

## Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit

### SERVICE AT HOME

Sunday, February 19, 2023

prepared by the Revd Gareth Hill

#### Call to worship

We do not know what to say,  
for we are afraid.

But a cloud overshadows us,  
and a voice comes to us —

“This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”

Lord, we listen today!

#### Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

The splendour of the King (StF 15)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ut5LBsi-YGE>

**The splendour of the King,  
clothed in majesty;  
let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice.  
He wraps himself in light  
and darkness tries to hide,  
and trembles at his voice,  
and trembles at his voice.**

***How great is our God,  
sing with me: how great is our God.  
And all will see how great,  
how great is our God.***

**And age to age He stands,  
and time is in His hands;  
beginning and the end, beginning and the end.  
The Godhead, Three in One,  
Father, Spirit, Son,  
the Lion and the Lamb,  
the Lion and the Lamb,  
How great is our God...**

**Name above all names, worthy of all praise;  
my heart will sing: how great is our God.  
How great is our God...**

***How great is our God***

*Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves and Ed Cash © Copyright 2004  
worshiptogether.com songs/Six Steps Music/adm. by Kingsway  
Music*

#### Prayer

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

Forgive us, O God, when we stumble in the  
darkness and turn away from your face.  
Strengthen us to walk in your brightness  
and live in your ways.

Enlighten the shadows that keep us from  
growing in your love and light.  
Shower us with your grace, that we might shine  
as your people upon this earth. Amen.

#### The Lord's Prayer

**Reading**      Matthew 17: 1-9

<sup>1</sup> After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup> There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. <sup>3</sup> Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

<sup>4</sup> Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’

<sup>5</sup> While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!’

<sup>6</sup> When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified. <sup>7</sup> But Jesus came and touched them. 'Get up,' he said. 'Don't be afraid.' <sup>8</sup> When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, 'Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'

## Sermon

Today, the Sunday before the start of Lent, is committed to the Bible story of the Transfiguration, which sets us on the way to Jerusalem and the crucifixion.

I imagine we all have moments that stay with us throughout our lives. Things we can recall so clearly that we can take ourselves back there in an instant. They may be traumatic or beautiful but they are an indelible part of our experience.

The 1990s TV series *Decisive Moments* told the story of news photographs and how the press photographers began to freeze history with one frame. It focused on events such as the St Valentine's Day massacre, the American Depression and the Hindenberg airship disaster and included interviews with people who witnessed the events.

The Transfiguration is a decisive moment for Peter, James and John. In fact the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) narrate the Transfiguration as a bridge between Jesus' public ministry and his passion.

From the time of the Transfiguration, Jesus sets his face to go to Jerusalem and the cross.

Like all witness testimonies, the story is told from the perspective of those who were there. The three Gospel writers all focus on the appearance of Moses, Elijah and Jesus discussing what Jesus was about to do in Jerusalem.

But don't forget that Peter, James and John were there too. There was a purpose - so they could witness after the event.

### 1 What did they see?

None of the Gospel writers can do the moment justice, especially when they focus on Jesus:

- Mark - *His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.*
- Matthew - *His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light*
- Luke - *the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.*

The moment was beyond their ability to detail. Something happened to Jesus as they watched and he was transformed beyond understanding and description. John's Gospel doesn't have this story but, in **1:14**, we hear: *the Word became flesh and made his dwelling place with us **and we beheld his glory.***

Here, for a few moments, the glory is visible.

It took time for the disciples to process what had happened to them. In the instant of witnessing the transfiguration Peter, James and John realise that something extraordinary is happening but they can't quite put their finger on it.

Jesus is seen with the two greatest Jewish figures: Moses and Elijah. They represent the Law and the Prophets: fundamental to Jewish religious belief.

They are discussing where Jesus is heading. Luke puts it like this: *They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem.* They discussed the crucifixion!

Perhaps it's not surprising that Peter gets it wrong - again - with his suggestion of three markers of the event. It's his Decisive Moment but he doesn't know what to do with it other than freeze-frame it. Instagram it!

### 2 What did they hear?

To be an eyewitness is to recall what was seen and heard. For the three disciples, as they watch the extraordinary scene, a cloud envelops them - another sign of God doing something - and "*a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. With him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'"* (v 5)

The image of Moses and Elijah alongside Jesus as heavenly cheerleaders helps us see that Jesus is more than a story-telling rabbi. The clincher

though is what the voice from the cloud says about him.

