**What can I do?**

*Sophie Whitmarsh, Curate at St Davids Cathedral, considers our utterly changed world during the Covid-19 pandemic in the light of the Transfiguration*

In Matthew 17:1-8 Jesus and his disciples, Peter, James and John, make their way high into a mountain to be by themselves. During their time there, Jesus is physically changed in front of them, Moses and Elijah appear to them, and they hear the voice of God calling, revealing who Jesus was and instructing the disciples to listen to him. Then Jesus says to his disciples ‘Rise, and have no fear’. When they did that, they saw no one but Jesus.

Life today is consumed by the outbreak of coronavirus. St Davids has become empty, police check points have arrived, and life is changing at a pace that no one could have imagined. I have found myself questioning who I am and what my role is as a deacon.

The disciples and Jesus go to a place where they are isolated from the rest of the world. No one will have any idea what happens on the mountain, except those with whom the experience is shared. What was the purpose? To further reveal to the disciples Jesus’ divinity, yes. However, if we look to other places in the Bible where similar transformations occur, I am thinking particularly of Revelation 1: 13-16, are we seeing a glimpse of the heavenly realms yet to come? Peter, James and John did not have to do anything for Jesus to be transfigured in front of them, only to be in that place, on that mountain top isolated from the rest of the world.

Moses and Elijah appeared alongside Jesus and, in his enthusiasm and willingness, Peter decides that he should, perhaps, provide tents for the three men. I can understand Peter’s eagerness to be involved, to provide, he doesn’t know what else to do perhaps, or maybe faced with three such important people he feels he should provide shelter for them. I, too, regularly find myself saying to Jesus, shall I do this, or maybe I can do that. Peter does not receive a response from Jesus, no answer to his offer; despite his best efforts to provide, Peter’s offer is cut short as they are overshadowed by a cloud and the voice of God directly addressing the disciples and telling them to listen to Jesus.

Out of a misplaced sense of what he should do, Peter urgently wanted to set up three tents. This seemingly selfless act was dismissed, ignored because there was something more important to focus on, that something more important was God telling them to listen to Jesus. I find myself wanting to do something, I feel guilty that I am not finding some magical way of reaching parishioners, that I am not streaming live services from my front room, or constantly posting another anecdote or piece of helpful scripture. There is nothing wrong with any of these things, and, in fact, it is wonderful to see so many friends and colleagues doing just that, but it’s not me, or the thing that I need to be doing at this time.

The disciples’ world, like ours, had just changed. They were no longer uncertain about who Jesus was, no longer wondering if he was a prophet like Moses or Elijah, they were sure: Jesus is the Messiah, the one who will bring about the fulfilment of scripture and the disciples’ world now looked radically different. But in an instant, it all returned to normality. Different, but the same. Jesus was no longer transfigured. He says to them ‘Rise and have no fear’, and in this instant, whilst Jesus remains the same, the disciples were transformed.

During this time of the pandemic, removed from the world and from each other, when we are sitting on this mountain top, I believe that it is important to watch, wait and listen for Jesus; we need to slow down our eagerness and listen. The time will come, when we will need to take action, come down off the mountain and re-join the world. In Matthew 17: 7 we read, ‘But Jesus came and touched them, saying “Rise, and have no fear.” And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.’ A reminder, perhaps, that we should allow ourselves to be touched by Jesus, to allow him in those times when we are fearful to reassure us that we should rise and have no fear. Instead of looking forward to coming out of lockdown and isolation, perhaps instead we should be enjoying our time on the mountain with Jesus.