**Sunday 11th**

**February 2024**

**Transfiguration Sunday**

**The Revd John Grundy**

**Call to Worship**

Come, leave to one side the worries of the day and week; come and meet the living God. **Strong defender lift up our heads!**

Come, leave to one side all that drags you down, all that exhausts and drains you; come and meeting the living God. **Life-imparting heavenly manna, feed us!**

Come, leave to one side your doubts and delusions, your despair and desperation; come and meet the living God. **Stricken rock with streaming side, refresh us!**

**Prayers of Approach and Confession**

Your light, O Most High,

shines in the darkness,

guiding the way as a star at night,

letting us see all that obstructs and occludes,

for the light in our lives we praise you.

Your light, O Christ, can blind us.

The glow of your glory exposes the rags we cling to;

the brilliance of your presence makes us want to hide in the dark.

Our sin and shame overwhelm us, and we turn away.

Forgive us, saving Jesus,

help us to learn to live in the light of your presence,

to feel your love and not our guilt,

that we may shine with you.

Your light, Most Holy Spirit,

burns away our dross, consumes our darkness,

and shines through us when we show love.

Give us time to change,

time to see you at work in our lives,

that your brilliance will enlighten our world. Amen.

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

Friends, God is faithful and just,

always yearning to welcome us home,

arms held wide in forgiveness

as a mother rejoices in the return of a wayward child.

God forgives you; have the strength to forgive yourselves. Amen!

**Prayer for Illumination**

Unveil our eyes and hearts, O God,

that we may see your light,

hear your word

and know your will

for us, for our church, and for all your people,

today and always. Amen.

**Readings**

*2 Corinthians 4:3-6* | *St Mark 9:2-9*

All Age Activity

It’s adults not children who have problems with understanding the Transfiguration – children are more imaginative and often have less difficulty seeing how Jesus can be both human and divine. They may make natural connections with the stories of superheroes who have magical powers.

You will need:

* A sheet of plain paper
* Lemon juice
* Cotton swabs
* An iron and ironing board

In Advance:

You may want to make a practice sheet of paper so that you know how much lemon juice to use, and so you can get an idea of how long it will take for the iron to reveal the message. Using a cotton swab as a paint brush, write the words, “This is my Son. Listen to him!” on a plain piece of paper. The paper doesn’t have to be white, but the message will be easier to see on lighter coloured paper. Allow the paper to dry. With a very cool iron press the paper to get some of the wrinkles out. When you heat the message to reveal the words, you will want the iron set higher.

Tell the story…

In the book of Matthew, Jesus had just told his disciples that they may face difficult things in their lives. He tells them to take up their cross and follow him. I bet that was very difficult for them to understand. They were already having difficult times. Many of them had left their jobs and their families to follow Jesus. But then Jesus promises them that they will soon see his glory. I can imagine that what Jesus was saying was confusing to them. It would have been confusing to me.

Six days later, Jesus went up on the mountain with Peter, James, and James’ brother John. And while they were up on the mountain, the Bible says Jesus was transfigured. Transfigured is a big word that we don’t use very often. Do you know what it means? Being transfigured means to change in appearance or shape. But, what’s really amazing about the Transfiguration of Jesus is that when his glory was made known to the disciples, he wasn’t changing who he was. We believe that Jesus was both a real person, and also fully God, but the people around him didn’t see that. They just saw him as a man.

When Jesus was transfigured, his clothes became bright white. His face was so bright it was shining like the sun, and the disciples were confused. But, then God spoke and said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” And they were afraid. How do you think you would have felt if you had been on that mountain with Jesus? Jesus said to them, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they looked up, Jesus was alone, and looked like a normal person again.

I brought with me a piece of paper. This paper has an important message on it…but it looks like a normal piece of paper, right? Give me just a minute…I want to do something to the paper. (At this point, use your iron to make the message appear on the paper. Make sure that you have the heat source in a place where none of the kids will get burned or hurt. It helps to iron both the front and the back of the paper to reveal the message.)

Can someone read the message to me? “This is my Son. Listen to him!” When the three disciples on the mountain saw Jesus’ glory, God told them to listen to Jesus. And, even though we weren’t up on that mountain top, sometimes we see Jesus too. When we are afraid or alone, sometimes we feel him with us. When we experience really happy or exciting things, sometimes it makes us want to praise God. It’s almost like God is saying to us, “This is my Son. Listen to him!” Once we’ve listened and learned about Jesus, it’s our turn to tell others about him. Let’s pray together.