In the "Gareth Hill amplified version", I think God is saying: "You may be impressed that these heroes of faith are here, but right at the centre is my **son**. Listen to him. Moses brings the Law - yes, pay attention. Elijah embodies all the messages the prophets have relayed from God. But **my Son**. Listen to him. The Messiah."

The disciples have heard a direct affirmation from God of who Jesus is.

Then suddenly ... silence ... the cloud vanishes ... Jesus is left alone ... except that the three disciples are there, witnessing and wondering as they return down the mountain while Jesus tells them to prepare for his death and resurrection.

### **3 What do they do with this?**

When we recount our stories - especially ones that have lived with us for some time - we have the words fixed along with the event.

We know the shape of the narrative just as we remember how we felt when it was happening. Like many preachers, you may have to say 'I may have told you this before'!

If we could talk to Peter, the Transfiguration would be an event he would go back to as one of the defining moments of his life. In fact, he did go back to it:

*2 Peter 1*

*16 For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. 17 He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.' 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. 19 We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it*

Peter doesn't try to explain the mystery of the Transfiguration. Later in life, it is enough for him to tell his listeners that he was an *eye-witness*: he saw Jesus in majesty and heard the voice of God.

Like Peter, we are witnesses.

For those who have yet to encounter Jesus in our time, we are the eye-witnesses.

What stories can we tell about our moments of Transfiguration: when heaven broke into our everyday?

### **Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along**

God, whose love is all around us (StF 585)

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

**God whose love is all around us,  
who in Jesus sought and found us,  
who to freedom new unbound us,  
keep our hearts with joy aflame.**

**For the sacramental breaking,  
for the honour of partaking,  
for your life, our lives re-making,  
young and old, we praise your name.**

**From the service of this table  
lead us to a life more stable,  
for our witness make us able;  
blessing on our work we claim.**

**Through our calling closely knitted,  
daily to your praise committed,  
for a life of service fitted,  
let us now your love proclaim.**

*Fred Kaan. Words © 1968, 1996 Hope Publishing Company,  
380 S Main Pl, Carol Stream, IL 60188*

### **Prayers for Others**

Heavenly Father, working through human events to show your presence and strength, work through each of us as we seek to respond to your call to serve.

[silence]

Let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Almighty God, shine in our lives like you do in the universe, maintaining life, order, balance and forever making new creations. Mend us as needed, bend us as necessary, that we may be your new creation, in body, mind and spirit.

[silence]

Let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Holy Spirit, put your seal upon us that we may be filled with zeal for God's work through us as his agents of reconciliation.

[silence]

Let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, when we do not know what to do, when we are overwhelmed by God's intervention in our lives, give us the wisdom to listen, to marvel, and to renew our commitment to follow you all the days of our lives.

[silence]

Let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Transfigure your world as you transfigure your Church, Lord God, that all may be made new and whole.

[silence]

Let us walk in the light of the Lord.

We pray for all who have needs beyond our power to meet, knowing that you, alone, are the Great Physician ...

[spend some time praying for those who are on your hearts]

Let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Light of the world, shine upon us. **Amen.**

— written by Paul Sauer and posted on [Lutheran Forum](#).

### **Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along**

Let him to whom we now belong (StF 557)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqQ1soGMdGs>

Let Him to whom we now belong  
His sovereign right assert,  
And take up every thankful song,  
And every loving heart.

He justly claims us for his own,  
Who bought us with a price;  
The Christian lives to Christ alone,  
To Christ alone he dies.

Jesus, thine own at last receive!  
Fulfil our hearts' desire,  
And let us to thy glory live,  
And in thy cause expire.

**Our souls and bodies we resign;  
With joy we render thee  
Our all, no longer ours, but thine  
To all eternity.**

*Charles Wesley*

### **Commission & Benediction**

Go now, and speak of what you have seen of God's glory.

Do not cling to the holy moments  
when heaven overshadows you,  
but as the Lord lives, listen to Christ  
and follow him  
from the places of revelation  
to the places of mission.

And may God shine the light of glory into your hearts.

May Christ be with you and never leave you.  
And may the Spirit renew the image of God within you.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,  
.....*In the name of Christ. Amen.*

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