

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Papa Owusu. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church and pray for them as they pray for you.

Welcome to our act of worship this morning on Transfiguration Sunday

Today we encounter unexpected life-changing and passing experience on a mountain-top where the three closest disciples of Jesus were dazzled by His altered appearance... The disciples had a bewildering and intense awareness of the glory of God and heard a voice speaking directly to them saying 'listen to him', [in contrast to the voice that spoke to Jesus at his baptism] before they then had to come back down the mountain.

Call to Worship - (inspired by Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-9, Luke 9:28-36, 2 Peter 1:16-18)

Beyond our busyness,
above the cold winter floor
there is a glory rising, born of heaven
and reaching out to each one of us

a light that shines through the clouds
an invitation seeking all of who we are
that transfigures the world

that transforms darkness into hope
that brings life from a cross
where old life ends, and new life is born

In glory Jesus meets us here
raising us from depths of valley to the height of the mountain
carrying the weight of our humanity
to the heights of heavens glory.

Let us worship from the mountain and hear again
"This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

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Hymn: King of Glory, King of Peace (Singing the Faith 56)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fn0VzGKr8zw>

King of Glory, King of Peace,
I will love thee;
and that love may never cease,
I will move Thee.
Thou hast granted my request,

thou hast heard me;
thou didst note my working breast,
thou hast spared me.

Wherefore with my utmost art
I will sing thee,
and the cream of all my heart
I will bring thee.

Though my sins against me cried,
thou didst clear me;
and alone, when they replied,
thou didst hear me.

3 Seven whole days, not one in seven,
I will praise thee;
in my heart, though not in heaven,
I can raise thee.
Small it is, in this poor sort
to enrol thee:
e'en eternity's too short
to extol thee.

George Herbert (1593-1633)

Prayer

Let us pray

We may not be able to climb a hill for you, O God,

but we gather to worship you in this place.
We may never see you transfigured in glory in our presence,
but we witness your transforming power in our living.
We may not have the words to explain all that you are,
but we have hearts that want to worship all that you are.
Enable us to meet you in your glory around us,
that we may worship you in truth and love. **Amen.**

Invitation to Confession

When Christ appears, we shall be like him,
because we shall see him as he is.
As he is pure, all who have grasped this hope make themselves
pure.
So, let us confess our sins that mar his image in us.

Silence

Your unfailing kindness, O Lord, is in the heavens,
and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Your righteousness is like the strong mountains,
and your justice as the great deep:
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

For with you is the well of life
and in your light shall we see light:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Words of Assurance

In Christ we are set free.
Through Christ we are forgiven.

Amen. Thanks be to God

The Collect

Father in heaven,
whose Son Jesus Christ was wonderfully transfigured
before chosen witnesses upon the holy mountain,
and spoke of the exodus he would accomplish at Jerusalem:
give us strength so to hear his voice and bear our cross
that in the world to come we may see him as he is;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Today's reading: Mark 9: 2-9 (NRSVA)

The Transfiguration

² Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John,
and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he

was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became
dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴ And
there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking
with Jesus. ⁵ Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to
be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for
Moses, and one for Elijah.' ⁶ He did not know what to say, for
they were terrified. ⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and
from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved;
listen to him!' ⁸ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw
no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

The Coming of Elijah

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to
tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man
had risen from the dead.

Hymn: Lord, the light of your love is shining (Singing the Faith 59)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rce9UHYZwl4>

Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining:
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;
Set us free by the truth you now bring us,
Shine on me, shine on me.

Refrain:

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory,
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word
Lord, and let there be light!*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
From the shadows into your radiance;
By the blood I may enter your brightness;
search me, try me, consume all my darkness
shine on me, shine on me.

Refrain

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
so, our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory:
mirrored here may our lives tell your story
shine on me, shine on me.

Refrain

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Time to Reflect

'Beholding God's Transforming Presence in the Face of Jesus (The Transfiguration)'

In the last couple of weeks, we have been looking at Jesus' early ministry as per the common lectionary. As we prepare to enter into the Lenten season, we move towards a different dimension of Jesus' life – The 'Transfiguration' which is pointing us to the glory that will come with his passion.

