

Sunday Sermon

Revd Canon Charles Jenkin – 14th February 2021 – Candlemas

2 Kings 2.1-12; Psalm 50.1-6; 2 Corinthians 4.3-6; Mark 9.2-9

People can fall in love for lots of reasons, some of them better than others. One of the most profound reasons is that, when you are with your beloved, you just feel that, somehow, you are more yourself or simply a better person. Of course it is easy to become rather confused about these things, but the principle holds good. Love works better when you rather like the person you yourself become, when you are in your beloved's presence.

Today is Valentine's day, but I am not just referring to romantic love. Also, the selfless aspects of real love are vitally important too. Love which is self-obsessed, which is just about what we desperately want for ourselves, is perhaps not really love at all, but something else less healthy, merely obsession. Mature love helps people to be less self-obsessed.

The Christian faith brings these two aspects of love together. The love of God helps us to become the people we are meant to be, and also helps us to be less unhealthily self-obsessed. But for this to work, Christians must grow in love too, with God, and with Jesus. A loving relationship with God is a two way thing too, like any other real love. But how does this happen?

There are of course some basic things, like investing in your relationship with God in all sorts of ways, spending time together (like in prayer and worship); developing mutual interests (like in the life of the Church and concern for those who suffer) which we otherwise call mission; and generally looking out for one another. A key point is sometimes reached when Jesus is somehow transformed for you, and you see him in a new light.

That happened for the disciples in our gospel reading for today; it's part of the meaning of the event known as the transfiguration of Jesus. The disciples saw Jesus, literally in a new light, and it profoundly affected them. The important thing to note is that this was not their doing in any way. They had not made some kind of pilgrimage; Jesus himself had taken them up the mountain. The whole thing was a work of the Holy Spirit. They were perhaps not ready for it, but time was getting short in Jesus' ministry.

The point is there are times, there need to be times, when Jesus is transfigured for us too. When he becomes not just a great teacher, not just an inspiration, not even just an image of God for us, and certainly not just another authority figure who burdens us with more responsibilities and even criticisms; but a loving and faithful friend who helps us to be more the people we are really meant to be; who make us feel more alive, whose presence in our lives transforms us. It is a transformation that is about growing: from respect and admiration, to loving and faithful mutual friendship.

CJ. 14.02.21