highest mountain, looking out toward Syria, Lebanon and the rest of the world — looking down on the land promised to Abraham — with this profound experience of the history — the past in Moses and Elijah and his future mission unfolding before him with those who with all their faults would be his closest friends, and the brightness of God's glory is so powerfully displayed as he is called and follows his path. The journey which began following a star brings us face to face with Jesus the light of the nations; brings us face to face with Jesus, the light of the nations.