

TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

27/2/22

CAVES BEACH

PRAYER FOR PEACE

God of peace, God of mercy

We pray for the people of Ukraine,

We lament the violence that has come to their country

We ask for comfort for those who mourn, hope for those who despair and compassion for all who suffer.

We plead for an end to violence and aggression in their land

We pray for the people of Russia,

We give thanks for those who protest for peace and pray for ongoing courage

We ask for a change of heart in those who commit acts of aggression and war against their fellow citizens and neighbours

We pray for Russians who will suffer because of sanctions and war

We pray for leaders around the world

We pray that world leaders might work for an end to war and for establishing of peace

We seek wisdom for those who are making life and death decisions about how to respond to violence and threats of violence

We ask for courage for those who campaign for peace.

We pray for aid workers and journalists

We give thanks for the willingness of aid workers to work in situations of war and unrest in order to meet the needs of others

We ask for safety, wisdom and compassion for all working to alleviate suffering and heal the wounded

We pray for journalist and media organisations reporting the situation in Ukraine and Russia, may they report truthfully and compassionately.

We pray for peace

We lament violence around the world

We plead for the ceasing of violence and the establishment of peace

We pray that you might give us a desire for peace and a willingness to work and hope and pray for peace each day. Amen

CALL TO WORSHIP

Known in the Law of Moses,

God, we greet you!

Your justice made known by the prophets,

God, we welcome you!

Your love made clear by Jesus,

God, we adore you!

Your way followed by martyrs and saints,

God, we worship you!

You are with us and for us today,

God, we thank you!

Opening Prayer

The light of Christ - light of will enlighten our worship.

The joy of Christ - joy of will echo in our praise.

The light of Christ will enlighten our worship.

**The friendship of Christ - friendship of will bind us
together in community.**

The light of Christ will enlighten our worship.

The acceptance of Christ will mark our relationships.

The light of Christ will enlighten our worship.

**The faithful commitment of Christ will shine through our
service. Amen.**

HYMN 547 Be thou my vision

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CMclLT_Hjg

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Maker of mountains,

we give thanks for all the gifts mountains give us,
challenging tracks, panoramic views,
alpine trees and Bogong moths,
snow, brilliant light, and high-country streams,
their splendour and their hazards,
their grandeur and their protection.

Architect of valleys,

we give thanks for all the gifts valleys give us,
deep chasms and gorges,
river gums and swallow's nests,
wide riverbanks and fertile soil,
their beauty and their perils.
all the resources they provide,
all the nourishment we gain from them.

Creator of all,

whether we find ourselves on the mountain top or the valley floor,
we know we are blessed, and we are grateful.

God of all, we hear your call to be light in the world and we take it to heart. But when we see so much, when we know so much of the precarious fate of the world and those with whom we share the earth, when tales of despair are rained upon us day by day, it can be a lot to bear. When it feels that all we experience is the hard slog of living in a valley of shadows, we can harden our hearts, we can place a veil over our eyes, we can lose hope and turn away. We need moments of joy and transformation and your assurance to enable us to journey on. God, please, send us mountain top times to encourage and sustain us.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God's view is one of hope and love, when we know God's mercy and take on the mind of God, the Spirit comes to us and we are set free, free, and enabled to continue to walk God's way. Let the Spirit settle in your heart and may you know this freedom.

Bring us mountain top experiences and then bring us back down so that we may be your people active in the world.

READINGS

- **2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2**

Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, 13 not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that[a] was being set aside. 14 But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. 15 Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; 16 but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

4 Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. 2 We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

- **Luke 9:28-36**

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. 30 Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. 31 They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33 Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my

Chosen; listen to him!” 36 When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

HYMN 675 Lord the light of your love is shining

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rce9UHYZwl4>

SERMON

Have you ever considered what the Bible might look like if Jesus came today, instead of 2,000 years ago? With social media His disciples might be tweeting daily episodes of His life rather than the passages of scripture that we have today.

