

Dorset South & West Circuit .

Sunday March 2nd 2025. Transfiguration Sunday

Written Service. 'Eight days a week'

Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.



Call to Worship.

From The Message Bible: Psalm 99:1-3

God rules. On your toes, everybody! He rules from his angel throne—take notice!
God looms majestic in Zion, He towers in splendour over all the big names. Great
and terrible your beauty: let everyone praise you! Holy. Yes, holy.

STF 34

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name.

Low at his feet lay your burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for you,
comfort your sorrows, and answer your
prayerfulness,
showing the pathway your feet should pursue.

Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth you would count as your own;

truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,
these are the offerings to bring to his throne.

These, though we bring them in trembling and
fearfulness,
he will accept for the name that is dear;
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling, and hope for our fear.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
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Prayers of adoration and confession.

(Based on a resource from the Church of Scotland written by Rev Lindsey Sanderson, Moderator of the National Synod of Scotland, The United Reformed Church, for Transfiguration Sunday.)

Holy, yes holy is our God so we come to worship you. Holy God, You come close to us. You are present here and we worship You. We see your presence in the beauty of the world in which we live in all its intricacy and diversity. You are present in the relationships we have with family, friends and neighbours, in the laughter and tears we share together. You are present when justice prevails and mercy is shown, when we dare to hope of a world which mirrors Your peace. Holy God, You come amongst us. Your promise is that You will never leave us. We trust in Your promise and Your presence with us as we worship, and so, we bring our thanks and praise. **Amen.**

You come amongst us and yet we know that there are occasions when we place limits on our receptiveness to Your presence. We limit the time when we consciously come into Your presence as we are busy with other activities, worries or concerns. We restrict the opportunities we take to listen for Your voice, hear Your Word, experience Your presence with us and live in Your love. We fail to remember that in reaching out to friend or stranger we are showing our love for You, who loves us without condition and with a magnitude beyond our comprehension. We recognise the ways in which we place limits and boundaries on our discipleship and we ask for Your forgiveness. Free us through Your grace and mercy to live as people who are being transformed into Your image from one degree of glory to another through the power of Your Spirit. **Amen**

Bible reading: Luke 9:28-36. The transfiguration

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, 'Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' (He did not know what he was saying.)

While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.' When the voice

had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

Reflection

We are just a few days away from Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent. The Gospel reading today raises two questions right from the start. "About 8 days after these sayings, Jesus took ...". Eight days after *what* sayings? Also the number 8 is significant. Numbers have important meanings in Scripture. For example, the number four represents the world (four corners), five speaks about grace, six is the number for man, and seven is used to represent perfection or completion. But what about the number eight?

The number eight is very significant in that it is used 73 times in the Bible. It is the symbol of resurrection and regeneration. In Bible numerology, eight means a new beginning. 1 Peter 3:20 reminds us that Noah and his family as "*eight persons were brought safely through the water*". Those eight persons experienced a true new beginning once the flood receded. Another was instituted by God as a sign of the covenant He was making with Abraham in Genesis 17:12, that each child would be circumcised on the eighth day. This covenant with Abraham represented a new relationship with God.

I have entitled this service as 'Eight days a week'. Do you recall the song that imbedded that saying into our lives in 1964? Made famous by a Liverpool group of four young men who we remember as, The Beatles. Ringo Star was being driven to John Lennon's house and is recorded as having said to the Chauffeur, "'How've you been?' – 'Oh working hard,' he said, 'working eight days a week.'" That brief conversation gave the group the inspiration to write a song that still lives on today.

I guess it strikes a familiar note. How many times have we echoed the chauffeur's words. We feel like we have been working so hard it feels like an eight day week. Or we find ourselves wishing for good or not so good reasons that we could have an extra day to the week.

Actually the saying is based on historical truth. An 8-day week was used in early Roman calendars. The week consisted of the days of the week, named after the Sun, Moon, and five visible planets: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. However, there was an additional market day called the *nundinae*. Phew! So there was a time when there was an eight day working week!

