

The Feast of the Transfiguration 2017

Imagine for a moment what it must be like to be a musical note. Let's say you are 'B Flat'.

You make your little sound. It's a good sound, a clear sound. You're doing a good job of being B Flat.

The thing is, though, frankly being B Flat is a bit boring. All you do is make the same sound, over and over and over again. What you want, what you dream of, is to be with all the others – C Sharp, D Major, A and E and G. You want some musical maestro, some new Beethoven or Mozart to put you together in astonishing combinations on Steinway pianos and Stradivarius violins, you want that score to be played by some brilliant performer. *You know* you were made for the orchestra; you know you can surprise the world with your beauty, with power, with emotion. You wait, poised, eager, expectant for that glorious transformation. You know it will come; you know it will be astonishing. B Flat dreams of glory.

Well, stop wondering about musical notes. Contemplate instead, *yourselves*. The Christian faith says that you are bit like B Flat. You too, are something full of promise, tip-toeing on the edge of glory. You too are something, *someone* destined to be swept up into a great symphony, suddenly translated from B Flat existence into a reality of power and splendour, beauty and majesty. Your whole life: your heart, soul, body, is charged with the glory of God: it will, some day, flash forth and you will be astounding. C.S Lewis put it brilliantly once:

'There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal ... it is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship...'

That's part of what we celebrate on this Feast of the Transfiguration. The Church has always thought that what happened on that mountain was that, just for a moment, the veil was set aside and those disciples saw who Jesus really was. They saw a human being, yes, but a human being on fire with God's glory; a human being every part of whom was suddenly shining bright with richness and power. Human life as we usually know it is broken, out of harmony, cast adrift from the deep mystery of goodness and beauty which we call God. We all know that break, that drift: we can feel it in ourselves, we can see it in everyone around us. But *this* man, this Jesus – in him there is no lostness at all. In him, we see what humans were meant to be, we see our humanity actually working, actually being what it was meant to be: the perfect expression of God, the image of God, what his glory and goodness and power looks like.

And the Gospel is this. This unbroken man, this man with filled with God, full of light and brightness and goodness, chose – for our sake – to go where he did not have to go. He chose to go to the very darkest of human places: to betrayal, violent death, and the grave. He did it precisely so that as wicked people stretched him out and broke him on that cross, the goodness and the light and the brightness would flow from his broken body into each of us. So that God would flow to those lost in darkness, even to those long dead in their graves. This is my body, broken for you. This is my blood, shed for you. The glory goes into the darkness, so that no-one ever must ever be lost there again. The glory flows from Him, from his broken body, into our broken lives. That is the whole meaning of what we do here with bread and wine.

So what must you do to receive this glory? What must you do to make this *your* destiny, to be swept up in the great transformation, the renewal of all things in grace, and beauty and power?

The first thing might surprise you. And it needs to be said more carefully and argued more closely than I have time to do this morning, but it still needs saying: the first thing you have to do is *nothing at all*. You don't have to be a good person. You don't have to be clever. You don't even – and here's the tricky bit for many Christians to hear – you don't even have to be a Christian. To believe certain things, feel certain things, pray certain things. St. Paul says somewhere, 'for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall *all* be made alive.' *All. All.* Not just the good people, not just the clever people, and not just the Christians – but the agnostics, the atheists, the Jews, the Muslims, the people who just don't think about these things but are playing football down the park instead. *All of us*, because of Jesus, are headed for glory. Now indeed some are so wicked, so filled with hate and violence that they lose their place – that warning is clearly there in the New Testament, in Jesus' own words. But that is a topic for another day, and it can only ever be the footnote to the much bigger message, the Gospel, the point this morning: ***the death and resurrection of Jesus has changed things for each and every human being that ever has lived and ever will.*** From the moment Jesus cried on the Cross, 'It is accomplished', it was indeed accomplished. Our destiny was changed, we were turned around and we are headed for glory.

So the first thing you must do is nothing. After that, what must you do?

Well, it cannot be a must but there are at least two things which will help a great, great deal in making your destiny come true.

Number one: simply ask. Say to Jesus: Lord, I hear what you have done for me, the destiny you have opened up for me. Let it become real for me. Let it become real in me. Say a prayer like that, once. Say it over and over and over again all the days of your life, and as Jesus says somewhere, knock and it shall be opened to you. Seek, and you shall find. Ask God for your destiny, and it will be given to you.

Number two, do what Jesus said. 'Take, eat: this is my body, given for you.' 'This is my blood shed for you: do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' He allowed Himself to be broken so that his life might flow into you, and He promises that that is just what happens as we gather here and we break bread, and share wine, in remembrance of Him. You take the bread into your bodies, you drink the wine – you do this in faith, and the glory flows into you. It will take root in you, and begin to change you in the very depths of your being. Come to this altar rail in a few moments, and kneel and receive, and know that it is not just bread and wine that you take: it is your destiny.

And for that, we give thanks to God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.