

WINCHESTER, EASTLEIGH & ROMSEY CIRCUIT

Service at Home – 12th February 2023

prepared by the Revd Peter Rayson

“And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’”
(Revelation 21: 5 NRSV)

Listen or sing along to StF 55

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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)

Let us come before God in prayer.

Almighty Father, as we come before you in
praise and worship, open the eyes of our soul,
that we may be able to encounter your presence
and glimpse your glory. We lay before you all the
things in our lives which have separated us from
you. We seek your forgiveness in Christ Jesus
and the renewing power of your Holy Spirit
which you promise to all who repent and trust in
your promises. Reveal yourself to us, we pray,
that we may, by your power, become the people

you make us and call us to be - in the name of
Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

Read Exodus 24:12-18 (NRSV)

¹²The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on
the mountain and wait there; I will give you the
tablets of stone, with the law and the
commandment, which I have written for their
instruction.” ¹³So Moses set out with his
assistant Joshua, and Moses went up onto the
mountain of God. ¹⁴To the elders he had said,
“Wait here for us, until we come back to you.
Look, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a
dispute may go to them.”

¹⁵Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the
cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶The glory of
the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud
covered it for six days; on the seventh day he
called to Moses out of the cloud. ¹⁷Now the
appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a
devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the
sight of the Israelites. ¹⁸Moses entered the cloud
and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the
mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Now read Matthew 17:1-9 (NRSV)

17 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and
James and his brother John and led them up a
high mountain, by themselves. ²And he was
transfigured before them, and his face shone like
the sun, and his clothes became bright as
light. ³Suddenly there appeared to them Moses
and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴Then Peter said to
Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you
wish, I will set up three tents here, one for you,
one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵While he
was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud
overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud
said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am
well pleased; listen to him!” ⁶When the disciples
heard this, they fell to the ground and were
overcome by fear. ⁷But Jesus came and touched
them, saying, “Get up and do not be
afraid.” ⁸And when they raised their eyes, they
saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus
ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until

after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

The image below is one from the Methodist Modern Art Collection. It is by Susie Hamilton and it is entitled, “Ecce Homo” which is Latin for, “Behold the man”. Spend some time looking at the picture and contemplating it. What do you see? What is it saying to you? Then read the artist’s own description of her work which is below.



“My painting, ‘Ecce Homo’ comes from a series of much bigger works ... They are all of single white figures against black backgrounds and I called them Mutilates. This is because my paintings generally focus on hostile and extreme situations in which figures morph into shapes of fragility or grotesqueness. They are both mutating and mutilated.

...

The figures in the Ecce Homo paintings ... are transformed into something not just fragile but non-human. As I said at the beginning I am drawn to the subject of metamorphosis possibly because it speaks of the open-endedness of human identity. And such mutation does not just mean change within the human: it can go beyond it. In Ovid or Bosch or Kafka humans are grotesquely or uncannily changed into insects or plants or beasts. But this “being changed” also has a religious dimension, as in St Paul (“we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed.”) or Hamlet (“Lord we know what we are but not what we may be.”) or the events in The New Testament. In my Ecce Homo series I was influenced by Rowan Williams’s book Resurrection and particularly his chapter “Talking to a Stranger” where he discusses ideas about

the metamorphosis of Jesus and writes about the turning of the familiar into the utterly unfamiliar. He writes of a “risen stranger” and quotes Iris Murdoch (in *The Red and the Green*): “The Christ who travels towards Jerusalem and suffers there can be made into a familiar. The risen Christ is something unknown.”

(Taken from

<http://www.susiehamilton.co.uk/essays-talks/ecce-homo-3/>)

Now go back and take another look at the painting.

Have Susie’s own ideas changed how you see the image? Seeing is our individual interpretation of the visual image based on what our brain expects.

Perhaps the reading had already changed what you see. Do you see Moses or Jesus or God? Or something else?

What I see is bright but indistinct. For me this carries the idea of the descending cloud from both Exodus and Matthew. It is something we can almost but not quite see. A glimpse of God veiled from our sight; both the glimpse and the veil given by God for our own benefit.

This was not painted as an image of the transfiguration but Susie’s description of mutilated and mutilating caught me. Jesus was changed by what happened on the mountain but the three apostles were also changed by their encounter.

There are various interpretations of the transfiguration and the presence of Moses and Elijah. One interpretation is that Moses and Elijah were alive and present, prefiguring Jesus’ teaching later in Matthew of God as the God of the living, not of the dead. I quite like the interpretation of Moses as law, Elijah as prophets and Jesus as the fulfilment. We can devise many clever myths from the Gospel writers’ accounts and debate them for many centuries.

Yet, while it must be said that I enjoy a theological debate, in our debate about the

meanings of the transfiguration we do tend to look for the obscure and ignore the obvious. Surely the obvious is that the transfiguration is an encounter – an encounter with God. For the witnesses it was disorientating, bewildering even frightening, but how could an encounter with God be anything else?

The Bible is, among many things, a record of encounters between God and his creation. Moses encountered God on the mountain and the people encountered God through Moses. The people encountered God through Elijah and the prophets. They also encountered God through Job. Then the people encountered God through Jesus. But it does not end there; not with the crucifixion nor the resurrection nor the ascension. God continues to call us into his presence; to offer us an encounter with him. We can encounter him in many ways: in worship, in one another, in the world – natural and human, in art – indeed in a painting. But be prepared, for encountering God is just as bewildering, disorienting and even frightening today as it was for Peter, James and John on that mountain. But one thing has changed; now the Son of Man is risen. We are no longer told to keep silent. We are called to proclaim our encounter with the one true God throughout the world so that others may believe our words and seek him and find him too.

Earlier in his Gospel, Matthew records Jesus' words, "Seek and you will find". Is seeing believing or is it believing which enables you to see?

Let us pray for God's people and God's world.

Almighty God, we pray that by the power of your Spirit, the eyes of all people will be opened and that they will see your image in all that you have created.

May your image be visible in each and every person you have made so that we may we recognise that, in you, we are all one.

May we know that when anyone is suffering, in mind, body or spirit, that their suffering is affecting every one of us and may we know that

everything which eases one person's suffering heals us all and brings us closer to you.

We pray for all those who work to relieve the suffering of others; we pray your strength, your help and your guidance on them and we pray that their service may inspire us and all people to do the same; through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pray '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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

Amen.

Listen or sing along to StF 545

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DORM8ttY1WS>

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day & the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true
might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong
tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my
power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, 8th century
translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880-1931)
versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860-1935) (alt.)

A blessing by Carmina Gadelica

Bless to me O God,
 Each thing mine eye sees;
Bless to me O God
 Each sound mine ear hears;
Bless to me O God,
 Each odour that goes to my nostrils;
Bless to me O God,
 Each taste that goes to my lips;
 Each note that goes to my song,
 Each ray that guides my way,
 Each thing that I pursue,
 Each lure that tempts my will,
 The zeal that seeks my living soul,
The three that seek my heart,
 The zeal that seeks my living soul,
The three that seek my heart.

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