However let's come back to our gospel reading and the question, eight days after what sayings? Eight represents a new beginning but what new beginning? Just before our passage today, Jesus asks his disciples: "Who do people say that I am?" "Some say John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets," they answer. Jesus continues, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter answers, "The Messiah of God." After Peter's confession, Jesus continues: "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." So a wonderful faith inspiring saying from Peter and then four difficult sayings about how Jesus must suffer, be rejected, die, and rise again. The disciples' must have been reeling. Jesus continues: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it." These sayings are said to his disciples who have left everything to follow him and now they are being told he will be taken from them and in what must have been a very difficult manner to accept. Was he asking more from them? "... let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." These "sayings" – from Peter's confession to Jesus' passion prediction and call to follow – are shocking. If I were among the disciples hearing these saying, I'm not sure how I'd feel. Confused. Anxious. Distraught. Eight days later probably still struggling with these sayings life gets physically demanding as they climb a mountain with Jesus. Once on top of the mountain, Jesus turns to prayer and we are told that the disciples were very sleepy. Exhausted no doubt both mentally and physically.

Jesus is transformed, 'the appearance of his face changed,'. The disciples probably used to hard trekking, however let sleep take over their troubled minds.

I remember climbing up a mountain in Palau and I definitely had a changed face, I don't think it could have got any redder with the exhaustion! Quite early on I doubted if I could even do the climb. With a lot of encouragement and reminders about the reward awaiting us at the top I finally managed it. We were going to swim in a jellyfish infested lake. The jellyfish had no stinging tentacles as the water was so pure there was no known predators. It was incredibly beautiful and an amazing experience. You couldn't see much of the water for the multitude of jellyfish swimming around. I went from completely wiped out with exhaustion to being the first into the water and revelling in this unique wonder of creation. My face coming down was radiant from the fabulous experience. Being so close to a species that few people are privileged to see or interact with.

I guess we have all had mountain top experiences of one kind or another and the struggle with doubt's along the way. Thank goodness that we like the disciples wake up and get to revel in the moment's when we feel so close to God. For me and for many it's experiencing the wonders of God's creation that draws us closer into his presence.

What are we to do with those moments? I tried to capture memories on my waterproof camera only to find that the camera was not working! At first I was disappointed but then I just enjoyed being there in the moment and not worried about focus etc and images being recorded for another time.

I guess if GoPro camera's had been invented in Peter's time he would've been rushing around trying to capture the perfect photo! Instead he wanted to build booths to protect and keep those holy people contained, Elijah, Moses and Jesus. It's so often the case that just when you think you have the image perfectly framed, the beautiful sunset etc, the clouds close in! The difference from the images we try to

capture, that take us away from enjoying the moment; and the disciples experience is that, 'A voice came from the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.'

The Prayers used at the start of this service and those to follow talk about awareness. I wonder if we would have been fully aware of what was happening on the Mount of transfiguration if we had been there? We have already considered how the challenging words spoken just eight days before the disciples arrived at this point would definitely still have them struggling to make sense of everything. Eight symbolises a new beginning but what new beginning is this signifying? Two men who they accredit to be Moses and Elijah are talking to Jesus; who has taken on a gleaming heavenly appearance, about completing the mission. The difficult way that he has shown the disciples that he must take. How did they know the men's identity? They may have heard Jesus using their names. However they would have known the prophecies like Malachi 4:5 "See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes." The scenario could almost be dreamlike with appearances changed and characters that are not living present. What are we to make about it? What can we or even the disciples hope to understand about what this is about? I guess that's where media whether photo or video helps us to look back at experiences that are hard to be fully conscious about what is happening. I have often looked back at photographs of events and seen things and people that at the time, because so much was happening, I didn't notice or take in. We have so much to help us look back through the lenses of history and theology and years of reflection to see more clearly what the significance of the transfiguration was about. How the gospel indeed turns everything around. Jesus speaks of death eight days before the transfiguration but it's too inaugurate a new beginning for all people. The Transfiguration event was probably the most definitive revelation of Jesus as divine next to the resurrection itself. Here Jesus is shown to be greater than the Law and the Prophets and that he was the beginning of the new covenant of grace that brings humanity to salvation and glory to God. It's indeed a pivotal moment in our salvation history.

Did you notice though that the disciples once the clouds appeared, went back into fear mode? From struggling, to sleep, to experiencing God's glory to.....fear! What were they to do with this range of emotions and experiences? Simply to, 'listen to him', listen to God's son speaking to them. I never thought I would be able to climb that rugged Palau mountain pathway but as I listened to the encouraging words of my fellow travellers we made it. When life is difficult we need to just listen to God's words and follow his Son's instructions.

