LENT B2 2012 (read only)

As we’ve just heard, Peter nearly fell into the trap of thinking that being with Jesus on the mountain top was all he needed to bring his life to completion. He wanted to capture and bottle a wonderful experience, to remain as a spectator rather than a sharer of the glory of Jesus. This is a trap that we can all be tempted to fall into. When something really wonderful happens we are tempted to stand still, hold on to what we have or where we are, in other words to reject the future.

This is very understandable because the future is always unknown except for the one thing that comes to us all – death. Experience also confirms that no one leads an entirely blissful experience in this world so we do our best to prolong such moments.

But there is something we can do with these moments of gift and insight. We can commit them to deep memory – place them safely in our hearts where they will grow stronger and gain greater significance. We are wise to do this so that we can revisit them when life takes the kind of turn we find hard and frightening.

Holding such gifts in our hearts, acts as a kind of down payment on the joy that beckons us forward. Holding such gifts in our hearts also sharpens our ability to see beyond the surface of our everyday experiences. If we allow these gifts to have life in our hearts rather than being mourned as part of a lost youth or missed opportunities, we can be a real help to others. Like Peter, James and John we can carry such gifts with us into our daily lives, allowing them to motivate and inspire us to be generous in whatever contribution we are invited to make within our family, workplace or community. This is how we give birth to God’s kingdom. We don’t have to be eloquent preachers or brainy theologians for God’s love to manifest itself through us.

William Barclay was a Scottish biblical scholar who had a real gift and determination for helping people understand the scriptures. His series Daily Bible Studies remains one of the most widely read set of commentaries on the books of the New Testament. And in his commentary on the gospel of John he makes the following observation about how God reveals himself, he says:

It is quite wrong to think of God’s revelation as being confined to what we might call theological truth. The theologians and the preachers are not the only persons who are inspired… [he continues] When a great poet delivers [to men] a great message in words which defy time, he is inspired… A great musician is inspired… When a scientist discovers something which will help the world’s toil and make life better [for men], when a surgeon discovers a new technique which will save [men’s] lives and ease [their] pain, when someone discovers a new treatment, a new drug, which will bring life and hope to suffering humanity, that is a revelation from God. It actually happens in a way that we can see.

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