I wondered the other day what would be a possible tweet by one of the disciples to describe the Transfiguration on Twitter where you are limited to 140 characters per message consequently everything has to be condensed. Perhaps it might go a bit like this?

Coffee and a chat with Moses and Elijah on mountain top. Everyone needed sunglasses. Must find better coffee next time. (That's 140 characters.)

How many social media apps do you have on your phone? I have a couple but tend not to look at them too much as they keep getting tied up with politics, especially with an election due in a few months. How would you cope with a faith limited to reports based on short snippets of text?

If we are honest a lot of our world today is structured around social media. It seems to have shaped the way that we receive our news. It has also caught people out sometimes for inappropriate comments that they have made because they forget that it can be open to anyone to read and pass on. I think that the tendency to concentrate comments and news is a shame as it tends to minimise our full understanding of situations and the background to stories.

Today is called Transfiguration Sunday and it marks the end of the period following Christmas. Lent starts next week. During this week we have Pancake Tuesday and Ash Wednesday. I believe that Lent should be more of a steady and considered pilgrimage rather than the rush and hassle of the rest the year. It is a time to go on a pilgrimage.

Just before the reading that we had today there is a passage that marks the transition in Luke's Gospel from a general sharing of Christ's journey to

the time when Jesus turns His head towards Jerusalem and all that goes with that event. That is again confirmed in this reading.

Our pilgrimage over Lent can bring us into a deeper connection with the journey made by Christ as he headed to His death and resurrection. As we take this journey we are opened up to the glory of new life in Christ so that we can have peace and freedom in the arms of God.

The passage that we just heard today sets the theological basis for this journey to Jerusalem. The disciples who witnessed this event could not help but recognise the significance of the presence of the two greatest patriarchs of the Jewish faith. It would have been a life changing experience for them. It was the start of a whole new chapter for them, a pilgrimage with Jesus.

The first step for us to consider comes in the first line: "Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray." Here we see that pilgrimage is about going wherever Jesus leads us, and simply doing whatever Jesus does.

Starting out on a pilgrimage seems so simple when we say the words but there is far more to it than simple words. There are several stages in the development of a pilgrimage.

Firstly, there is the basic decision as to how we respond to an invitation from Jesus. Some people might choose not to follow along with Jesus. A lot of people might choose not to take up an invitation like this as they have other plans. They might have a career to follow or specific plans for their retirement which would be interrupted by following Jesus. When we are called by Jesus to follow Him we need to be prepared to set aside other plans we had made and say: "Not my will but yours!"

It is in taking the risk to follow Jesus that we come across the chance to end up in a better place. After all Jesus said: "Those who want to save their lives will lose it, but those who give up their lives for my sake, will gain it." (Luke 9.24) The promise of Jesus is this: "if you go where I go, and do what I do, even unto death, you will find what you are looking for; unlike you, I actually know what it is!"

Secondly, we need to recognise that we know so little about the person that we are following. Do you really know enough about Jesus to blindly follow him? We have all heard the phrase "What would Jesus do?" Have you even thought of handing everything in your life over to Jesus?

A lot of us would struggle to have the confidence to hand our lives over completely without having some sort of escape clause.

Our main source of learning about Jesus is from the New Testament. While this describes a lot about Christ there is more to Jesus than what we read in the Bible.

- Can we say that we have a personal connection with Jesus?
- Are we connected with the Holy Spirit which He left with us to keep us in touch?
- Do our prayers bring us closer to Jesus?

This passage tells us that Peter, James & John willingly followed Jesus up a mountain simply to pray.

So, now we come to the realisation that part of being on a pilgrimage is about prayer. In the passage we heard this morning we can see that Jesus started to pray. Jesus is praying about the journey that He has embarked on. The disciples by their efforts are part of a wider and more vital prayer.

