

God's voice is a powerful actor in the history of divine revelation. The word that sets Creation right; the word that sets Abram on a new path; the words on stone that constitute a nation; the word that through the prophets call God's people to account and give God's people hope. The Psalmist evokes the power and majesty of the Divine Word and reminds us that God is enough.

A curious Psalm this is - in which God is heard to question the purpose and manner of human devotion. Under cover of what seems like a threat, the Divine voice reminds humanity that God needs none of what we are inclined to offer. God cannot be bribed with food and drink; the rituals that we develop to 'satisfy God' are, in the end, pointless.

There is something God asks of us. Thanksgiving. The root of the Hebrew word suggests 'extending a hand' - the same root can suggest throwing stones or firing arrows) - either way, the sense is more personal and more immediate. Offering something of yourself rather than an impersonal gifts of food or drink. These things are human essentials, but also 'ordinary, in the sense that they are regularly required. A genuine, heartfelt offering of self is unique and (sadly) not so common. God here asks for the uncommon; the unique gift of our attention.

Well, its an interesting idea; but the notion of thanksgiving as sacrifice - of ritual habits rooted in tradition - this is difficult to shake off. Convinced that God requires a really big show, human patterns of worship still tend to be grand. Our religious buildings are, more often than not, palaces to the Holy - beautifully decorated and lovingly maintained. They are held apart for special circumstances and jealously guarded so that no hint of the ordinary might somehow degrade them and, by extension, spoil our gift of worship.

So when Peter, James and John are dramatically overcome by the Glory of God in the person of Jesus (Mark 9:2-9) they (Peter especially) want to capture the Holy and make it proper. "It is good that we are here..let's build shelters (booths)..."

Let's capture the moment - let's preserve the holy atmosphere and follow the pattern of perfection that WE have come to believe defines true worship.

This (Mark's gospel says) is a fearful reaction. So afraid of missing the chance to show devotion (in the only way they know) they miss the moment.

On 'a high place', with no preamble - no call to worship - no introductory prayers - God's glory is revealed. Given a chance to give thanks - to be grateful for what they have witnessed, they try to frame the un-frameable. God doesn't ask to be sheltered or fed; God doesn't NEED to be sheltered or fed. God asks to be known; acknowledged; thanked; praised.

That is a lesson we would do well to remember.

In times of great anxiety - in the 'day of trouble' - God's goodness is as near as our willingness to be grateful. God's help is as close as our ability to ask for it. Jesus stands as the perfect symbol of that idea. Bathed in glory - steeped in (in this case, surrounded by) tradition - Jesus, shining and splendid, is **present**, as he always has been. We don't need to react in fear or with particular symbolic activities; we are asked to be present and aware of the nearness of God. Then God's (sufficiency) covers us; God's glory overwhelms us; God's mercy and grace would heal us...so long as we don't get in the way.

We want what we want. We want our lives back - we want the familiar, satisfying, sacred patterns of our lives returned to us. And then, in these texts we are reminded of God's constancy - reminded that what God 'needs' is for us to recognize that we need God - who has all we need; who has created all we'll ever want or need.

Jesus stands, shining with glory one moment - in the eternal presence - and the next minute, 'just Jesus', as though nothing had changed. And nothing has changed. Jesus has always carried God's glory within himself. God's majesty is always amongst us. When the chaos is settled, and we are allowed a moment to focus, we might see it..even if only briefly.

Don't be afraid. Don't adopt an attitude of panic. Don't try too hard to capture the moment and reproduce it for posterity.

Yes, our worship aims to make those moments of Holy recognition possible, but sometimes, they just happen. Let them. God is not bound by our expectations. Jesus is not limited by our ideas of perfect worship. Too often, our efforts to recreate this mountaintop revelation fail miserably. THAT's okay, so long as those efforts are motivated by a desire to acknowledge that God is enough.

Let God's people be ready - be gracious - be open to asking God's help and honouring God's presence. God will do the rest.