

Looking ahead to Lent Mark 9.2-11

[Andersen Jeremiah interview.mp4](#)

Some time ago our family went on a coach holiday to Austria, staying in a guest house at the foot of a mountain. It was grey and drizzly most of the time we were there, but one day we walked up part of the mountain and then took a lift to the top. We stepped out into snow and dazzling, almost blinding light, quite unprepared for the contrast between the bottom of the mountain and its upper slopes. For a moment we were transfixed. I imagine it must have been rather like that for Jesus' disciples when they reached the upper slopes of the mountain and are literally bowled over by his radiance – see the icon.

We have this reading here at the start of Lent. Immediately before this passage Jesus has been telling his disciples that he must suffer and die. They didn't want to hear this. Here on the mountain the presence of Moses and Elijah underlines how the Hebrew scriptures point towards his suffering and death, as does the voice heard at his baptism and now heard again, that he is God's beloved Son. On both these authorities they must listen to his unpopular message.

I used to think that we had this vision of Jesus' glory here at the start of Lent, a time that can feel rather grey and drizzly, to encourage us with a glimpse of resurrection – that mountain top, that happy ending as it were. And there is something in that. However, in a context where we are perhaps ever more acutely aware of human suffering, whether in wars, or the impact of climate change, or racism, or sickness or our own and others' internal struggles, Jesus' transfiguration speaks to the fact of the divine presence in each human being, even in acute distress. The transfiguration anticipates the deep truth that Jesus was most fully human on the cross, and yet also most fully divine. Lent offers an invitation to enter more deeply into that mystery.

Christian thinkers who come from a part of the world where there is more suffering or who have experienced it themselves are better at expressing this. We're now going to watch a clip of Anderson Jeremiah, a theologian from South India who is about to become bishop of Edmonton in London, share with Paula Gooder, a British theologian, his perspective on Lent. This is part way through a conversation where he speaks of the importance to the Dalit people and others who are marginalised of a Jesus whose divinity is most revealed in his suffering.

Christine Bainbridge 11 February 2024