

WEEKLY SERMON

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Mountains and Valleys

Matt 16:13-19

This weekend we will see the ordination of a number of men and women as Priest and Deacon at the Cathedral. This service is quite possibly the biggest occasion in the Diocese in each year and is a joyful celebration with hundreds of people celebrating the work of God in the lives of the individuals he has called.

It is a service that prepares people for ministry. We pray for each person to be filled with the Holy Spirit and equipped to serve God by meeting the needs of those they encounter and by sharing the Gospel.

The Christian life of discipleship has a mixture of mountain-top experiences and down-in-the-valley experiences. The mountain-top experiences are those where we find ourselves in the delight of God's presence through His Holy Spirit - where we feel alive in Him. The valleys on the other hand are all too often places where there is difficulty and we can often feel far from God, perhaps turning from him or perhaps even hurting others in what we do and say.

This passage from Matthew's Gospel retells the moment when Peter declares that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. There is an interesting list in verse 14 focussing on who other people say that Jesus is; these thoughts most probably passed through the minds of the Disciples as they journeyed with Jesus.

But Peter declares aloud his belief in Jesus. What a moment! He must have had a million thoughts going through his head when asked the question 'who do you say I am?' but he stepped out in faith and was blessed by Jesus.

Whilst this was a 'mountain-top' moment, it is not long afterwards that he then denied Jesus and must have felt at his lowest. But God still used Peter and fulfilled the promise Jesus made. This and other moments of encounter prepared Peter for the challenges of living out faith in a secular society.

As we think about those being ordained and our own life of discipleship, we would do well to remember that we need to spend time with God 'on the mountain'. To declare Jesus' salvation and to ask for the Spirit to fill our lives. In doing so, we can be prepared for the valleys of life and be equipped to serve God all the more.

Stephen Whittaker, Diocesan Secretary

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