

Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit

Service at Home Sheet 2 March 2025

The Transfiguration

prepared by Pat Fry

This is the Sunday before Lent and it is traditional to focus on the story of The Transfiguration. It's a strange story, something so outside our experience that we struggle to get our heads around it. It seems to me this amazing supernatural experience was given to strengthen those three leading disciples for the harsh experiences ahead, and so for us, before we start to focus on the painful story of Jesus journey to the Cross, we take time to wonder at Jesus, the Divine Son of God, now in Glory, but still approachable through the Holy Spirit.

We begin with a **hymn**:

134 Christ whose glory fills the skies

<https://youtu.be/cu1ZKM-IXZg>

Christ whose glory fills the skies,
Christ the true the only light;
Sun of Righteousness arise
scatter all the shades of night.
Daystar from on high be near,
Daystar in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn
unaccompanied by thee.
Joyless is the day's return
till thy mercies beams I see,
till they inward light impart,
glad my eyes and warm my heart.

Visit then this soul of mine,
pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
fill me radiance divine ,
scatter all my unbelief ;
more and more thyself display
shining to the perfect day.

Charles Wesley 1707-1788

Prayer of praise and confession,

O God of Life,
Eternity cannot hold you,
nor can our little word catch the magnificence
of your kindness.

Yet in our hearts and minds,
in silence, in our own homes,
Your Spirit comes close to bless us,
and so we offer our praise and worship,
knowing our need of your grace.

Lord, bring new life where we are worn and
tired,
New love where we have grown hard-hearted
Forgiveness where we feel hurt
and where we have hurt or neglected others ,
And the joy and freedom of your Holy Spirit
where we are prisoners of ourselves.
Help each of us to know the promise of
forgiveness and a new start through the love
of Jesus who calls us to follow him, Amen

adapted from The wee worship book, WGWW 2006

Introduction to the theme

Have you ever climbed a mountain? Not just
ridden up on a funicular railway or in a cable
car, but actually walked all the way?

My first experience of climbing a mountain
was on a school geography field trip. We were
taken up Helvellyn in early Spring, and as we
perched on loose stones to sketch glacial
features I discovered I do not have a good
head for heights. As we huffed and puffed and
scrambled up I decided I did not like
mountains.

But when we reached the top, with a
splendid view over the high fells, the sense of
achievement, the exhilaration,
was wonderful, and I was a convert to
mountain walking.

Coming down was just as hard, a long trudge,
slippery where the ground was frozen, a long
plod down boulder strewn Grisedale, just as
exhausting as the climb.

We often talk about "mountaintop
experiences, and a mountain climb can be a
good picture of the Christian life.

Christina Rossetti wrote
"Does the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes, to the very end."

Today's gospel reading is about an amazing mountain top experience and then coming back down to earth.

But before the reading let me set the scene. I have been to Mount Tabor, the Mount of Transfiguration. It is a steep conical hill rising suddenly from flatter fertile agricultural land all around it. Along with many other pilgrims, we were driven up by taxis, up a terrifying steep road with many hairpin bends, but for the disciples it was a tough climb away from anyone else, to a spectacular viewpoint in itself an out of this world experience.

Bible reading part one: Luke9: 28-36

Reflections on the story

1, Going up

Them

I wonder how Peter, James and John were feeling. Only six days before they had been up in the mountains near Caesarea Philippi. It was there Jesus had put the question "Who do you think I am?", and with a rare flash of insight had said "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Now he is taking them apart again. More prayer time? It was hot, dusty and stony, and they were tired and thirsty.

Did they begin to complain?

Why must we go so far?

Do we really need to get right to the top?

We have left the crowds behind, can we stop now?

They trudge on wearily.

What about us?

We know that feeling when life feels like an uphill struggle.

We know it in church life when we wonder how to keep the building open and the tasks done.

We know it on our spiritual life when prayer

becomes a dry discipline rather than a delight, We know it when we feel drained and life makes conflicting demands.

We can so easily become anxious, dull or short-tempered.

2 The revelation

Them,

This happening outshines anything any of us have experienced.

Jesus appears to shine like the sun, and Elijan and Moses appear beside him.

The disciples had come to realise that Jesus was much more than the local carpenter, so much more than a travelling rabbi with a gift for healing.

On the lake in a storm they has seen amazing power, but this – this is super-human.

Moses and Elijah had been dead for centuries, but here they are, talking to him.

Peter struggles to say something, but it comes out all wrong, he can't think straight.

Then a bright cloud casts a shadow, and they hear a voice. Steeped in the Old Testament, recalling Moses encounter with God, they are terrified - utterly overwhelmed.

And the voice – the voice of God- confirms that Jesus is indeed God's Son and they must listen to him.

Then Jesus himself touches them, lifts them to their feet and everything is normal again – or is it?

