

**Dorset South & West Written Service. Sunday February 19th 2023.
The Sunday before Lent.(Transfiguration).
Prepared by Revd Jean Quick**



Call to Worship.

'Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here;' 'While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!'

As we worship it's good to be here and we long to Listen for God's voice.

STF 83

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like thee his praise should sing?
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress;
praise him, still the same for ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise him! Praise him!
Glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like, he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him! Praise him!
Widely as his mercy flows.

Angels in the height, adore him;
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace!

Gospel Reading Matthew 17: 1-9. The Transfiguration.

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, 'Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

O God,
We open our eyes and we see Jesus,
the months of ministry transfigured to a beam of
light,
the light of the world,
your light.
May your light shine upon us.

We open our eyes and we see Moses and Elijah,
your word restoring us, showing us the way,
telling a story,
your story, his story, our story.
May your word speak to us.

We open our eyes and we see mist,
the cloud of your presence
which assures us of all we do not know

and that we do not need to fear that.
Teach us to trust.

We open our eyes and we see Peter's
constructions,
his best plans, our best plans,
our missing the point,
our missing the way.

Forgive our foolishness and sin
We open our eyes and we see Jesus,
not casting us off,
but leading us down, leading us out -
to ministry, to people.
Your love endures forever.

We open our ears and we hear your voice,
'This is my beloved Son, listen to him!'
And we give you thanks. Amen

(Written by William Loader)

Our next hymn is from the singing the faith website and the suggested tune is Bethany STF 25 which we use for the hymn, 'God is here! As we his people'.

Who is this, whose face shines brighter
than a thousand summer suns?
Who is this, who speaks with prophets,
preachers, leaders, ancient ones?
This is he, who won't seize power,
sets his face to suffering.
Listen! This is God's Beloved!
Hear him! Serve him! Follow him!

Who is this, who feeds the hungry,
opens eyes, and drives out pain?
Who is this, who casts out demons,
frees the cursed from every chain?
To the powers, he stands defiant,
to the outcast, opens arms.
See him! This is God's Beloved!
Watch him! Serve him! Follow him!

Who is this, whose footsteps echo,
calling us down city streets?
Who speaks truth to power, and ever
power displays when washing feet?
Always healing, always asking,
"Do you know yet who I am?"
Kneel before the Lord's Beloved!
Rise and serve him! Follow him!

Old Testament reading. Exodus 24: 12-18

The Lord said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.' So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. To the elders he had said, 'Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them.'

Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Reflection

Did you see that both Bible Readings talk about being on top of the mountain? I can't imagine a better place to be? When I think of the mountains I have been privileged to be on top of what glorious sights to behold. Climbing Mount Snowdon and being up in the clouds but despite the interesting weather, all those years ago; we made it! Yes the group I was with was all very much younger and fitter but it was still a struggle and at times we thought we would not make it. However we persevered. When we reached the summit we found we were transformed from struggling, doubting, physical wrecks, to triumphant, joyous and rewarded people.

Nowadays it's a journey in a cable car to the top of any mountain that brings me joy and happiness. I am amazed that some people find it to frightening to take even that journey. The rewards on the way up of the amazing views are only surmounted by the view from the top.

We are in the Sunday before lent. Lent can feel like a mountain hike. Trying to give up or take on something for forty days. Phew! It's a challenge.

What surprise's me is that in both passages there's a hard journey to make but the rewards to the body and soul must have been out of this world. The mountains would not have been Everest proportions but the attire worn in those days, must surely have added to the difficulties. I recall my first ever serious hike along the South Downs way. We didn't get very far before my fellow travellers took me to a post

office and we packed parcels from my rucksack of what I thought was essential items, but were actually weighing me down and making the journey impossible.

Have we seen the face of Christ transcending our way. Have we listened and heard the voice of God directing our steps? Lent is the time to cast off everything that is weighing us down and to wait and listen for the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus.

There's an instruction to wait! In the gospel passage we see Peter's workaholic traits kicking in, 'if you wish, I will make three dwellings here,'. Oh we love to keep busy! Peter is told to just listen.

If I make it through lent on my personal challenge I must admit the appeal of celebrating Easter feels like seeing the finishing line and wanting to make a dash for it.

