

# **Sunday next before Lent (Church of England) Year A**

## **Green**

Exodus 24.12-18

Psalm 2

*or* Psalm 99

2 Peter 1.16-21

Matthew 17.1-9

### **Exodus 24.12-18**

The LORD said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.' So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. To the elders he had said, 'Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them.'

Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

### **What's going on?**

As we approach the season of Lent, this passage takes us into the significance of the forty days and the forty nights Jesus was in the

wilderness and which is remembered in Lent. Moses is called by God to go up on to the mountain and receive the Law. So Moses leaves the people while he goes up on to the mountain to seek God's will. The Bible records that the amount of time he spent on the mountain was forty days and forty nights.

## **Psalm 2**

### **God's Promise to His Anointed**

Why do the nations conspire,  
and the peoples plot in vain?  
The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the LORD and his anointed, saying,  
'Let us burst their bonds asunder,  
and cast their cords from us.'

He who sits in the heavens laughs;  
the LORD has them in derision.  
Then he will speak to them in his wrath,  
and terrify them in his fury, saying,  
'I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.'

I will tell of the decree of the LORD:  
He said to me, 'You are my son;  
today I have begotten you.  
Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.  
You shall break them with a rod of iron,  
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'

Now therefore, O kings, be wise;  
be warned, O rulers of the earth.  
Serve the LORD with fear,  
with trembling kiss his feet,  
or he will be angry, and you will perish in the way;  
for his wrath is quickly kindled. Happy are all who take refuge in him.

## **What's going on?**

**This psalm talks about God's anointed one, the person on whom God's favour rests. God has a purpose for his anointed and no one should get in his way because that purpose cannot be stopped. These words are seen as prophetic of Jesus' purpose as he accepts his ministry. This psalm also continues the idea of the anointed and specially appointed servant of God being made king on a 'holy hill'. In all these readings an extraordinary event on a mountain which reveals God's glory is included.**

### **2 Peter 1.16-21**

#### **Eyewitnesses of Christ's Glory**

**For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.**

**So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**

## **What's going on?**

**In this letter, the writer argues that the story of Jesus is not just a clever story or a myth because the events confirming his identity as God's son were witnessed. God's revelation of Jesus was made known to those around him in his time. So the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain confirmed Jesus as God's own Son, an event which we will hear about shortly. The writer says that confirmation of who Jesus was came from heaven and was heard and witnessed. The writer also says that we can be sure that this information is true because there are different kinds of information. Human**

interpretations cannot be trusted, but the information about Jesus and through prophetic speech comes to human beings from God.

## **Matthew 17.1-9**

### **The Transfiguration**

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, 'Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'

This is the event which all the readings have been leading up to. This is the second of three important events in Jesus' public life. At his baptism, Jesus is confirmed as God's Son and at the Ascension he returns to heaven. This event occurs at the height of his public ministry. Jesus goes with the disciples up a high mountain and they see a vision of Jesus transfigured. This means that he appears as a heavenly being, shining with light and talking to Moses and Elijah – Moses chosen by God to bring the holy law to human beings and Elijah as the ancient prophet. Jesus now takes his place along with them, for he will fulfil the law and the prophets. The disciples also hear the voice of God confirming Jesus as God's Son and announcing God's favour. The disciples are understandably terrified, but Jesus reassures them. Jesus also tells them what is to happen to him. The event has confirmed his pathway and God's purpose in him.