They have had an experience of the presence of God they will never forget – a moment of absolute certainty, a moment they found very hard to put into words, to explain to anyone else; indeed Jesus warns them not to try until after "The Son of Man has been raised from the dead." A moment they will look back on, savour treasure, and draw strength from.

What about us?

We are at a much humbler level, but some of us can recall moment when God gave us a special moment, not a voice from a cloud, but something deep within that we struggle to put into words

. Our special moment may have been on a mountaintop, or another awesome natural sight – sunset, the sea, a deep forest;

It may have been in worship with a large congregation, or in silent prayer; it may have been holding a newborn baby, or witnessing the great faith of an elderly Christian friend.

If you have had a special deep experience of the presence of God, you have a special blessing to sustain you, but such moments are few and far between. If you are feeling left out at this moment, stay with me, the absence of such an experience will be the focus of the next section. But first a reflective hymn

Hymn:18: Be still

https://youtu.be/AyDr9-Mpc_s

Be still and know that I am God
Be still and known that I am God
Be still and know that I am God.

I am the Lord that saves and heals
I am the Lord that saves and heals
I am the Lord that saves and heals.

In you O Lord, I put my trust
In you O Lord, I put my trust
In you O Lord, I put my trust.

Anon. based on Psalm 46 v10-1

Afterwards:

Them

Only three of the twelve were present at the Transfiguration – but all except one of the rest remained faithful, staying with Jesus as he set his face to Jerusalem in spite of the dire warnings of what awaited him there. Indeed it was Thomas, the one who wrestled with doubt, who urged the others to stay with Jesus, even if it meant risking their lives.

The three were told to keep quiet, told not to boast about their special experience, and the others grew in faith without the vision.

Later their moment would come in the Resurrection appearances.

What about us?

We too are not to boast, nor claim any special status if God has given us a moment of revelation.

And if we have no such experience to hold on to, we must remember that God does not value us any less. “Blessed are they who have not seen, but believed”, Jesus said to Thomas after showing his wounded hands. We are all called to quiet obedience and faithfulness, with or without spectacular experiences

Bible Reading part two: Luke 9:37-43

Reflecting on the Story:

Them

I really feel for those disciples left behind and struggling to get on with the job. How disillusioned they must have felt, looking fools, failures, how they must have wished Jesus had been there when they must needed him.

Us

We know this experience only too well: if only Jesus were here..... if only we could be sure what to do... if only, if only....
In those difficult times we need to draw on the strength that has been given in the special moments, that’s what they are for, and we need to hold on to Scripture passages like this one to boost our faith when the going gets tough.

Our spiritual journey can be like climbing a mountain - or a series of mountains- may the glimpse of glory we are given keep us going.

Prayers of Intercession

Our prayers for others follow the same pattern as the sermon.

Think of someone who is having an uphill struggle,

Perhaps someone coping with physical illness or disability

Perhaps someone wrestling with mental illness or dementia, or caring for someone they live with such problems.

Someone overworked – or unemployed
Someone anxious about their health or their future.

Pray that the Lord will uphold them and give them a glimpse of his glory.

Think of someone enjoying a mountaintop experience:

Perhaps parents of a new baby,

Or someone who has had some really good news,

Or someone who has just discovered Jesus as their Saviour.

Pray that they may treasure this moment and recognise it as God's good gift

Think of someone who is getting on with a tough job that takes all their strength, maybe in their work – with a lot of responsibility,

maybe at home caring for a relative who is ill
maybe someone rebuilding their life after bereavement

maybe someone whose life feels unrewarding and lonely.

Pray that the Lord will strengthen them and give them a glimpse of his glory.

Now bring your own needs before God.

Give thanks for a moment when you have glimpsed something of God's glory, or a moment when you have felt God's presence very close.

Ask that you may be aware of God's presence with you in the ups and downs of life now

Thank you dear Lord for the promise that your Spirit will be with us always. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn; The love of God comes close

<https://youtu.be/v-7BraZNS8Y>

The love of God comes close
Where stand an open door
to let the stranger in,
to mingle rich and poor.
The love of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk his way.

The peace of God comes close
to those caught in the storm
foregoing lives of ease
to ease the lives forlorn.
The peace of God is here to stay
embracing those who walk his way

The love of God comes close
where faith encounters fears,
where heights and depths of life
are known in smiles and tears.
The love of God is here to stay
embracing those who walk his way.

The grace of God comes close
to those whose grace is spent,
where hearts are tired and sore
and hope is bruised and bent.
The grace of God is here to stay
embracing those who walk his way.

John Bell b1949 & Graham Maule b.1958

Blessing

As you say the blessing hold in mind the people especially close to your heart:

May the love of the faithful Creator,
The peace of the wounded healer,
and the joy of the life-giving Spirit,
The blessing of God the three in one
surround us and encourage us
today and forever. Amen.

Adapted from The Word in the World NCEC.

Hymns copied under: CCLI. no. 30794