

Sunday 30th December
Feast of St John

A meditation

Before I met him I used to read passages from scripture like that one in the book of Exodus and just wondered what it must have been like. You know, the place where it says that *The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.*

I used to think about Moses – what kind of relationship did he have with God? It must have been amazing. To be able to talk to God as if you were talking to a friend.

And I thought about Abraham too – you know he is described as the friend of God. And I thought about some of the conversations he'd had with God. No holds barred. As honest as you like.

It made me think about my friendships. With people like Peter and Andrew and of course my brother, James. Great friends. I could tell them anything and just knew they would understand. Comes from working so closely with them over the years on the fishing boats, I suppose. We had learned to trust each other for everything – for our very lives sometimes as it could get pretty hairy fishing on the lake and you needed to know that those around you were on your side and would do anything for you.

Sometimes it was like we all knew what the others were thinking; we just agreed what to do without a word being spoken. That's what close friendship is about I guess.

It was strange that day when Jesus came to the lake. We'd heard about him, of course. And the four of us had had conversations about him. Talking about whether he was the Messiah and all that. But that was all.

But when he came to the lake and started talking to us. And then when he said "follow me" we all had the same reaction, almost at the same time. We all decided to follow him. There was something about him. Magnetic. Loving. Accepting. And none of us were surprised that the rest of us had the same

response to him. It just seemed the right thing to do. We knew it would happen I suppose.

And then as the weeks and months passed, he slowly became as close to each of us as the best of friends. We found that we could tell him anything and ask him anything – sometimes some really stupid things. But it was fine. His love for us all was so clear, so plain. And nothing we could say or do could shake that.

I think the others would agree that I became a bit closer to him than they did. Not in a competitive kind of way. It was just the way it was. Some people gel at a deeper level than others. And he and I were like that. Almost as if we could read each others minds.

Well that's not strictly true. Yes, he could read my mind. It was as if he knew what I was thinking or about to say before I did. Uncanny. But I can't say I knew what he was thinking. Occasionally I had some kind of special insight, but very rarely. His thoughts were way too deep for that!

But that didn't stop us being really close. I could say anything to him; and he shared a lot with me that he didn't tell the others. They used to joke – in a friendly kind of way, mind – that I was the one that Jesus loved. I suppose looking back on it, there was truth in that.

And his words, his teaching. Absolutely mind blowing. Stories just flowed from his lips. Stories that made you think; that made you examine what you would do; stories that turned the teaching of the religious leaders upside down.

And things about who he was. He used enigmatic language like calling himself the Son of Man, but it was clear there was something very very different about him. We all came to understand that he wasn't simply a godly teacher; it was as if he were actually God speaking to us. His words were so powerful. Just like they had brought the very world into being!

It was as if the very word of God had become a human being and was standing in front of us; talking to us and listening to us. It was as if the word of authority and power that had been there at the beginning of time was now walking along the shores of the lake, stopping and teaching and healing and transforming lives. Performing signs that clearly showed who he was. That he

was God himself become human flesh and making his home alongside us. Sharing our lives; being our friend.

And then I realised what Moses must have felt like. In God's presence. I was able to be myself in a way that I never had before. Able to be the real me. No pretences, no masks, no hiding away. But me – as I really am – before God himself.

It all sounds a bit crazy and far-fetched, but as time went on we all began to think the same. The friendship we had with Jesus was as if God were walking alongside us, listening to us encouraging us, comforting us and giving us hope and inspiration to do things we had never thought possible. It was as if we were speaking to God face to face – just like Moses.

And then the time when we celebrated the Passover with him. And one minute he was washing our feet like a servant – and telling us to do the same, and the next he was telling us to eat bread and wine in remembrance of him – and proclaiming forgiveness of sins.

And later that night things took a turn none of us imagined – though afterwards as we thought back we realised this was what he had been trying to tell us all along, but we had just not understood. He was arrested – I still don't know why – after all he was doing good, doing God's work, healing people and giving people purpose.

And then there was that sham trial and all too quickly the crucifixion. The others had gone; Peter said that earlier that night he had denied even knowing Jesus and couldn't bear to face him as he died. But I stayed. You can't desert your friend in their hour of need.

And then as he struggled for breath; as he hung in absolute agony, as he looked as if the sin of the whole world was on his shoulders – he looked into my eyes. And when he did that it was like the very light of God was piecing the darkness all around and there was no way that the light could be put out. He looked deep into my eyes and asked me (or was it told me – it would really make no difference) to care for his mother. The least I could do for someone so special and so, well, Godly.

How could the word that had been there at the beginning of time, the word that had become human flesh, how could it be put to death? How could it be silenced? How could that light that had shone be put out?

Just 3 days later we saw that it couldn't be. Somehow – the mysteries kept on coming – somehow it was clear he was alive again. The word continued to live. The light had not been put out or overcome.

And it was soon after I realised that having had this great privilege of being with him, of being so close to him, the least I could do now was to help others get to that same position.

So I use my words and my experience to tell others the story. Tell them of what it is like to be with him; to listen to him, to talk to him, to see him, to be a witness to the truth.

Tell them of what it is like to talk to God – for that's who I believe he is – face to face like speaking to a friend. Tell them of what kind of relationship each and every one of us can have with God, the creator of the universe. Tell them that The word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth. I had seen his glory – and I know he wants others to know him and see him as well.