Dear God, when we read about Jesus’ Transfiguration, sometimes it is hard for us to understand. Help us to see your amazing power and glory so that we may know you, and so that we may tell others about Jesus. We pray this in Jesus’ name – Amen.

From <https://aprilfiet.com/theology-culture/now-see-transfiguration-sunday-childrens-lesson>

**Sermon Notes**

We know, quite a lot can happen in one week. That week Jesus had been doing quite a lot. He'd been ministering with his disciples in the villages around Caesarea Philippi. And as they were going, Jesus was asking his friends, Who do people say I am? And as we know, lots of theories. John the Baptist, or Elijah, or one of the prophets. But Peter makes a Peter changing declaration that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. Jesus makes it really clear that not only will his life be in danger because of that, but the disciples will be too. Much can happen in a week. And six days later, we get this incredible mountaintop experience. I think there's something really powerful about a mountain.

This encounter that Jesus shares with some of his friends, on top of a mountain, is unexpected in a lot of ways. And I think for a start, the cast of characters involved is a little bit unexpected. You wouldn't expect to find Moses and Elijah on top of a mountain. But Peter gets to meet with these wonderful icons of his own history.

In the past, I've considered Peter to be the most human of all the disciples. Because many of us have similar reactions to him. There are times when we experience the amazing glory of God in nature, in people, in experience. And instead of rejoicing in the moment, we find ways to be very busy. That's often the bind I think we have in church life.

It becomes too easily a busyness and a business. Rather than us being an expression of God's love at work in the world and what we would really want to be. Church becomes a bit of a drudge. I think we need to watch for that. You know, I've always taken before that focus for this reading. But as I prepared this, I found myself, I found an understanding of this text that's made me rethink.

Because it seems there was a Jewish expectation that God would usher in a new age during the Festival of Booths. This was a festival that helped people to remember their wilderness journey from Egypt. And for this festival, Israelite family was supposed to build a booth to remember. This festival was when the people thought God would take control of creation and bring in a new age of Shalom.

So instead of assuming Peter simply didn't get this, maybe we need to give him credit. Obviously, Peter thinks this mountaintop encounter is a sign that the end is coming and the festival of booths was happening. So maybe we shouldn't judge Peter for not getting this. Maybe we should praise him for generously offering to build a booth for Jesus, for Moses, and for Elijah, so that they wouldn't have to.

Maybe we should know that Peter has recognized change is coming, he kind of got his timings a bit wrong about stuff, and in the craziness of all that's just happened on the mountaintop, It seems he'd forgotten what happened the week before, what Jesus had told them. I think this year, we have to listen to that same voice that they heard on the mountaintop.

We have to be listening for the voice of God. This is my son. Listen to him. We need to hear again that what we were told was right. Yes, things are going to change. Yes, things are going to be different. But in the end, it's going to be okay. I think that's what we need to hear this Transfiguration Sunday.

Listen to what Jesus is saying to you. Maybe we could hear this encounter as an invitation to not just look for God in the usual places, but to be open to listening for Jesus where we don't expect Jesus to be, and from the people we don't expect either. At the core of this passage is Jesus and his friends on the top of a mountain.

And we might have mountaintop experiences in our lives, but we know that Jesus isn't confined to the lofty heights. Because we meet Jesus in very different places too. Walking with those in need. Suffering with those who are hurting. Longing with those who hope for restoration. With us in all of our pains.

With us in all of our suffering. And when we struggle, I doubt any of us would think it was a mountaintop experience. But maybe this is where Jesus does transformation most dramatically. Away from the mountaintops. Next week we are entering the season of Lent, a time to pause, to wait, to prepare and to reflect on our own journeys with God.

So as we prepare to journey into Lent this year, starting later this week, as we find ourselves on mountaintops and in the dark valleys we're living through, I pray that we can all say, Lord, it is good for us to be here and listen to what Jesus is asking of us. And maybe this can be a time of shalom for us all. A lot can happen in one week.

**Affirmation of Faith**

We believe in God,

Creator and Sustainer of majestic mountain and gentle valley,

of deep sea and icy glacier, author and summit of all the life

with which we share this planet.

We believe in Jesus, our Sovereign and Saviour,

who shines his love on us

and who refuses our attempts

to confine him to shrine and sanctuary.

We believe in the Holy Spirit

who journeys with us in the highs and lows of life,

defeating our expectations, surprising us with joy,

enabling us to proclaim God’s great deeds.