This tells us that our prayers are not just about reaching out towards God from the depths of our own concerns and fears, it also links us with Jesus and therefore through the Trinity with God. By praying with Jesus we are connecting directly with God.

From this I would suggest that we should shape our prayers on what Jesus left with us. In this respect Jesus was praying when He received the visit from Moses and Elijah who were the patriarchs that represent the central themes of the Jewish faith; tradition, law and prophecy.

Following Jesus means that we need to start out sitting silently and listen to what God has already shared with us in the stories and traditions of the faithful as well as the Bible. Quite often we find that new directions arise out of the wisdom of the past. We find that the best ways to seek wisdom from God is to be aware of the messages he has already left for us.

Next, we need to understand that a Pilgrimage is not simply about learning from books. In reality a pilgrimage is about connecting with God through our interaction with humanity, just like Jesus did. In digesting the Biblical material we need to recognise it as a living message and the community behind it, not just some words on a page.

As we study the Bible we join with others who have reflected in depth with the texts and become part of the ongoing conversation. This conversation goes into the depth of our lives and we then can start to see how God reaches out to us to show us the way forward. God is with us in the here and now. God is exactly what Jesus is, the shining forth of a divine presence in and through the lines of story and experience which comes through our community.

Now onto the third part of our journey into pilgrimage. The disciples began their journey not as individuals but as a group. Peter, James and John were the three pillars of the early church. Luke uses them to reflect the message for the church as a whole. Therefore, we now undertake the Lenten journey not only with Jesus but also with our sisters and brothers in faith. This is a great idea because it can be a scary journey and when I feel scared I am comforted to have others there to support me.

So there are a few ways to embark on a pilgrimage during the coming period of Lent.

- You can join with others in a small group, even joining in the Bible Study on Mondays.
- Or you can take time to read and reflect on the different ways of looking at Jesus' last journey towards Jerusalem in each of the Gospels. Talk to me if you want to follow this idea through.
- There are also online links to follow if you wish.

Lent is a time to review and reflect on where we are going with our lives and our faith. It is a time to stop drifting through life and renew our emphasis on growing our faith and ministry.

When the three disciples sat with Jesus on that mountain top they joined Him in prayer. During that prayer time amazing things happened. A whole new experience opened up before them. Jesus seemed to change and His clothes started to shine like a dazzling beacon just like Moses did after seeing God pass him by when he received the 10 Commandments and prayed daily in the inner sanctum of the tent temple.

If we look into the Greek carefully the wording says that Jesus' face actually became divine, the human aspect having changed into a divine image. Luke had a particular reason for this. They were connecting with

God.

Like those disciples we are not embarking on a journey with no purpose. There are always difficulties in life and suffering still happens. However, as in the case with Jesus, God is always present. Out of endings and death comes everlasting life and out of the crucifixion comes resurrection for all of us. Out of the darkest times come the light of new beginnings.

If we take the time to reflect we can see from the theme of the Transfiguration comes the possibility of transformation for each of us as we embark on our journey like a pilgrim.

The wonderful promise of the Lenten pilgrimage is that despite all of our failings and shortcomings we can still travel towards a safe place through the turmoil of life. This can be like a ship reaching a safe harbour after a big storm has tossed it about.

Like I said at the beginning Jesus leads us through life without us being stuck in a world which concentrates on trying to explain everything in terms of snippets of 140 characters. Life with Jesus is fully available to everyone who embarks on the pilgrimage.

HYMN 685 Lord I come to you

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSi-9PPPGnl>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

May these gifts traverse mountains, flow through valleys, cover all sorts of terrain in order to make their way to the people and places that need them. May they ease some of the hardships of living and bring joy.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (Lieza Steele)

First of all I have an update about my son who had a stroke 6 weeks ago, which paralysed his left arm and leg. A few days ago he took 3 steps with both legs and has some movement in his arm. He is being discharged from hospital at the end of March. So I want to thank you all for the prayers. They definitely helped all of us. Please continue to pray as he and his family have new challenges ahead of them when he comes home.

