

St Peter's, Ealing  
Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2016  
Sunday next before Lent YrC:  
Exod 34.29-35; 2 Cor 3.12-4.2; Luke 9.28-36

This is my Son, the Chosen; listen to him!

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This week the BBC unveiled the next team member to join Chris Evans as a co-presenter of the television programme Top Gear. Matt le Blanc of 'Friends' fame. Revealed with fanfare and photo ops, ending speculations amongst those who are interested in the make-up of the team set with the task of standing against the expelled, well-worn veterans of Jeremy Clarkson et al. Met with mixed responses – some hailed this as a triumph others thought such an addition a gimmick – time will tell. Sharing the secret has burst the bubble of unknowing anticipation and set the scene for a programme launch with the rallying cry 'Let battle commence!'

Secrets are funny things; they can hold a myriad of responses and emotions. Sometimes we love secrets, like birthday surprises or games of secrecy and detection. There are occasions though when we don't like not knowing or may be uncomfortable realising someone knows something you don't, especially if it affects you. Secrets can be held to protect or they can be used as weapons.

Moses hadn't intended to create a secret. He was fully open as he came down from the mountain with the commands of God in his hand. It was the people who through fear wanted him to keep something back, to cover something of the truth from them. The glory of God revealed in Moses' face was too much for the people to bear. What was it that frighten them? A strange visage could be overcome with knowledge. Knowing it was Moses and this is what could be yours if you stand in the presence of God was too much for them. It may be that the commands of God were enough at the time for them to take in. Whichever it was they asked Moses to veil this glory from them, so they would not have to live in its sight or in its light.

Paul sees this as an example of the people of God not being able or prepared to live in the full knowledge of God's saving grace. By veiling part of the revelation, veiling the glory of God transported into their presence in the person of Moses, the people of the Old Covenant restricted the revelation of God from before them. This veil, for Paul is maintained by those who live by the old covenant. Paul tells us through the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that same veil is lifted, revealing the glory of God to all creation and opening the way to salvation.

Is this the parallel drawn at the transfiguration? Sort of I suppose, at least in that, in God's presence the true nature of Jesus is revealed and described as glowing, dazzling white. If the reader is under any misunderstanding, or is unsure of the meaning of this story, it concludes

with the voice of God telling us who Jesus is and by association what he is all about. This is the unveiling of a secret in a way. Or at least the unveiling of the rest of the truth. Making clear the place of God in creation and God's enduring relationship with us.

Ok, so the truth is made complete, it is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. As we will hear over the coming weeks as we journey through Lent, this is the story of our salvation, ultimately made real through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is after all what we celebrate as we gather as God's children to receive the body and blood of Jesus, the grace of God through the sacrament of the bread and wine of the Eucharist. This is why we gather here this morning and why we will stand around the altar together, as the body of Christ in this place, proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

In this story today though is another challenge. The challenge is set by God in our passage from Luke; 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!'. The danger is we make this truth a secret. We veil it from our neighbours and friends, on occasion we may even veil it from ourselves, happy to come to church but we don't always listen, or rather we listen to the bits we want to listen to and ignore those that challenge us in our faith. The people of Israel were challenged when they saw Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with the commands of God. They couldn't face it so asked Moses to veil God's glory revealed in him. The disciples were challenged when they misunderstood what was happen before them on Mount Tabor and gave equal standing to Moses and Elijah with Jesus. Paul reminds us this veil has been removed and we are now open to the full understanding of God. For us who follow Jesus Christ, the truth is there, all we have to do is open our hearts and minds to accept it and live by it, wherever it takes us.

Part of the taking us somewhere is the challenge to share the good news of Jesus with those who have not yet heard it. To stop this message becoming a secret. And there are a growing number even in our own community to have not heard the story of salvation, who do not know that God loves them and that that love, far from being some mythical story, or a secret, is very real and healing today. That God's love for all creation is laid bare in the cross and empty tomb. Our task, as follows of Jesus, as disciples is to share that truth with others. In not sharing we can draw a veil over the good news. As Paul says, "by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.' By proclaiming the love of God that we have in our hearts, in both word and action, we play our part in revealing the truth given us in Jesus Christ, that 'this is God's Son, the Chosen; listen to him' and we all will be saved.