

Dear friends,

I hope you are all keeping well within the parameters of your life. No doubt we shall all be thankful when the rain and winds calm to a more normal amount for the time of year. Hopefully, we can look forward to a nice Spring and Summer and can put our macs away! This week we look again at the Transfiguration – this year from Matthew’s gospel. When we hear about the transfiguration of Jesus, we may regret missing such an encounter for ourselves – if only it would happen today! But we can experience how close God does often come to us by being open to knowing that he is near – and that this is something worth sharing! With every blessing – Margaret.

Call to worship:

Let us draw near to our awesome God, bringing our praise and adoration – bringing ourselves with our memories and hopes, in expectation of meeting with our Lord, whose presence is all around us. In Jesus, God is with us.

Lord, our God, let us see your glory. Help us to lift our eyes to you & open our ears to hear your voice. You gave your message to prophets throughout history – you give us your Holy Spirit for the present. And you have given us Jesus, your Son, to lead us into eternity with you. Lord – we see, we hear, we believe and we come to worship. Amen.

‘The Lord is King, let the peoples tremble!’

Lord, we praise your great and awesome name – you are the holy one.

Today we draw close to you – to be still and to listen – to be mesmerised by your dazzling brightness. Meet each one of us today, Lord, wherever we may be. Amen.

The words to ‘ Jesus, on the mountain peak’ by Brian Wren [b. 1936]

Singing the Faith 259

1 Jesus, on the mountain peak, stands alone in glory blazing.

Let us, if we dare to speak, join the saints and angels praising:

Refrain: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

2 Trembling at his feet we saw Moses and Elijah speaking.

All the prophets and the Law shout through them their joyful greeting: *Refrain*.....

3 Swift the cloud of glory came, God, proclaiming in its thunder,

Jesus as the Son by name! Nations, cry aloud in wonder: *Refrain*.....

4 Jesus is the Chosen One, living hope of every nation,

hear and heed him, everyone; sing, with earth and all creation: *Refrain*.....

Prayer including the Lord’s Prayer:

Most mighty and exalted Lord, we come today to praise and worship you. We thank you for your glory, for your power and your majesty that transforms our lives into your likeness.

You shone like the noonday sun and as you revealed your glory on the mountain, reveal yourself and shine on us today. We worship you, most beloved Son of God. Amen.

Peter jumped to the wrong conclusion because he just did not understand. The best he could come up with was: 'We need a shelter.'

Forgive us, Lord, for the times when we jump to wrong conclusions – when we act before we think – when we open our mouths before engaging our brains.

Forgive us, Lord, for the times we miss significant moments with you and others, because we are too busy doing and not being.

Forgive us, Lord, for the times we do not treat you, or the people made in your image, with respect. Help us to make time to see you – to see what is right – and to see what you really want of us. Amen.

Awesome God – we are your beloved and our home is in you. We are forgiven and transformed into your likeness. You make us whole. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

O Morning Star, we thank you that we can be completely changed by you and that you have called us to yourself to be transformed and made whole.

We thank you that we can draw aside and spend time in your presence, worshipping you and praising you for your love.

You transform us day by day, drawing us closer to you so that we can shine bright and be your children of light.

O Morning Star, we praise you! Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Matthew 17: 1-9 – taken from The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language. Copyright 2002 by Eugene Peterson.

Six days later, three of them saw that glory. Jesus took Peter and the brothers, James and John, and led them up a high mountain. His appearance changed from the inside out, right before their eyes.

Sunlight poured from his face. His clothes were filled with light. Then they realised that Moses and Elijah were also there in deep conversation with him.

Peter broke in: 'Master, this is a great moment! What would you think if I built three memorials here on the mountain – one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah?'

While he was going on like this, babbling, a light-radiant cloud enveloped them, and sounding from deep within the cloud a voice: 'This is my Son, marked by my love, focus of my delight. Listen to him.'

When the disciples heard it they fell flat on their faces, scared to death. But Jesus came over and touched them. 'Don't be afraid.'

When they opened their eyes and looked around all they saw was Jesus, only Jesus.

Coming down the mountain, Jesus swore them to secrecy. 'Don't breathe a word of what you have seen. After the Son of Man is raised from the dead, you are free to talk.'

Comment: The Transfiguration is recorded by all of the Synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke. A Jewish-Christian would recognise the significance of the location. Mountain tops are a traditional place for encounters with God, and by ascending a mountain to meet with God, Jesus' encounter has parallels with Moses, who met with God on Mount Sinai. Moreover, just as Moses was accompanied

by his successor Joshua, so here Jesus brings with him Peter, James and John, who will be leaders of the Church after Jesus' death.

