

Lent IV – 30.3.14

We undergo something of an interrogation in today's Gospel.

Implicitly we are asked a number of questions.

"He himself knew what he would do" – and what he would do, we have before us every year in these Lenten weeks, leading us to Holy Week, to Our Lord's passion and Crucifixion.

From the Gospel accounts – all four of them – it is obvious that Jesus knew what was to befall him.

He knew what lay ahead because he is intent on a growing awareness through prayer of what is required of him. A point the Evangelists keep before us.

We note again his reply to Satan, who would divert him from his calling. His answer you will remember – "It is written" – It is in the Scriptures. It is God's will, that man should be obedient to his Creator.

And this is the nub of the matter. This is the centre of the meaning of humanity.

We might suppose that given the "evil" stemming from humanity, God could have made us otherwise.

But no. He couldn't. Not if he is to be the loving Creator we see in the whole of creation – in our redemption – and in, what is no less, than our Transfiguration – revealed to us.

"He knew what he would do". And if we listen He will have us know what we will do – we know the voice of the Shepherd.

Our Lenten calling is to recognise as though for the first time his concern – his love – for his sheep.

And the day following, to recognise afresh – as though for the first time, his love for his sheep.

But with this recognition, we yet ask, "What shall we do?" If we are unclear in this – there is a subsidiary question that takes us further.

How closely do we read John's Gospel?

If we read on one more sentence, following today's Gospel, we notice that Jesus goes up into the mountain for the second time – and this without his coming down from the first ascent!

Is this a mistake in John's narrative? Or is it deliberate? Is it deliberate, that we might be aware of John pointing us to Moses, who on two occasions went up into the mountain to speak with God.

And who on the threshold of the promised land, said that God would raise up a prophet like unto himself.

On Israel's exodus from Egypt we have some stirring words from Moses. Words we hear easily on the lips of Jesus – speaking of another exodus, "Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which he will show to you today: the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever".

We too await full entry into the promised land. And are left again with the question, "Do we await it eagerly?"

And one other question awaits us. Note the many people of this, John's Gospel – the many who would be with Jesus – This many people.

Jesus went over the sea of Galilee – and a great multitude followed him.

When Jesus then lift up his eyes he saw a great company come unto him.

And from Philip we have his point that a great deal of bread would not suffice for so many people.

Andrew too. He speaks of a few loaves and a couple of fish. But what are they among so many?

John the Evangelist is more specific – "the men sat down, in number about five thousand". A lot of people.

And in Lewes too. There is a lot of people. Particularly as the weather improves – we are aware of many people – of people shopping – enjoying the sunshine – the ancient parts of the town – enjoying each other's company – or just happy to be out.

These many people bring us to our last question. Having part ourselves with these many people – our awareness is that each of them is made in the image of God.

Must this awareness remain only in our sub-conscious?

We speak of transfiguration.

That is our experience when we see God in the other person.

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