

'Nothing can separate us from the Love of God in Christ Jesus' - The Feast of the Transfiguration.

Today, we celebrate the Transfiguration of the Lord.

When it comes to our relationship with God, one of the basic questions that we always ask is; Does God love me? Will He continue with me? Even if I struggle?

The answer is yes, yes, yes!

There may be times when you don't much believe in God, but He believes in you! Allowing ourselves to hear the 'yes', and truly believing it, transforms our lives.

In Romans, chapter 8, St Paul tells us that 'nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus'. In other words, once we recognise who Jesus is and the love he reveals from God, nothing more can harm us.

God has come in search of you and me. He wants to adopt us as his daughters and sons and bring us into his family, the Church, so that he can share his blessed life with us. He wants to lead us into a promised land flowing with milk and honey. An eternal dwelling place, where the earthly decay of our bodies will not affect the eternal goodness of our souls.

He always has your best interests in mind; your eternal best interests, not just what makes you feel good at this minute. Nothing can separate us from the eternal love of God in Jesus Christ.

We see this way back in the Old Testament. God saw the plight of His people in Egypt, where they were being abused and harshly treated as slaves. He sends Moses to deliver them and after this great deliverance on Eagle's wings, they go into the desert for 40 years.

During that period of time, God took care of them. He fed them, clothed them and protected them. He still does the same for us today.

And so, when we think back about the Exodus, we think about our freedom; our freedom from bondage, and God's endless provision for us.

Now, one of the keys to understanding scripture, particularly the relationship between Old and New Testaments, is that we need to focus on the idea that Jesus fulfils everything in the Old Testament. He fulfils everything by reliving everything in his own life.

Today's Gospel reading has us thinking about the Transfiguration of Jesus. When you first hear the story, you might not automatically think about the Exodus of God's People in the Old Testament. But as we move through a few features of today's reading, we can begin to see that this is a fulfilment of the Exodus, but it is a new Exodus. It is not an Exodus from physical slavery at the hands of the Egyptians or any other earthly power. It is an Exodus from sin; the Transfiguration is about God delivering us from the real oppressor, the real enemy, which is evil and Satan.

Jesus takes a select few of his most trusted disciples and they go up the mountain. After they reach the top, he is transfigured before them and his face shines like the sun and his garments become as white as light.

Already this should remind us of the Exodus. Whilst God's people are in the wilderness, Moses goes up the mountain to get counsel and guidance from God. His holiness and close proximity to God leave him with a face that shines and his whole person breathes a radiance of heavenly splendour.

After Jesus is transfigured, Moses and Elijah appear on the mountain with Him and the three of them begin talking. Now,

Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets. And Peter, recognising this, says to Jesus; ‘it is good for us to be here, let us build three booths’.

Peter is still speaking when the cloud overshadows them and a voice from God can be heard; ‘this is my beloved Son; in Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!’

When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were filled with awe. But Jesus comes and touches them and tells them to ‘rise, have no fear’. When they lift their eyes, they see no-one but Jesus – he is alone.

Now, what has just happened on top of this mountain? And why does Peter suggest building three booths?

Booths were something that the people of Israel utilised during the Old Testament Exodus in the desert. This was their God-given shelter during this Exodus and this journey.

Peter recognises that, what is happening with Jesus is a fulfilment of the Old Testament Exodus, but this is not a freedom from Egypt or the Romans, but a freedom from sin and all that traps us and twists us into the kind people God did not design us to be.

The Gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke all describe the transfiguration in some detail. When Luke tells this story in his Gospel, he actually tells us a little of what Jesus, Moses and Elijah say to one another: they spoke about the Exodus that would begin when Jesus enters Jerusalem.

You see, the Holy Week of Jesus: The entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, The Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the burial and resurrection of Jesus, are the fulfilment of the Old Testament Exodus. In the Eucharist we enter into of all of these divine events. So the Eucharist is a meal of our freedom. The Eucharist proves to us, that even when we don’t much believe in God, He believes in us!

And so, we can experience this love that we can never be separated from in the Eucharist, this New Testament Exodus – a journey through which God does not give up on us, but leads us through the wilderness of our lives to a place of freedom; a freedom from the sin and negativity that would otherwise destroy us.

So, I encourage you this week to dive into this text and pray; ‘Jesus set me free. Set me free from the sins that have so easily entangled me; the addictions and distractions that darken my heart; set me free Lord as we celebrate this Transfiguration.

Amen.