

Avoid See-Saws!

Daniel 7^{9-10,13-14}; Psalm 97; 2 Peter 1¹⁶⁻¹⁹; Luke 9²⁸⁻³⁶

When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. (Luke 9³⁶)

How do you follow-up on the great moments of faith?

There can be an experience of anti-climax after great events and there can also be an experience of *spiritual depression* where you know that faith is real but you just don't manage to experience it for yourself.

This isn't doubt nor is it isn't a challenge to faith - it is a season that many experience where belief is still intact, but it doesn't feel like it makes any positive difference to our lives.

Christians can often feel very guilty when, for no reason at all, their faith doesn't thrill them or enliven them as they think it should, made worse by the fact that it is still something vital and important to them.

I want to attempt to assure any who have had or are having this experience - this *Spiritual Depression* - that it is normal and that it will pass.

(Those of us who were Christians in the mid 20th century may be familiar with the book that is a spiritual classic by Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones, the one-time physician to the King and minister of the Westminster Chapel - it is a worthwhile read that helps us challenge rather than indulge *Spiritual Depression*.)

So how do the readings for the Transfiguration help us to live through and survive *spiritual depression*?

- ✦ The image of God - both Father and Son - in Daniel reveals to us that certainty that is God: **an Ancient One took his throne** in the presence of the court of heaven and judgement is about to be issues as **the books were opened**. Christians read back into the appearance of **one like a human being** the presence of Jesus, not least as it goes on to say: **his dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away and his kingship is one that shall not pass away**.

As in everything else, the starting point is God; holding at the centre of our faith God as he is and - based on what Daniel says about Jesus' kingship - the fact that our faith rests on what God does and never what we do or how we feel! It gives us, whether we are up or down (or somewhere in-between) a solid foundation for our faith.

- ✦ Peter, in his second Epistle, affirms his experience of the Transfiguration and repeats what God had said. He then goes on to say: **You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the days dawn and the morning star rises in your hearts**. It is that word **until** that reveals that even those who were present at great events sometimes take time to grow into the benefit of them.

If God is the starting point, God is the one who sustains. So much of faith is future and we wait in anticipation, but hope can be a present reality. In the waiting we draw on what we know of God - that he does keep his promises; that we have known his grace to be dependable; that his love is unconditional; and that his love is complete. God is the beginning and in the middle.

- ✦ In the Gospel the thing that always catches my eye at the Transfiguration is the need that takes hold of the disciples - Peter specifically - to do something: **Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah**. Missing the point that in the encounter of Jesus, the Messiah, meeting with Moses, the Law, and Elijah, the Prophets, you have completeness - nothing else is needed.

Is God is the beginning and the middle, God is the point of completion. So often we beat ourselves up about what we need to do - and the truth is we only need to be: be at the centre of God's love; be at the centre of God's grace; be at the centre of God's plan: in this is our completion.

If you had been there at the Transfiguration, how would you have responded to it? How would you have moved on from it?

What matters more is that constant knowledge that whatever happens to us or around us that God is consistent.