

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## What Happens Next?

Luke 9, 28-36

*About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus.*

*They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.*

*As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.*

*A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.*

In that wonderful TV programme, 'A Question of Sport' there used to be a round called 'What happened next?'

The contestants watched a short film clip of a sporting moment and then, when the clip stopped, they had to fill in the missing action. Did the goalkeeper throw the ball into her own net? Did the rugby player have his shorts torn off? Did one of the team fail to jump into the bobsleigh and go skidding ridiculously down the track?

It's a game we perhaps need to play with this passage from St Luke's Gospel. It tells the story of the Transfiguration, which is one of the most mysterious and beautiful in the whole of the Gospels.

Atop a mountain, Jesus reveals his divine glory as his body and clothes shine dazzlingly white, as Moses and Elijah honour him and as the Father hails him as His own Son. It's a scene of indescribable glory and splendour. But it makes no sense at all unless we know what happens next.

And what does happen next?

Jesus goes down the mountain and starts a whole new phase of his life as he leaves Galilee behind him and makes his way to Jerusalem. That city will be the place of what Luke describes as his 'fulfilment'. In other words, his death. So, the Transfiguration is not an end in itself. Here Jesus is renewed in the Father's love so that he can start the journey to the cross.

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This story is often a focus for attention for Christians at the start of Lent. On the mountain, as Jesus addresses his incarnate son, he addresses us too as he reminds us of his infinite love. He reassures us in this way because of what will happen next, which is our own Lenten journey to the cross.

In Lent we travel with Jesus to Jerusalem where we will witness the unspeakable events of His death and the wonder of His resurrection. And in this holy season we prepare ourselves to claim that death and resurrection as our own as we renew the promises of our baptism.

That's why it is so important that Christians set this time apart as a period of the year when we can focus all the more on Jesus Christ and what He has done to free us from sin and death. A Lenten Rule can really help to set these precious few weeks apart as hallowed time.

Your Lenten Rule will include more time with the scriptures. This year during Lent, as a Diocese we are going to focus on St John's Gospel and our Lent book will offer daily reflections. Ask your priest if you would like a copy. Your Lenten Rule will include extra space for prayer.

One way of doing that is to join in with The Church of England's pattern of Morning and Evening Prayer which [can be found here](#) and there is also a Church of England Daily Prayer app that can be downloaded from your favourite app provider

Your Lenten Rule might include fasting, and we are calling the whole Diocese to a Day of Fasting and Prayer on March 8th as we pray for more vocations. It might include repentance so that you can deal with sin in your own life, either in the privacy of personal prayer or with a priest in the holy intimacy of the confessional. It might include generosity as you make personal sacrifices to support those who are poor.

There will be times when your Lenten Rule will challenge you, just as the journey to Jerusalem so deeply challenged Jesus. But ultimately it will bring a profound joy for it will enable you to experience anew the life-changing power of the cross which is the ultimate and final guarantee of God's perfect love for you and me.

So, what happens next? Let's get down from the mountain. And let's set off on our Lenten journey to the cross. For there we will find the gift of life itself.

**Bishop Philip North, Bishop of Burnley**