

*The second word: (He replied) “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

*Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking with him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighted down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you one for Moses, and one for Elijah” – not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.*

In the context of this humble reflection on the scripture passages that you have just heard, I wish to take a few moments to ponder revelations—I don’t mean here the book by that title in our Bible, but the ongoing action of God’s revealing himself to us. Revelations, remembering—and the desire to be remembered—are what have come to my mind and heart as I spent time with these scripture passages.

A history has unfolded reaching far, far back into the most ancient of days in which God constantly discloses who he is to his people—and who, as his loved ones, we are to be. That same history is also filled to overflowing with we his creations, turning from the revelations and choosing to define for ourselves the idea of God: in this venture we are no longer in the right state of heart to see and hear what we cannot possibly be in a position to predict or control. And so too it was for Peter and his companions. Witnessing the glory of Jesus in the company of the great lawgiver and great prophet on that mountain, Peter suggests—as a means of holding on to the moment and shaping it to his expectations of God, that they erect a dwelling, a temple if you like, for each of three great ones. It is at this moment that a cloud enshrouds them – perhaps, if I may be so bold to suggest it, the cloud of Faith: frightening, disorienting—and it is then within the cloud that a voice says, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”

And so, now—this Good Friday—we find ourselves in the cycle of our pilgrimage, at the foot of the cross. And as we are asked to do each week in our liturgy, we remember Jesus: who he truly is and what he has done for us. We are before the cross where to either side of Jesus are two common criminals, both crucified, as is Jesus. One criminal, derides Jesus, asking why He doesn’t save himself and them also, if He be the true Messiah: the King of the Jews: the great anticipated

one: the longed for political and religious leader in the very earthly realm of human power and politics.

Hearing this the second criminal rebukes him, saying that they are condemned justly for their deeds – but not so Jesus who is clearly innocent.

And then he makes this simple plea, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He, this common criminal has come to the place where we all should desire to be; all expectations and hopes have withered: he does not ask to be saved from his mortal death. He in fact sees God revealed for who he truly is— not just a great human prophet suffering an excruciating death upon a cross—but the very Christ that we see depicted in all his majesty in the centre window of our chancel here at St. Paul’s: God himself—on that cross, about to die an all too human death for our sins—and this having been revealed to him, he asks, humbly, only that Jesus remember him when he comes to into his kingdom.

In our individual and collective pilgrimage as we re-cover the path of the liturgical year, as we worship, as we pray, as we confess our faith, as we come to the table you have set for us, may we find that stillness—that place where we shed all our pre-conceptions of who, Lord, we think you are—and be opened to what you are revealing to us of yourself. May we come to that place, not unlike that of the common criminal who hung on a cross beside you —where only the absoluteness of death and pending oblivion looms before us—and ask not that we be saved from this worldly destiny, but that we be remembered in your kingdom. And on that portal of eternity, grant that we might be able to hear you saying, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Amen.