

Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit  
SERVICE AT HOME – Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Prepared by the Revd Peter Rayson

*If you are able, place a candle in front of you and light it.*

*As you prepare to worship, consider the words of the psalmist (Ps 50:1f NRSV)*

The mighty one, God the Lord,  
speaks and summons the earth  
from the rising of the sun to its setting.  
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,  
God shines forth.

**Read, listen or sing, “Immortal Invisible” (StF 55)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oGuGzCFEWI>

- 1 Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.
- 2 Unresting, unhasting, and 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.
- 3 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.
- 4 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.
- 5 Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

*Walter Chalmers Smith (1824-1908)*

**A prayer of approach:**

Holy God,  
holy and strong,  
holy and immortal:  
have mercy on us.

**A prayer for this day:**

Almighty Father,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross:  
give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to  
glory;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 (NRSV)**

<sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus's sake. <sup>6</sup> 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.

**Now read Mark 9:2-9 (NRSV)**

<sup>2</sup> 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, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes became dazzling bright, such as no one on earth could brighten them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> 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." <sup>6</sup> He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" <sup>8</sup> Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus. <sup>9</sup> 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.

## **Sermon**

The reading from 2 Corinthians ends with Paul's words, "The light of the knowledge of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Christ" What does Paul mean by this? He cannot mean it literally because it is unlikely that anyone receiving this letter would have ever seen Christ's face. Paul must be using some form of imagery here and I suggest that the most likely inspiration for this was Jesus' transfiguration of which we read in today's Gospel. As Paul would have known, this is not the only account of a visible transfiguration following an encounter with God. In Exodus 34, we also read of Moses whose face shone each time he returned from speaking with God. The light of God is key here because Paul begins this sentence by writing of God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness" which is from the very beginning of creation. Skilfully and remarkably, in that one verse, Paul has taken us from the beginning of creation to the Messiah's revelation. This may now seem obvious to us but we could only know it by first knowing and understanding the history and the context of Paul's letter.

Seeking to understand scripture and its application to our lives is an important part of the faith journey of anyone who seeks to follow Jesus. Now, you might argue that the Bible is written in plain English and that anyone who can read it can therefore understand it. If only reading and understanding were synonymous! That would make everyone's life so much easier because then teachers would only be needed until children had been taught to read. Once they could read then they could learn everything from books written in plain English. However, experience tells us that everyone who seeks to learn needs help in understanding what it is they are seeking to understand, be that nursery rhymes or be that the will of God. And, of course, neither the Gospel nor Paul's letters are written in plain English. They are written in Greek and not classical Greek but a regional dialect of Greek, parts of which we still struggle to interpret. Deepening our understanding our scriptures needs and has always needed the collective knowledge of the faithful, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Paul also writes of the people being blinded by "the god of this world." This is also something which is as true today as it was then. We all –

whenever we are – see things through the filter of our own age. Our understanding is always subject to our own knowledge and experience and we only need to consider how human understandings have changed over the centuries and, indeed, how they still change by geography to see this. Because we are people in a particular place and time, it is only through this filter can that we seek the underlying truth. Sometime a new age brings a new clearer understanding; sometimes the opposite.

Some might believe that being a Christian automatically enables us to see clearly; to bypass the filter of the age and to unequivocally understand God's Will. I suggest that it is this view which has led the some of the greatest atrocities which have ever been committed in Christ's name. Being a Christian; believing and trusting in Christ does not make any of us infallible but rather gives us a new filter through which we can and must look at the current age. This filter is presented to us through the whole of the incarnation; its prophecy; His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection and His ascension. And His promised return.

This may sound interesting theologically but what does this incarnational filter mean in our everyday lives? Although it has become a familiar cliché it is none the less still a good summary of the application of that filter, "What would Jesus do?" In any situation, the first thought of the Christian should be, "How would Jesus respond?" This is how we are called to live our lives; by seeking to respond as Jesus would. Now the answer to that question is sometimes obvious and sometimes not and the right answer in one place and time might not be the same in another.

Take, for example, the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan did the right thing; he took the injured man to an inn where he could rest and recover but had the Samaritan been near his own home, would he not have taken the injured man there instead? The right thing depended not just on the needs of the injured man but on the best way to attend to those needs. What would he have done today in England? Would he have taken, the injured man to a hotel or take him home? Almost certainly neither. Rather he would call for an ambulance and have him taken to

hospital. These are quite different responses but the underlying truth of the parable stays the same; we are called to help our neighbours in need according to that need.

