

Bennochy church 3rd march 2019

When does the ordinary become extra ordinary? When does it 'flip', from that we can understand, to that which is beyond our understanding. What is the moment, when, something that is very much part of this world, moves to something 'beyond' it?

The life of those first disciples had been turned upside down. For them the ordinary had already gone. Theirs was now a life of miracles, parables, conflict with the religious authorities, a call to leave and live a very different kind of life, and even at this very early stage in the ministry of Jesus, Luke speaks of Jesus future death, and the challenge that would bring them. In the timeline of events, I am not sure that these words of Jesus would have been spoken at that point, but Luke is giving his readers not just, big hints of what was to come, he is saying to them and to us, this is what it is actually all about. This is what everything else, you have witnessed, is leading up to.

Jesus takes his inner team, that is Peter, John and James, away for a bit of a retreat. It seems that Jesus goes off to pray. Not sure at this point what the disciples are up to. We know that they eventually fall asleep. We could speculate. Fill in some of the gaps. I suspect they are talking about all the recent events they have witnessed and been part of. *"Remember that storm out on the lake, I really thought we going to die..."* *"Who do you think Jesus is, this man who can actually heal people. Did you see what he did! I don't understand what's going on here. I am*

confused..." *"I really don't think I am up to this going out and driving out demons. It's not for me..."* *"And what's this about taking up a cross...is that nor for criminals"* *"And what are we doing here, half way up a mountain. At some point they fall asleep. They were obviously out of condition and not seasoned Munro climbers!*

Can we draw some parallels here? Of questions we might ask in similar situations; of this moving from the ordinary to the extraordinary. I am wondering, is that a description of the life of discipleship? Is that what we are called to do and to 'be'? To recognise the 'other', that which is outside us, but which also lives within the ordinary lives that we lead? To recognise those moments when God intervenes and burst through, into the 'ordinary' of human history.

They wake up. Something has caught their attention. Maybe a voice. *"Jesus, what's happening here?"* Luke tells us that while Jesus had been praying, his face changed appearance, and his clothes became dazzling white. I could think of an advert for washing power, but I am not going to! What's happening? I don't know! All we can say is this. Light was associated with the presence of God.

The same thing happened to Moses, thousands of years earlier. In the book of Exodus we are told, that when Moses had come down from mount Sinai, carrying the 10 commandments, his face was shining, because he had been in the presence of the

Lord. In the minds of the biblical writers, there had always been this close connection between Moses and Jesus, to the point, that Jesus was seen as a second Moses.

"Wait a minute. We're not alone..." "Is that..." "No it can't be...that's not possible!" Actually Luke does not record any element of surprise. But their little group has been expanded, and in their midst, with Jesus, now stands Elijah and Moses. Now, as miraculous as that sounds, it was not that surprising it was these two men, who now stand beside Jesus.

Luke is making a theological point here. Moses, he represents the Law, and Elijah, the prophets. What Luke is saying to his readers is this, in Jesus, these two have now come together and are being fulfilled. Not only that, if you read about the deaths of these two men, Moses we are told, was 'buried by God' and Elijah was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot. In other words, having not died, as we understand it; they were able to return and be with Jesus.

What is happening here, is more about theology than miracle. Luke is saying to his readers, hugely important things about who Jesus is. That's the point. In him there is the presence of God. He is the new Moses. He has come to fulfil the law and the prophecies of God. If you push the image too far it will start to break down. But how else can you begin to understand the extraordinary that is going on here?

"Let's build some tents..." Really! Is that the best response Peter could come up with? Did he think they were going to live there? Luke covers for him a bit, and says, 'he did not know what he was saying'. We have also said some pretty stupid things in response to God! We get tough tied, and say the first thing that comes into our head. We can forgive Peter.

To conclude his account of this dramatic event, Luke draws on two stories well known to his readers. The cloud, that image would take his readers back to Mount Sinai, Moses and the giving of the law. It is a symbolic of the presence of God. The exact same thing happened there. And, the words of God, *"This is my son..."*, is an echo of the baptism of Jesus. So just in case anyone was in any doubt, the backdrop to this story, confirms the identity of Jesus, Son of God. Luke says, it is 'in your face'. You can't miss it.

As quickly as it begun, it ended. And in spite of the extraordinary things they had seen, the three disciples tell no one what happened. To be honest, I find that hard to believe! *"You will never believe what happened to us..."*. Maybe no one would. The world finds it hard to believe the extraordinary, and that there is a role for God in the world today.

If we have glimpsed the extraordinary. If God has in some way revealed himself. When we come down from the mountain, what are we to do?

Luke felt it was important to share what had happened. Not to amaze people with a miracle, but to say, what you have waited for all these centuries, promised by God, is now revealed in Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God is here. Where the ordinary, and the extra ordinary, meet. Amen