My Parents used to give us Easter eggs on Easter Sunday but we were never allowed to have them until Easter Monday. Often we would go to somewhere with an easy climb. A little hill scramble and then we would roll our eggs down the hill and run after them and capture them before disaster happened. Often it was our Dad who ran on ahead to save any tears!

What will you do for lent? Will you engage in a personal challenge to help you see 'the mountain top view' of Eastertide. Then when Easter comes can you hold back and stay in the moment. Meditate and see how our Heavenly Father goes on ahead and knows what we need.

Before Moses went up the mountain, for the benefit of the people. He goes to the Elders and did you see it wasn't an instruction like we might make if we put someone else in charge while we are away.

"Now if you need anything..." We would probably say. Moses says, "whoever has a dispute may go to them"!

How sad, and of course after the first set of instructions which we know now as the Ten Commandments there was mayhem and the whole law giving process had to be repeated.

How many regrets and tearful moments could we have avoided if we look back down the mountain of our life's journey and think, 'if only I had, waited, listened...'

We need moments in time such as lent to take time with our Heavenly Father.

How special it must have been for the ones in both scripture passages to be chosen to go on those very special transforming journeys and to be rewarded with time alone with such a close vision and understanding of God and His ways.

Whatever you decide to do it will be a transformation time. Hopefully it will be something beyond yourself. Let's face it for a good number of people giving up chocolate for lent, is just about reducing their own waistline! In both scripture readings the individuals are given a view that transcends all earthly thoughts and desires. That is beyond their own desires and comforts.

The view of heavenly matters is almost unimaginable. So many mountain view's are described as, 'a little nearer to heaven'. So how will you engage with the journey and the mountain top moment? If nothing else is possible at least make time to listen and let the voice of God transform your view of the world and carry you through the journey and experience's you and others are facing.

Prayers of intercession

O God, as your Son drew apart to be in prayer with you, we offer our prayers for the transformation of the world and the church.

Holy Holy Lord! In the transfiguration of Jesus, we see your glory. And we see what a human being, immersed in you, will look like. Thank you for this vision. Thank you for showing us that Jesus truly is all in all. Thank you for his suffering and death, which transfigures our own. Thank you for the vision of his holy glory, which he so lovingly pours upon all who cling to him in faith. Help us to be transformed to be more like the people you want us to be.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Transfigure your Church. Make it a lamp, radiating the splendour of your beloved Son's light and life. Make it a place where all may be drawn into your presence. Make it a place where the truth of the Gospel is so evident in all the various activities and programs. Make it a place where all may come, and be fashioned into the very image and likeness of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Transfigure the congregations of our Circuit: its people; its decisions and vision; its worship, service, and fellowship. Make our every word and action like clear crystal, through which the radiance of Jesus' love shines unimpeded upon everyone we meet.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Transfigure this world, so that the sacrifices of those who serve us in so many different ways might feel rewarded and appreciated. We see and hear of the struggles of our world. We read or hear in the news of strikes, targets not being met, the energy crisis, rises in living costs and inflation and so much more. In all our worries it is easy to forget the many who serve us in so many different ways and for many with little reward. Help us to show gratitude and be with those who are struggling
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Transfigure this dark shadowed world; its people; and its leaders. We hear of the atrocities in the war waged against the Ukraine and we know the world is so full of people who do not enjoy the joy of life lived in peace. Remote from the shadows of terror and conflict. Turn all people from being enemies of one another, to lovers of peace. Transfigure us into sisters and brothers of one another. Help us to eradicate all prejudice's and fears of those who are different to us. Remove from us all greed and destructive ways. Help us to be wise stewards of creation, and those who truly respect and enjoy being in the light of your presence and with all people.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Transfigure the lives of all who sit in the shadows of suffering and sorrow – especially those known personally to us. Let sorrow be turned to joy; fear into hope; and despair into faith in your love.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We offer these our prayers in the name of the transforming love of our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn STF 20

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found -
we stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned:
how awesome is the sight -
our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place;
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace:
no work too hard for him -
in faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

The Benediction.

We go in peace, committed to seek to love and care for one another in the name of Christ;
Knowing that the Spirit of the Lord will strengthen us,
the glory of God of the Father will shine upon us,
and the faithful love and mercy of Christ Jesus will fill our hearts,
both now and forevermore. **Amen**

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Mount Sinai



The Mount of Transfiguration