

***When they were up they were up –
and when they were down they were down!***

Exodus 34^{29-end}; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3^{12-4²}; Luke 9²⁸⁻³⁶

*And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.
[2 Corinthians 3¹⁸]*

With the threat of war with the Russian invasion of the Ukraine this week we look to God to change the hearts of those who believe that aggression and violence is morally right or appropriate. Yet it is the duty of Christian people to reflect God's commitment to shalom, that wholeness of relationship with God, with others and with ourselves.

The last Sunday before Lent always has the readings that remind us of the Transfiguration, when Moses representing the Law and Elijah representing the Prophets (and together hold all the faith of the Hebrews together) appear with Jesus and affirm him before he turns towards his passion and death, just as his Father does from the cloud.

Perhaps they should call this the Grand Ole Duck of York Sunday, as you have Moses coming down and Jesus going up, but perhaps not?

What I did notice was the response when the cloud enveloped those up the mountain: **they were terrified when they entered the cloud.** To these first century disciples the cloud represented God's presence (as it did to the Hebrews in the wilderness) and the expectation was that when you had seen God you would immediately die.

That response, of terror, is to be expected – I imagine that when the missiles started flying in Kyiv there were many there that were terrified (as we would be).

But how should Christians and people of faith respond? We aren't people who look around and despair, we are people who look up and have hope!

- ✘ Moses went up the mountain and received from God the law on the **two tablets of the Covenant** and then came down again. Because he had been in God's presence **the skin on his face was shining**. When he was passing on what God had said **he would take the veil off** and when he was not, such was the difference that God made that **he put a veil on his face**.

How the world needs those who will spend time with God – listening more than praying – so that they are transformed, noticeably and remarkably transformed. Only then will people listen to a message of hope and peace.

- ✘ Paul refers to Moses and makes it clear that when they heard **a veil lies over their mind** and that was because **their minds were hardened**. Seeing truth, seeing things through God's eyes, becomes possible, but **only in Christ is it set aside**.

The real hope that is born in us and becomes as infectious as a virus, is when we consciously and deliberately work to become more like Jesus: accepting that we are and we should be **being transformed into the image [of the Lord] from one degree of glory to another**.

While there are leaders and politicians that will lead us into war, the people who are increasingly like Jesus will lead us into peace.

On Wednesday this week BBC Radio 4 broadcast a special *Thought For The Day* on the brink of war from the Archbishop of Canterbury. I confess that I was so disappointed that his go-to text was Shakespeare and not the Bible.

Only when we go up to God and bring his word down will we have anything worth saying, and only when we reflect Jesus will we be worth listening to.

Is that our Lenten challenge – to spend such time with God that we shine so much that those around us want us to put a bag over our head?