In our Gospel reading from Mark 9, we see God's transforming presence in the face of Jesus (The Transfiguration) ... a revelation of God's glory through Christ – a glory which will be fully revealed when Christ returns (2Thess. 1:10).

This beautiful story is recorded by all the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 17:1-13, Mk 9:1-13, Lk. 9:27-36). It is also referred to by the writer of the 2nd Letter of Peter (2 Peter 1:16-18).

According to St Mark and the other two synoptic Gospels, this event took place after Peter's confession – (Matt. 16:16-18; Mark 8:27ff; Luke 9:18ff) ...The beginning of Jesus' preparation to go to Jerusalem.

This revelation of God's transforming presence in the face of Jesus could not have happened at a more appropriate time. In Mark 8, the disciples' thinking of who Jesus is has just been

turned upside down in Caesarea Philippi. Peter found words to articulate who Jesus is: 'You are the Messiah'. On Jesus' acceptance of Peter's confessions, he tells the disciples of his impending suffering and death. The disciples must have found it impossible to grasp this unimaginable future. Suddenly, there is this difficult situation ahead, but the glory of Jesus' true being is also revealed to them.

The whole event is told from the perspective of the disciples. It envisages Jesus encountering God on a mountain top both with Moses and Elijah before him (Exodus 24; 1 Kings 19). Moses and Elijah are two of the greatest heroes of the people of Israel. Their presence embodies the traditions of law and prophecy. The Jewish Christian readers would recognise the significance of this location – Mountain Tops were traditional places for encounters with God. It needs to be noted here that neither Moses nor Elijah was accompanied when they met God on Mount Sinai; but in the instance of Jesus- the disciples were with him, when with Moses and Elijah, they were overshadowed by the cloud of God's transforming presence ...

The three disciples were indeed given a vision of a gloriously transformed Jesus... and they were terrified when they saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. Peter proposed for three shelters to be built to prolong their visit; He was yearning for the moment to go on forever. While he was still speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them. Jewish tradition linked the cloud

and the glory of God (Exodus 40.34) – and from the cloud, God speaks - 'This is my son, the beloved; listen to him'. God's words at Jesus' baptism were spoken to Jesus himself, but these are addressed to the disciples. God's voice gives the disciples the words to make sense of what they have seen – this has happened because Jesus really is the Son of God – and they are reassured that they should listen to him.

This was a divine voice... a voice that stopped the conversation between Jesus and the disciples with a central instruction to the disciples to listen to Jesus...

This voice indeed makes it clear who Jesus is before God – '...my son, the beloved, with him I am well pleased...' (v5; NRSV). That's why God said, "Listen to HIM!" or "Hear Ye Him" (KJV).

If we are to understand our calling as disciples of Christ, then we will need to listen to him... Do we listen to him?

In St Luke's account, Jesus had taken Peter, James and John along as he goes onto the mountain to pray... 'as he was praying the appearance of his face changed...' (V29)

Prayer changes lives and situations... Do we take time to pray?

While praying, the appearance of Jesus' face became different. Jesus' clothing, his apparel or raiment became white, – (The

Greek word used is 'leukos' - implied here is a supernatural white; or a pristine white); and his apparel was gleaming.

This Transfiguring experience may have given the disciples some new revelations on how they were to understand clearly who they had followed all this while... This vivid moment of insight may have enabled them:

- To say: "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but WE WERE EYEWITNESSES OF HIS MAJESTY. For He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain." (2 Pet. 1:16-18)
- To now conclude that Jesus is indeed the Son of God
- To now see him in an entirely new light... '...and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.' (John 1:14)
- To have the realisation that their calling has a meaning and purpose...

Dorothy A. Lee, a Professor of New Testament Studies, Queen's College, Australia states that:

'In Christian teachings, the Transfiguration is the pivotal point where human nature meets God: the meeting place for the temporal and the eternal, with Jesus himself as the connecting point, acting as the bridge between heaven and earth.'

