Circuit Written Service 11th Feb 2024 Revd Steph Jenner

Call to worship – 2 Corinthians 4: 3 – 6

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing clearly the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’s sake.For it is the God who said, “Light will shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Hymn StF 691

What shall our greeting be:

sign of our unity?

‘Jesus is Lord!’

May we no more defend

barriers he died to end:

give me your hand, my friend –

one Church, one Lord!

What is our mission here?

He makes his purpose clear:

one world, one Lord!

Spirit of truth, descend;

all our confusions end:

give me your hand, my friend –

‘Jesus is Lord!’

He comes to save us now:

to serve him is to know

life’s true reward.

May he our lives amend,

all our betrayals end:

give me your hand, my friend –

‘Jesus is Lord!’

Fred Pratt Green

Prayers of Praise and Confession

Eternal, majestic God,

creator of life and light,

you bring order out of chaos

and light out of darkness.

We praise and adore you.

All glory and majesty,

wisdom and authority belong to you,

now and for ever. Amen.

God our Father,

we confess our sins to you.

We have glimpsed your glory

but have chosen darkness rather than light.

Father: **Forgive us.**

We have heard your voice calling us

but we have not listened.

Father: **Forgive us.**

We have claimed to follow Jesus

but we have gone our own way.

Father: **Forgive us.**

Help us to know that we are loved and forgiven

and to walk in the light of your love;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord’s Prayer

Reading Mark 9: 2 – 9

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, and his clothes became dazzling bright, such as no one on earth could brighten them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us set up three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

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 StF 55

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,

in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,

most blessèd, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,

almighty, victorious, they great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, as silent as light,

nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might –

thy justice like mountains high soaring above

thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;

in all life thou livest, the true life of all;

we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,

and wither and perish; but naught changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,

thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;

all praise we would render: O help us to see

‘tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,

in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,

most blessèd, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,

almighty, victorious, they great name we praise.

Walter Chalmers Smith

Reflection

Today’s reading is about the transfiguration – a strange time, but one that give glimpses of glory, a look into the potential future, but a very scary time if you were there.

On Wednesday we begin Lent, a time of repentance and reflection, a time of giving up or taking up. My hope today is that we think and consider the things that led up to Jesus’s death, beginning with the transfiguration. A time when we get that first glimpse of Jesus divinity alongside his humanity.

We turn to Jesus’ story, as told in Mark’s gospel. Mark is thought to be writing Peter’s remembrances, and could even be Peter’s son.

Let us try and put ourselves in the shoes of Peter, James and John:

It is a week after Jesus has foretold his death and resurrection – we don’t have a report of what has happened in that week, but we can assume it has been a difficult time.

Jesus takes three disciples away with him and they climb a mountain. Jesus often goes up mountains or other quiet places to pray and have some alone time with God.

These three may be curious, excited, fearful, and probably tired from climbing. Without warning, Jesus, who is ahead, leading them suddenly becomes transfigured, changed, altered, transformed. He shines; his clothes are whiter and brighter than anyone would be able to make them. He is dazzling, he takes on a brighter, spiritual dimension that they hadn’t seen before. It would have been a very ethereal experience, beyond anything they could have comprehended before.

Sometimes when people are very ill, they see a bright white light. I have often wondered if it was a similar light the disciples saw, beckoning them from earthly to heavenly realms.

But, as if this wasn’t enough, suddenly there is not just Jesus, but Elijah and Moses appear with

Jesus and they are deep in conversation. Another question that pops into my mind at this point is how did they know? Was it an assumption borne out of their knowledge of scripture, did they call one another by name, or was it just so obvious that it could be none other. This explanation is not given.

Peter ever eager to please, but often getting it wrong, opens his mouth. He wants to commemorate the moment, or capture it. Make this mountain a special place, bring others here… we don’t know, but as his ancestors marked places of heavenly encounters, Peter in his nervous fear suggests three booths should be erected, one for each of them. But before anyone else can comment, before James or John can add to the conversation, and before Jesus can respond, a cloud envelops them all and they can see nothing – and then the voice:

‘This is my son, my beloved, listen to him.’

There are echoes of Jesus baptism. And then, normality returns, but things are different, things have changed and they will never be the same again. The disciples are told not to tell until after the resurrection, another thing to get their heads around. I suspect they are reeling, I know I would be. We all need to be challenged in our thinking, especially about Jesus. We can never be sure in our heads that we have it right, but we can have that surety in our hearts. Our own knowledge and experience can triumph over a little confusion in our heads, that’s called faith!

But we need to work out a way of telling people about what we know about Jesus, but telling it to people who have little concept of faith. They need facts to hold onto. Which is why, if we can tell the stories of Jesus of Nazareth they can begin to understand that this was a man (a real, historical man) who lived among the people, cared for the people, listened to the people, stuck up for them against those who were putting them down, healed the people, taught the people, helped them to help themselves and each other. For them the transfiguration may have to wait: for us with a more mature faith, but still perhaps many questions and doubts, we can rejoice in Jesus’ divinity, his closeness to God and therefore God’s closeness to us.

As we return to Lent, we can perhaps take the time to consider the wonder of Jesus of Nazareth and the awesomeness of Jesus Christ, and how over these next 7 weeks, we move from focussing on one to focussing on the other and give thanks.

Hymn StF 362

Meekness and majesty,

manhood and deity,

in perfect harmony –

the man who is God.

Lord of eternity,

dwells in humanity,

kneels in humility

and washes our feet.

*O what a mystery –*

*meekness and majesty:*

*bow down and worship,*

*for this is your God,*

*this is your God!*

Father’s pure radiance,

perfect in innocence,

yet learns obedience

to death on a cross:

suffering to give us life,

conquering through sacrifice –

and as they crucify,

prays: “Father forgive”

Wisdom unsearchable,

God the invisible,

love indestructible

in frailty appears:

Lord of infinity,

stooping so tenderly,

lifts our humanity

to the heights of his throne.

Graham Kendrick

Prayers of Intercession

Ever-changing God,

sometimes we plod on,

head down

watching our feet

missing the glimpses of glory.

Ever-changing God,

breaking through into

the mundane greyness of our lives

to make all things new,

lift up our eyes to see your glory:

in the taken-for-granted intimacy of human loving,

in the persistent courage of day-to-day struggle,

in the renewal of green growth after winter,

in the new insight that stretches our imagination.

Lift up our eyes

to see the wonder and mystery of your presence

beckoning through the everyday glimpses of grace. **Amen.**

Hymn StF 261

Transfigured Christ, none comprehends

your majesty, whose splendour stuns

all waking souls; whose light transcends

the brightness of a thousand suns!

You stand with Moses on the hill,

you speak of your new exodus:

the way through death, you will fulfil

by dying helpless on the cross.

You stand here with Elijah too,

by whom the still small voice was heard:

and you, yourself, will prove God true,

made mute in death, Incarnate Word.

If we could bear your brightness here

and stay for ever in your light,

then we would conquer grief and fear,

and scorn the terrors of the night.

But, from the heights, you bring us down,

to share earth’s agonies with you,

where piercing thorns are made your crown

and death, accepted, proves love true.

Majestic Christ, God’s well-loved Son,

if we must share your grief and loss,

transfigure us, when all is done,

with glory shining from your cross.

Alan Gaunt

Blessing

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,

the love of God

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,

be with us all,

now and always. Amen,

