**Narrative sermon for today by Graham Phillips**

**The Transfiguration**

"Nathanael, Nathanael, wake up, wake up. I've got something so important to tell you."

"John, is that you? Where have you been? I was beginning to get worried."

"We have been with the master."

"Well I gathered you were with him - eh, what's up friend? You can't keep still. What's happened? Has he fed another 4,000? Or did he walk on water again? That really freaked me out."

"No, no something just as extraordinary.”

"Well spit it out man, you're like a kid after a first kiss."

"Okay, okay, just ... Just let me gather my thoughts. Yesterday evening he gathered me, Petros and James. He told us to grab some food and water and then we set off. None of us knew where he was taking us. We just followed on as usual. Trusting that if he said move, we would move.

Well I tell you, it was some walk. We headed up this mountain, walked and walked. Fortunately it was a clear night and the moon was up, so we could see well. After a bit we stopped for a drink then carried on. The master did not say much but there was an air of purpose, a deliberateness, an expectancy about him and we began to be expectant too. Our senses heightened. Listening and looking, being attentive to everything.

It must have been around the middle of the night when we finally got to what seemed to be the summit. Petros, James and myself all sat down for a rest, but Jesus stood very still, looking up, praying. Suddenly there was this amazing change in his clothes, they shone out with a bright light, as if they were covered with thousands and thousands of fireflies.”

“You are kidding me” said Nathanael.

“No I am not, his clothes were extraordinarily bright, but the best is to come. For two other people appeared next to him. It turns out they were Elijah and Moses. Elijah and Moses come back from the dead, standing before us, talking with Jesus. Talking with Jesus about what he would have to go through. Can you imagine that? It was incredible. It was as if they were affirming him in his task, affirming him in the path he has to take.”

“But how do you know it was Elijah and Moses?” asked Nathanael.

“We just knew. Something about them - we just knew who they were. It was awesome man, just awesome. But there was more. Petros almost spoilt it, put his foot right into, suggested that we make shelters for the three of them. I think he thought that the end times had come, that the world was going to stop and that we should make ourselves comfortable. It reminded me of the booths we make at The Feast of Tabernacles. But it was not the right thing to say. To be honest none of us knew what to say - it was so mind blowing.

Then a really weird happened. Do you know when the Torah talks about the cloud of the presence of God coming down upon Mount Sinai? And Moses entering the cloud? Well that’s what happened to us. We were suddenly enveloped in this really thick cloud, but it wasn’t just moisture. There was something more. There was a heaviness about it. A presence in it, a vibrancy in it. The cloud itself was alive. It set your whole body tingling. It seemed to come into you, fill you as if you were breathing it all in. It was frightening yet it was also beautiful. There was power in it, awesome creative power, and yet peace. It was so calming. You had this certainty that all was going to be alright, that all would make sense, and that love was the most important thing in all the world. That love conquers all, changes everything, that nothing can stand in its way. Then this voice spoke, a rich sonorous, deep melodic voice, almost singing, lots of notes all at the same time.”

John paused, lost in the memory.

“What did the voice say?” pressed Nathanael.

“”This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” It was a command, Nathanael. Listen to him. There was such authority in that voice, you have to obey it. Jesus has important things to say and what he says is from God. His path is laid out for him and we are to support him on that path, walk with him on that path.”

“You mean the path to the cross?” asked Nathanael.

“Yes. The cross...Listen to him. For he is God’s Son.”

**A Sonnet for the Feast of the Transfiguration**

**by Malcolm Guite**

Transfiguration

For that one moment, ‘in and out of time’,

On that one mountain where all moments meet,

The daily veil that covers the sublime

In darkling glass fell dazzled at his feet.

There were no angels full of eyes and wings

Just living glory full of truth and grace.

The Love that dances at the heart of things

Shone out upon us from a human face

And to that light the light in us leaped up,

We felt it quicken somewhere deep within,

A sudden blaze of long-extinguished hope

Trembled and tingled through the tender skin.

Nor can this this blackened sky, this darkened scar

Eclipse that glimpse of how things really are.

(This next poem to be read at the end of the service as a preparation for Lent)

**Eternity's bright vision by Jeannette Kun**

My frail and fragile frame cannot contain you yet, O Lord.

Seeing but your shadow takes away my breath

and a glimpse of your splendour overwhelms me,

your burning beauty engulfing me like fire.

More of you I cannot bear to see,

though my heart longs for that day

when I shall gaze upon you face to face.

And so I ask you:

Prepare me for eternity's bright vision.

Purify my eyes

that I might behold your unveiled glory.

Cleanse me of my sin

that I might stand upon your holy mountain.

And fortify my soul

that I might endure the full force of your radiance

and wholly satisfy the claims you make on me.