For the last few years I have been receiving each month a letter from In Touch Ministries - Reverend Charles Stanley.

I'm sure some of you have heard of him. Anyway this month's letter he shared some lessons he learned from his grandfather when at 17 years old he visited him on a regular basis. And his own experience in a lifetime of walking with Christ, which I would like to share with you.

First of all he says it's ever so important for us to live by Biblical principles and we need to know what's at stake. If our minds aren't grounded in these truths we will be more influenced by our environment than by the Holy Spirit. At times we may feel like a ping pong ball being bounced from one circumstance to another, never recognising what God is doing in our lives. We could react to the pressures of the moment and make decisions based on fluctuating emotions. I'm sure we can all relate to that. But that's not how the Lord intends for His children to live. He knows we need help responding to situations wisely, so He's given us His word filled with teachings to guide us through every circumstance of life.

The 1st principle is to obey God and leave all the consequences to Him. In order to obey God, we must know what He wants us to do. That means time in prayer, and His word, should be our priority in our lives. Next, we must trust Him to handle whatever happens as a result. One of the biggest obstacles to obeying God, is fear of the outcome. We want to know what's being set in motion so we can decide whether we want to proceed. But that's not how the Lord works.

God alone knows the future, and He calls us to trust Him and walk by faith, not by sight. It takes courage to obey when we don't know the outcome, and that is exactly what God wants to build in our lives. Our responsibility is to step out in faith and obedience, knowing that the Lord holds us and the future in His omnipotent hand. He's responsible for the outcome and will use it for His purpose and glory, even if it's not at all what we had hoped for or expected.

The next principle is that God is in absolute control of every circumstance of life. If we belong to Christ, nothing can happen to us outside His will. If He allows difficulty and hardship, He has a purpose for it. But we don't always know what that is. We want everything to work out for the good right now, but the Lord's priorities are eternal. And He promises that the momentary sufferings we experience are not worthy to be compared with the glories that await us in heaven. We live under the canopy of divine omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. If we didn't believe this, we'd have to conclude we're victims at the mercy of the world. But since the Lord is sovereign over every circumstance in our lives, we're not victims. He takes the bad situations and uses them to "perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish us.

The last principle is to trust the Lord for every need in our lives. We need to know God is trustworthy and He is! We can rest in the absolute confidence that if he makes a promise, He'll keep it. If we don't trust Him, we'll be anxious, worried, and fearful, when all the while, He has His deep peace, just waiting for us. I pray that you will apply these principles to your mind

and heart and live in the fullness God, intends for each of us. As we depend on the Holy Spirit, He'll make scriptural truths a reality, so we can live wisely, thus glorifying and honouring the Lord. Amen.

Let us pray,

We thank you for all the frontline workers, doctors and nurses in keeping them strong with perseverance, patience in looking after all the people in their care suffering from Covid virus. We pray for all kindergarten, primary, high school, college and university students who have commenced a new year of study. Lord, give them an open mind, wisdom and understanding of what they need to learn to help them grow and mature. And also that they learn about you God, of your unfailing love and faithfulness. In the name of Jesus we thank you.

We pray for all our congregational brothers and sisters in Christ, whom are waiting for or are recovering from surgeries. Lord, we lift them all up into your loving arms for healing so they know and feel comfort from your great unfailing love, which endures forever and never lets us down. Lord, may you strengthen us to trust you more. In His precious name of Your beloved Son, Christ Jesus. Amen.

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.

HYMN 690 Beauty for brokenness

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5_TVy2gHRg

BENEDICTION

When we leave this place, we will find ourselves on mountain tops, in valleys, in deserts, in wheat belts, on the coast, stuck in the car in a traffic jam. Wherever we are God is with us, so go in peace.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH_HdkWs74&list=RDIiH_HdkWs74&start_radio=1