We believe in the Church,

one and hidden, holy and broken,

catholic and reformed, apostolic and ever new,

God’s mission to our world,

where we work out our salvation.

**Intercessions**

Eternal Trinity,

your light shines on our world offering hope, direction, and justice.

We pray now for places and people living in darkness.

Eternal One

we pray for those living in dark cycles of violence,

repressive governments, terrorists, and those who profit from weapons

that your light might expose their foolishness.

We pray for those living with the dark violence

of war, terror, and poverty,

that despite the odds, they may turn towards light and

away from the cycles of despair that perpetuate evil.

*pause*

Suffering God,

we pray for those who use law and treaty

to hide the darkness of their deeds,

for those who wish to shut the borders

of their hearts and our lands to those in need;

shine O Jesus, your light that we may see things properly,

care for those in need and see you in their faces.

*pause*

Flame of God’s love,

shine your light on those who are in any kind of pain,

especially for those we know pray….

*longer pause*

Let us be, O God, lights which bask in your light,

reflections of your glory, and agents of your change.

Inspire us as again we are reminded how to pray as we say Our Father…

**Offertory**

The Transfiguration reminds of the miraculous. In the inaccessible light of God’s presence, Jesus’ glory was revealed, ancient prophets came, and the disciples saw a glimpse of glory. In our lives we have similar glimpses – not on mountain tops and not of prophets but in the simple everyday things of life. As we show love to those in need, as we listen to someone in trouble, as we offer love and attention to those who struggle we find glimpses of glory. As we realise that we should use our resources more responsibly we see God’s glory at work in the ordinary things of our lives. Week after week we give believing that our giving is tied up with our discipleship; now we give thanks for all that has been given – the time, talents, and treasure of God’s people, given in the hope of transfiguration of the world’s pain into light and love.

Generous God,

bless all that is given in this church:

the time, the love, the talents, the laughter,

the ability to share with friend and stranger,

the welcome to the lost and lonely,

the light of love shining here,

the treasures given and found,

that, at the end, we may be transformed. Amen.

Blessing

As we journey between the mountaintops and the plains of life,

may the transforming power of God inspire you.

May the challenging and comforting grace of Jesus guide you,

and may the companionship of the Holy Spirit walk with you.

Go knowing the love of God within you, today and every day. Amen.

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| **Hymn Suggestions** |
|  | RS | CH4 | StF | MP |
| At the Name of Jesus | 261 | 458 | 317 | 41 |
| Christ Triumphant ever reigning |  | 436 | 319 | 77 |
| Lord Enthroned in Heavenly Splendour |  |  | 593 | 431 |
| Shine Jesus Shine |  |  | 59 | 445 |
| Lord Jesus Christ | 373 |  | 594 |  |
| Alleluia Sing to Jesus |  | 445 | 569 | 207 |
| Immortal Invisible | 67 |  | 55 | 327 |

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* |CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*

Other Ideas

Dan Schutte’s Join in the Dance is rather fun. You can hear it here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1YfdgWn8NI> and find it in the hymn book

Laudate at 759. The lyrics are online here <https://www.sixmaddens.org/join-in-the-dance/>

The public domain *The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns* by John Brownlie in 1907 is good:

The King shall come when morning dawns

and light triumphant breaks,

when beauty gilds the eastern hills

and life to joy awakes.

2 Not as of old a little child,

to bear, and fight, and die,

but crowned with glory like the sun

that lights the morning sky.

3 O brighter than the rising morn

when He, victorious, rose

and left the lonesome place of death,

despite the rage of foes.

4 O brighter than that glorious morn

shall this fair morning be,

when Christ, our King, in beauty comes,

and we His face shall see.

5 The King shall come when morning dawns

and earth's dark night is past;

O haste the rising of that morn,

the day that aye shall last.

6 And let the endless bliss begin,

by weary saints foretold,

when right shall triumph over wrong,

and truth shall be extolled.

7 The King shall come when morning dawns, and light and beauty brings;

"Hail, Christ the Lord!" Thy people pray, come quickly, King of kings!

The meter is 8686 so would go to many well known tunes.

Brian Wren’s Christ Upon the Mountain Peak published by Hope can be found here <https://hymnary.org/text/christ_upon_the_mountain_peak> where you can download the lyrics and use if you have the appropriate licence. The meter is rare but you can her the tune here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU-gDQTbC9w>