

Renewed in Hope:

Week 2: Hope is Vision

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone.

As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, "Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." [Matthew 17.1-9]

Video Summary

The readings on this second Sunday of Lent draw us to see through the eyes and walk in the footsteps of people of hope. Abram, the father of faith, who senses the draw to go a land he does not know and sets out to discover it. And alongside Jesus within the dazzling transfiguration on the mountain: Moses and Elijah. Moses who will carry God's intent to set the people free from slavery in Egypt, and Elijah the prophet working against seemingly impossible odds to draw the people back to God. And Jesus himself, facing full square the opposition that will lead to his death, setting out resolutely on the road to Jerusalem.

Hope sees possibilities. Where others see dead ends, those moved by hope see open doors – or at least doors that, with some persistence might one day open. How we see will affect how we act. Hope is vision – sometimes with the eye, sometimes with the imagination, sometimes in the active trust of what has begun to beat inside you – or even who has begun to beat inside you. You in God and God in you: no matter what stands in your path, together, you find a way to begin.

Some questions for groups

- Who personifies hope for you? Whose life inspires you? Why is this?
- Which activities fuel a sense of hope in you: sowing seeds, baking, working with people – or something else?
- Have you experienced a 'mountain top' moment – one where you felt God near and that with this presence, all things were possible? What happened for you once this clarity left you?
- What else spoke to you in the video?

Some personal exercises for prayer and reflection

Parables of Hope

Whilst not all these passages listed below are parables in the strict sense of the word, they have something of that quality: stories or visual pictures that allow our imagination to flow as we open ourselves to God. It is rare that a parable is precisely interpreted in the Gospels. Sometimes the meaning of the parable is suggested; often meaning is left undefined for us to wrestle with. Rather than define truth in a statement, parables invite us to explore what is true with open mind and heart.

The seed that becomes a tree where the birds of the air take shelter [Mark 4. 30-32]

Some seed fell on good soil... [Mark 4. 1-9]

The seed that grows by night and by day [Mark 4. 26-29]

The cut down tree that bears a fresh shoot [Isaiah 11. 1]

The rain and snow water the earth [Isaiah 55. 10-11]

The wasteland rejoices and blooms [Isaiah 35]

The grain of wheat that in dying yields a rich harvest [John 12. 24-25]

Spring beckons us to new life [Song of Solomon 2. 8-14]

Those who sow with tears will reap with joy [Psalm 126. 4-6]

Planting a seed

Imagine God has given you two seeds of hope.

One is to plant in a barren area of your own life.

One is to plant in a barren area of the life of your church, local community or wider society.

In prayer hold each seed in your hand, asking God to help you identify where this seed is most needed, how you will plant it, and what care it will need.

Visionary people

What person of vision and active hope most inspires you? It might be someone you know personally or a figure from history. Ask God to show you what it is about this person – their character, their story – that speaks to you. How might God desire to draw out in you that spirit you admire in another?

“This is my beloved Son,
with whom I am well pleased;
listen to him.”