We speak of this whole experience as The transfiguration. Possibly thinking it's just about Jesus, but in fact the disciples were being transformed by the experience as well. We too are transformed and continually being transformed when we experience the glory of God that is always present if only we would listen to Him. Soon we will be entering Lent, forty days that can just pass us by, or we can endeavour to take on a Lenten challenge. For some it really sounds like hard work to struggle to give something up, longing for Easter Day to get back to doing what they enjoy and have deprived themselves of! Or perhaps more noble to take on something that helps them to get closer to God in a spiritual discipline or a charitable purpose that allows them for awhile to try to express and share the love of God with those in need.

What ever we do in lent, let us make it our mission to listen to him. To hear and see God in a clear way and to praise him. To give him our love through how we choose to use the days of lent. Let's endeavour to go the extra mile, to live eight day weeks so that like the refrain of the Liverpool boys song we can say to God:

'Eight days a week, I love you. Eight days a week, Is not enough to show I care.'

How will you mark Lent? On the mountain Jesus turned to prayer. The disciples initially gave into their exhaustion and chose to rest. Resting in God's presence is good and even more so is being able to listen to him and then become empowered to take up the cross he calls us to carry.

I love the message Bibles interpretation of Psalm 99, 'On your toes, everybody!' 'take notice!' Then it speaks of God as majestic, splendiferous, 'let everyone praise you!' Let us symbolically get up on our toes through lent so that in seeing God's glory we will be transformed and used to transform others lives too. In order that we all might be able to say, eight days a week, we praise you! A new beginning in our faith journey this Lenten-tide awaits. Holy. Yes you are indeed our Holy God. Amen.

STF 59

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.

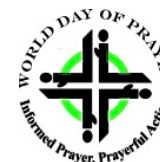
*Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;*

*send forth your word,
Lord, and let there be light!*

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

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.

Prayers of Intercession



On Friday 7th March we are celebrating the International World Day of Prayer. The worship service comes to us from a group of ecumenical Christian women from the Cook Islands in the Pacific. Kia orana is a phrase in the Maori language that the Cook Islanders use to greet each other. Kia orana means more than just hello. It means: May you live long and may you live well. May you shine like the sun. May you dance with the waves. These are an excerpt from the prayers of intercession.

God of Wisdom, we pray for the leaders in our world.
Guide their hearts and minds to have integrity as they make decisions.
Inspire them, and bless them with vision to move our world towards unity and peace.

We pray for women and girls who are vulnerable in our societies.
Create the conditions so that elderly women can live with respect and dignity.
Give our young women the education, aspiration and vision to develop into a promising future.
Provide strength, courage and patience to all women experiencing domestic violence.

God of Healing, restore us to wellness.
Heal us from physical diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.
Relieve us from mental illness and heal our emotional wounds.
Protect us from the selfishness and greed that threaten our spiritual wellbeing.

God, help our World Day of Prayer movement unite our communities in prayer.
Help us make your love visible. Strengthen us to continue loving and supporting all who are in need.
Lead us to treat others as wonderfully made by you,
so that all people would feel that they are important, cared for, and treasured. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer.

From the STF plus website. Words: © Vince Gilbert.

The Metre: 87.87.D and Suggested tune: Bethany. StF 25 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!

The Blessing (taken from the world day of prayer order of service).

Go now, and live the good news:
God is our Creator, God made us wonderful. God knows us and God is with us.
Treat yourself as a precious and beloved child of God.
And treat others as precious and beloved children of God. **Amen.**

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On the first Friday in March the Day of Prayer begins on the international dateline, in Samoa. Early in the morning, Christian women begin praying for our world. As the earth rotates, a great wave of prayer begins to build. It sweeps across the Pacific, touching Fiji and New Zealand, rolling on through Asia: Japan, the Philippines, Korea, and Bangladesh. The countries of Africa, and the Middle East are next. The wave reaches the shores of Europe as the day dawns there. Across the Atlantic, it moves onwards, the Caribbean, the Americas, and on to the Pacific again until the sun finally sets over American Samoa where the final service takes place. A worldwide circle of prayer is complete.

Cook Islands 2025 - I made you wonderful