Although the Mountain-top experience was a moment of brilliant encounter, the disciples were to return to 'real life' at the foot of the mountain. In St Mark's theme of secrecy, Jesus tells them to share this glimpse of glory with no one, until the full revelation of Jesus' identity in the crucifixion.

The disciples may have learnt to trust the link between God's glory and God's power. They may have found that they too could change the world for good if they hold fast to their trust in God. We, as people of God, could also become agents of change in this world especially in these difficult and terrible times that we find ourselves in... as we experience his glory.

When we have a 'mountain-top' experience- a moment that we encounter the glory of God in our lives – and become transformed, we must manifest the glory that we have encountered... 'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim

the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.’ (1 Peter 2:9, NRSV)

Although Peter, James and John were initially told not to tell anyone about what they had seen on the mountain. We are well aware from the Gospels that the story was shared after Jesus’ ascension, as the disciples sought to understand who Jesus was and what had happened.

We do not hang onto the ‘mountain top’ experience... instead we are led back down the mountain into the world to be his witnesses...

When we encounter the glory of God, we are transformed into effective carriers of his grace and mercy to the world. We can’t stay on the mountain top if we are to witness effectively. It is good for us to enjoy the bright light of Jesus, but then we have to take that light out into the world!

This job wouldn’t be easy because just as Jesus would have to suffer and die to save us from our sins, the disciples’ lives would also involve suffering as we shine his light and share his love with others.

It is my prayer that our lives will affect others and God’s name will always be glorified... May He send us back now down the

mountain to speak of what we have seen of God’s glory and share the radiance of his love!

It is my prayer that we will listen to Christ and follow him from the places of revelation to the places of mission.

May God shine the light of glory into our hearts.
May Christ be with us and never leave us, and may the Spirit renew the image of God within us. **Amen**

A time of prayer (trusting that others pray with us)

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ,
let us pray to the Father.

Lord of glory, it is good that we are here.

In peace we make our prayer to you.

In trust we confirm our faith in you ...

Help us to set our faces steadfastly to where you would have us go.

Lord, look with favour.

Lord, transfigure and heal.

Lord of glory, look with favour on your Church,
proclaiming your beloved Son to the world
and listening to the promptings of his Spirit ...

May she be renewed in holiness that she may reflect your glory.

Lord, look with favour.

Lord, transfigure and heal.

Lord of glory, look with favour on the nations of the world,
scarred by hatred, strife and war ...

May they be healed by the touch of your hand.

Lord, look with favour.

Lord, transfigure and heal.

Lord of glory, look with favour on those in need and distress,
suffering as your Son has suffered
and waiting for the salvation you promise ...
May the daybreak and Christ the Morning Star bring them the
light of his presence.

Lord, look with favour.

Lord, transfigure and heal.

Lord of glory, it is good if we suffer with you
so that we shall be glorified with you.
According to your promise bring us all in Christ...
to see him with their own eyes in majesty
and to be changed into his likeness from glory to glory.
To him be praise, dominion and worship
now and for all eternity. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray the prayer that the Lord Jesus taught his disciples
and us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Hymn: There's a light upon the mountains (Singing the Faith 188)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words (Verses 1, 2, and 4)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuvbW7gVwal>

There's a light upon the mountains, and the day is at the spring,
When our eyes shall see the beauty and the glory of the King;
Weary was our heart with waiting, and the night-watch seemed
so long,
But His triumph-day is breaking, and we hail it with a song.

There's a hush of expectation, and a quiet in the air;
And the breath of God is moving in the fervent breath of prayer;
For the suffering, dying Jesus is the Christ upon the throne,
And the travail of our spirit is the travail of His own.

Hark! we hear a distant music, and it comes with fuller swell;
'Tis the triumph song of Jesus, of our King Emmanuel;
Zion, go ye forth to meet Him, and my soul, be swift to bring
All thy sweetest and thy dearest for the triumph of our King.

Henry Burton (1840-1930)

Blessing

(May) Christ Jesus,
the splendour of the Father and the image of his being,
draw you to himself
that you may live in his light and share his glory;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest,
but was appointed by the one who said to him,
'You are my Son, today have I begotten you.' (Hebrews 5.5)

Amen

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