The glory of the Lord that was like a 'devouring fire' – a destructive force – in the Old Testament, is now revealed in the face and person of Jesus as 'like the sun' that gives life and light to every creature on earth – an appropriate image for Matthew's understanding of Jesus.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus shows that he stands in the same tradition. Matthew was always concerned to authenticate Jesus to a Jewish-Christian audience. Moses had died while Elijah ascended to heaven in a whirlwind – Matthew now shows them both as alive in the presence of God, implying that life in God's presence is available to all who have faith in him and heed the words of the messengers God sends.

The cloud from which God speaks is another sign of his presence – and another parallel with Moses [see Exodus 24: 18]

The words spoken by the voice are almost identical to those heard at his baptism with the addition of the injunction: 'Listen to him!' Matthew thus presents the Transfiguration as complementing the identity of Jesus revealed at his baptism. His divinity is declared again.

Jesus is Son of Man and Son of God – fully human and fully divine. What the three apostles – Peter, James and John, witness on the mountain top confirms and build on everything that Matthew has so far declared about who Jesus is.

Meditation of James – taken from A Most Amazing Man Year A Copyright 2010 Nick Fawcett

We saw him that day as never before, literally in a new light, glimpsing for the first time just who and what he was. He'd simply been one of us until then – special, yes, amazing even, but essentially a friend, a teacher, a person like you or me.

Yet up there on the mountain-top all that changed, for there was more – much more – our eyes opened to new horizons, the awesome, astonishing truth.

Don't ask for details – it's all a blur – but one moment we were catching our breath from the climb and the next gasping in wonder – one moment passing the time of day and the next prostrate in worship, for suddenly, he was transformed before us – his clothes white as white – his face radiant – the world bathed in light. It was like a divine Yes, as though everything had been leading up to that moment. And, as if to confirm it, Moses and Elijah appeared by his side – the bringer of the law and the greatest of the prophets joining in joyful welcome.

The moment passed, of course, as all do – and after the heights of the mountain came the depths of the valley – descent into the shadow of death. But though darkness came and night fell, through a kiss and a cross and tomb, we looked forward in faith to the dawn – for we had seen God's glory, the shining of his Son, light that would rise again.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, we delight in the fact that you walked on our earth, sharing our humanity, being one with us – but we can forget sometimes that, just as you were with God in the beginning, so you are with him now, enthroned on high, and that, through your life and ministry, you made him known, revealing his wonder and glory to all who had eyes to see and ears to hear. Save us from ever reducing the divine to our level so that our worship becomes cosy, comfortable and complacent.

Help us instead to discern the splendour of the Godhead – the awesomeness of who and what you are – and thus to come before you in awe and reverence, rejoicing at the privilege of entering your presence, receiving your love and sharing your life. Amen.

We thank you, Lord, that Jesus is near to everyone.

We pray for people who live in situations where God seems far away.

We pray for those who are persecuted for their beliefs and for all who have little to even feel joy about, never mind being able to express it openly. We pray, Lord, that you will fill them with your strength, joy and peace.

We hold before you now all those who are sick, disabled or otherwise in health crisis, that they will quietly feel your awesome presence in their times of suffering – that you will bring healing to them.

And we pray for all who may have lost someone they love – those whose hearts are broken into so many pieces that they think they will never mend.

Lord, we thank you that Jesus is near to everyone – may all know that he is with them always, walking by their side. Amen.

Lord, whatever today brings, whatever each of us is doing, help us to take a few moments out to remember you on that mountainside, shining for all to see. May your love, power and presence shine through each of us, especially when we least expect it. Amen.

The words to ‘Stay, Master, stay’ written by Samuel Greg [1804-76] Hymns and Psalms 158

1 Stay, Master, stay upon this heavenly hill; a little longer, let us linger still;
With all the mighty ones of old beside, near to the awful Presence still abide;
Before the throne of light we trembling stand, and catch a glimpse into the spirit-land.

2 Stay, Master, stay! We breathe a purer air; this life is not the life that waits us there;
Thoughts, feelings, flashes, glimpses come and go; we cannot speak them – nay, we do not know;
Wrapt in this cloud of light we seem to be the thing we fain would grow – eternally.

3 No, saith the Lord, the hour is past, we go; Our home, our life, our duties lie below.
While here we kneel upon the mount of prayer, the plough lies waiting in the furrow there.
Here we sought God that we might know his will; there we must do it, serve him, seek him still.

Close:

God of all creation, radiant with the light of your glory,
let us know that, like your Son Jesus,
we too are marked by your light and the focus of your delight.
Lead us to places of encounter, open our eyes to your glory,
And inspire us to tell others of your love. Amen.

May God’s blessing be with each one of us – with all whom we love – and with all for whom we pray,
this day and forever more. Amen.

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