

Worship 27th February 2022

Transfiguration

INTRODUCTION:

Transfiguration Sunday is the Sunday before Lent. Its position in the Christian year suggests why the Transfiguration was given; to offer encouragement before a time of rigour. Peter, John and James were given a vision of Christ in glory, the risen and ascended Lord, as they struggled to come to terms with what Jesus had said about the trouble and suffering that lay ahead.

CALL TO WORSHIP

God, you bring us together in this place,
**we come to be fed,
to be renewed,
to seek understanding.**

God, you challenge us in this place,
**we embrace the challenge,
trusting that through challenge we grow in faith.**

God, you are revealed in this place,
**sometimes in shining glory,
sometimes in tears and struggle.**

God as we worship in this place,
**refresh, renew, and challenge us
so that we would see your awesomeness.**

We pray in Jesus' name,
as we strive to walk the path of discipleship. Amen

OPENING MUSIC Holy holy holy

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, present in our midst yet beyond all comprehension, by your light, we see light; by your healing, we are made whole; by your mercy, we know your greatness. Turn your gaze upon our weakness and show us the way of your love that we may live with unveiled faces, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

By your Spirit, O God, enlighten our hearts, open our minds, fill our vision with your radiance, and give us life, as we hear your Word today. Amen.

READINGS:

Exodus 34:29-35

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36 (37-43a)

HYMN Immortal Invisible

SACRED MOUNTAINS

We are surrounded by mountains, sacred mountains, which watch over us, beckon us, call us to approach and begin the journey.

Mountaineering is a risky venture and exhausting, but our mountains are accessible. Every day we meet them, and their magic tells us: just stop, just turn aside here for a few moments, let me lift you to the sacred place.

There are no gates or barriers. These mountains don't close after sunset. They just lie in wait, offering a quiet space, inviting us to a new view. Even with the greatest disabilities, the frailest limbs, the faintest heart, there is a place for us. No one is too big or small. No one is unworthy.

Touch the mountain and we touch the earth, we touch the universe, we touch God. Just to say we are coming is more than half the journey. It is to say we belong, to enter the wide embrace of the mountainside, and to say, yes, to love.

There is a mountain stream for the thirsty and its waters are there for cleansing. There is peace and forgiveness and renewal. The wind of the Spirit sometimes blows strongly, challenging us to stand firm, or gently touches us with memories of God's goodness.

Climb the mountain and you see a long way. People you have not noticed. Distant needs which want to say also: "I am here". And in the silence of the sacred space are voices of hope, of joy, of pain, of possibility. Climb the mountain and you will see Jesus.

But most roads run past the mountain and hurry away to noise and distraction. Mountains become incidental scenery to be forgotten or photo-shots for two dimensional living. The mountains come and go, hiding in the clouds, emerging to ask again, always patient and knowing, always there for you and me.

William Loader, <https://billloader.com/SacredMts.htm>

Sometime ago I travelled with a number of colleagues up to the top of Lewis pass to the highest private owned hut in New Zealand. Located at Dalrachney Station in the Lindis Pass. I went for a retreat of sorts, with the late Rev Andrew Norton. It was quite a journey to get there, and it was a wonderful time of sharing and being with people, but ultimately that time had to come to an end. And we needed to take the 4wd journey back down the hill, to our cars, and then to our homes. All good things come to an end as they say.

On Transfiguration Sunday, the glorious mountaintop is a tempting place to set up camp. Our experience of life's ups and downs tells us that the trek back down from the mountaintop is often the hardest part. The descent is hard on the knees; we stumble on loose rock. Just as I found that returning from a powerful retreat weekend or when we return from fabulous vacation, we can be somewhat surprised to find that reentry to normal life is a lot harder than we expected. I have heard of people purposely returning from annual leave mid-week to make the transition from holiday to work much easier for having a short week. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians is a guide for the trip back down the mountain and into the foothills of daily life, but it is not without its demands.

When I was leading young people at Easter Camp with up to 5000 young people. I would often see the come down effects of people who had experienced life changing mountain top spiritual experiences. Often, they would crave them again at youth group.

With our 30 odd members. It was of course impossible to recreate that same experience. Or for the young people that missed out on attending Easter Camp, and the others coming back with these wonderful stories of their experience it was difficult. In our reading Peter James and John all have a fabulous life changing experience, and yet the other 9 disciples do not. And yet despite not having that same spiritual experience they still carry on, and still serve the mission of God through their lives.

In our reading today Jesus is transfigured upon the mountain top, next week we begin our journey through Lent, to when Jesus once again is transfigured upon a mountain, this time mount Golgotha, and the transfiguration is through one of pain and anguish and death. We may well ourselves be transfigured as we face the next few months in our country and indeed the world. Let us all remember a time of us connecting with the divine in our own mountain top experiences to sustain us through our next period of life. We seldom live at the top of the mountain, but the memory of those mountaintop experiences and the reading of the hope that is derived from scripture can help sustain us in the hard times. And those memories can help us train our eyes and ears to perceive God's work in the more ordinary times.

HYMN To God be the Glory

PRAYER FOR US ALL

God of glory,
you took your friends with you
when you went to pray on the mountain.
You revealed to them
the glory of Jesus,
your beloved Son,
on his way to the cross.

We do not live on mountaintops,
but we, too, would glimpse your glory
in the ordinary days of our lives,

and in the community of your Son
in which you have chosen to dwell.

We look for you among people who have
no power
no rights
no voice.

We look for you among those who
live on the streets of our city,
whose housing is inadequate,
whose homes are not safe.

We look for you among those who
grieve a past that is no more
and fear a future that seems full of loss.

God who meets us
in the broken places,
shine the light of Christ deep into our lives,
so we may carry that light into dark places
and point to the One
whose brokenness is our salvation.

PRAYER FOR UKRAINE

Holy and Gracious God

We pray for the people of the Ukraine and the people of Russia; for
their countries and their leaders.

We pray for all those who are afraid; that your everlasting arms hold
them in this time of great fear.

We pray for all those who have the power over life and death; that
they will choose for all people life, and life in all its fullness.

We pray for those who choose war; that they will remember that
you direct your people to turn our swords into ploughshares and
seek for peace.

We pray for leaders on the world stage; that they are inspired by the wisdom and courage of Christ.

Above all, Lord, today we pray for peace for Ukraine.

And we ask this in the name of your blessed Son.

Lord have mercy.

Amen

HYMN [He came down that we may have love](#)

BENEDICTION

In the coming week,

may you experience the presence of God with joy.

May the holy cloud comfort you.

May the divine voice encourage you.

May the power of the Spirit transform you,

transform us,

transform our world. Amen.

Rev Andrew Howley