We are living in a constantly changing world but the reality is that for most of human existence this has been true. Throughout history, almost every new thing, be it an invention, a discovery or an idea, can change how we perceive things. As well as changing our perceptions, most new things can also be used for good or for evil. Progress is not intrinsically good or bad. What matters is how we use that progress. Do we seek to use it according to the god of this age or do we seek to use it according to the God of the Ages? Whatever changes life may bring to you, ask yourself first, "What would Jesus do?" and then ask yourself, "What will I do?"

**Read, listen or sing, "Through all the changing scenes of life" (StF 638)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBkorDtz1nU>

- 1 Through all the changing scenes of life,  
in trouble and in joy,  
the praises of my God shall still  
my heart and tongue employ.
- 2 Of his deliverance I will boast,  
till all that are distressed  
from my example comfort take,  
and charm their griefs to rest.
- 3 O magnify the Lord with me,  
with me exalt his name;  
when in distress to him I called,  
he to my rescue came.
- 4 The hosts of God encamp around  
the dwellings of the just;  
deliverance he affords to all  
who on his succour trust.
- 5 O make but trial of his love;  
experience will decide  
how blest are they, and only they,  
who in his truth confide.

- 6 Fear him, you saints, and you will then  
have nothing else to fear;  
make you his service your delight,  
your wants shall be his care.

*Nahum Tate (1652-1715) and Nicholas Brady (1659-1726)*

*Based on Psalm 34*

***A prayer of thanksgiving:***

For the love of our Father, the Maker of all,  
the giver of all good things:  
let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For the world's beauty and the changing seasons,  
and for the life that we have been given:

let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For Jesus Christ our Saviour,  
who lived and worked among us:

let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For his suffering and death on the cross  
and his resurrection to new life:

let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For his rule over all things

and his presence in the world:

let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For the Holy Spirit, the giver of life,  
who teaches and guides us:

let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For the grace of the Spirit  
in the work of the Church  
and the life of the world:

let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

***A prayer of intercession:***

Blessèd are you, eternal God,  
to be praised and glorified for ever.

Hear us as we pray for your holy catholic Church:  
make us all one, that the world may believe.

Grant that every member of the Church may truly  
and humbly serve you:  
that the life of Christ may be revealed in us.

Strengthen all who minister in Christ's name:  
give them courage to proclaim your Gospel.

Inspire and lead those who hold authority in the nations of the world:  
guide them and all people in the way of justice and peace.

Make us alive to the needs of our community:  
help us to share each other's joys and burdens.

Look with kindness on our homes and families:  
grant that your love may grow in our hearts.

Inspire us to have compassion on those who suffer from sickness, grief or trouble:  
in your presence may they find their strength.

We remember those who have died:  
Father, into your hands we commend them.

We praise you for all your saints who have entered your eternal glory:  
bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.  
Amen

### ***The Lord's Prayer***

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 forever. Amen.

### ***Read, listen or sing, "Your [Thy] hand, O God has guided (StF 692)***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eniRq02fMPQ>

1 Your hand, O God, has guided  
your flock, from age to age;  
the wondrous tale is written,  
full clear, on every page;  
our forebears owned your goodness,  
and we their deeds record;  
and both of this bear witness:  
one Church, one faith, one Lord.

2 Your heralds brought glad tidings  
to greatest, as to least;  
they summoned all to hasten  
and share the great King's feast;  
their gospel of redemption,  
sin pardoned, right restored,  
was all in this enfolded:  
one Church, one faith, one Lord.

3 Your mercy will not fail us,  
nor leave your work undone;  
with your right hand to help us,  
the victory shall be won;  
and then, by all creation,  
your name shall be adored,  
and this shall be our anthem:  
one Church, one faith, one Lord.

*Edward Hayes Plumtre (1821-1891)*

### ***A Blessing***

May the love of God surround you  
assuring you of His presence;  
May the Son of God inspire you  
to live according to His gospel;  
May the Spirit of God be upon you  
revealing to you His will in your life.  
Amen.

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