

TRANSFIGURATION
11/2/24
CAVES BEACH

CALL TO WORSHIP

In the beauty of a snow-covered forest, sparkling with sunlight;
the beauty of a fast flowing stream, sparkling with sunlight;

Artist and Creator God is revealed to us.

In the smile of a newborn baby, in the love of parents for their child,
vulnerable, miraculous, and in family, God is revealed to us.

In the laughter of children on the school bus, in joy-filled evenings in the
park,

friendly, enthusiastic, and happy God is with us.

In the silence of a meditating moment, in the quiet of an evening prayer,
gently, confidently, God's will comes clear to us.

Opening Prayer

Take us to the mountaintop, O God; we will see things differently.

**We will see the great faith figures of the past and value their
influence.**

Take us to the mountaintop, O God; we will be amazed.

**We will see your Beloved One, Jesus, and know he has words
for us to hear.**

Take us to the mountaintop, O God; we will be awed and afraid.

We will know the mystery of The Holy and be ready to worship.

Bring us down from the mountaintop, O God, and prepare us for service.

**We will go about the saving work of Jesus in our church, in this
neighbourhood, and in our suffering world. Amen.**

HYMN 143 Immortal, invisible, God only wise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zd0FyrzVUCM&t=15s>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

We come before you, O God, in awe of your power and might. Heaven and earth are surely full of your glory. We come celebrating our belief that you - God of the whole universe - chose to reveal yourself to us in Jesus Christ. In him your abundant love for all people is made visible. We adore you, O God, and we praise your holy name, and we pray that this time of worship will bring honour and glory to you.

Lord Jesus Christ, God's glory and love shone through you that day on the mountain and you persisted in revealing that glory and love through your words and deeds; through your life of humble service. We hear again these wonderful words of God "You are my Son, the Beloved, listen to him!". We confess our failure to listen to you because of the influence on our lives of the gods of this world. When this happens our attitudes conceal rather than reveal your glory and your love.

If we conceal your love because our pursuit of other priorities prevents us from seeing and serving people in need:

forgive us, Lord.

If we conceal your glory because all we reflect is our own self-centredness:

forgive us, Lord

If we conceal your truth through our lack of credible witness:

forgive us, Lord.

If we conceal your justice through our failure to empower those who are powerless:

forgive us, Lord.

If we conceal your mercy because of our hard and unforgiving attitudes:

forgive us, Lord.

If we conceal your compassion because of our prejudice and intolerance:

forgive us, Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, cleanse our lives of all shameful attitudes of mind and heart so that we reveal your glory in and through all we do and say and are. This we pray in your name and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENES

It is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness" who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6) The good news is that we are not only enlightened by our belief in Christ, we are cleansed and we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

READINGS

- **2 Corinthians 4:3–6**

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing clearly the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do not proclaim ourselves; we

proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who said, "Light will shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

- **Mark 9:2–9**

2. Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became dazzling bright, such as no one on earth could brighten them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us set up three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" 8 Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. 9 As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

HYMN 234 How good, Lord to be here

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

SERMON

How many times during your faith journey have you come to a cross-road in your life and found that you need to rethink the direction that your faith has been taking you?

Some of us might be able to nominate the moment of conversion, however there may well be subsequent times when you have been forced to reconsider things which you had previously taken for granted in your faith. We sometimes have to admit that what Jesus is calling us to do can change as we grow.

What we had previously thought about a Gospel message can sometimes change in the light of our maturing and different life experiences. This sort of thing can cause us to reconsider some previously held perceptions. God's grace is such that we can be forgiven for what in retrospect turns out to be previously off-beam perspectives in our faith.

What should happen is that we should be prepared to re-evaluate our faith so that it becomes deeper and more mature. This is a lifetime journey always drawing us into God's heart and opening us up to new and exciting pathways set out for us through the Holy Spirit.

Reflecting on the passage we just read from Mark's Gospel we can see that Peter, James and John certainly had this sort of experience on that hilltop.

Can you recall that moment when you suddenly become aware of seeing a long-time friend in a completely different way? That is a transfiguration experience.

How often have we felt that a situation which had been a bit confusing suddenly starts to make sense? In that moment a variety of information comes together to make a whole new picture out of what had been a confusing situation. Perhaps it is a friend who has been acting strangely but when they reveal their full situation their actions and behaviour suddenly make sense.

While we have no video evidence of what happened that day on the mountain top the way that it is described to us is more about the impact that the event had on those present, rather than a clear objective witness style description. Perhaps the most relevant thing is that it reveals a lot about Christ and what His message was to His followers.

In the story we are told that the three disciples see both Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. Normally we have seen this as some sort of continuation of the groundbreaking prophetic revelations of these patriarchs of the Jewish faith. In some ways Jesus has been seen as the fulfilment of the faith that those honoured figures from history.

However the works of the theologian, Paul Nuechterlein, has made us rethink this perception. I think that his approach perhaps gives us a fresh understanding of the message coming out of the mountain top event.

Let me paraphrase the passage a bit for you:

“Then they saw Elijah and Moses there talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, this is great! What a team: you, Moses and

Elijah! Let us build three tents, one for each of you and stay here with these heroes of the faith.” He was freaking out a bit and had no idea what to say. But then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “Don’t worry about those two. This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” Suddenly they looked around, and only Jesus remained.”

This approach can change our whole perspective on the event. Looking at it this way we can see that Jesus is being compared with the approaches taken by those historical figures. Rather than looking at the similarities we now reflect on how they differed from Jesus.

We are now being drawn onto aligning with the ministry shared by Jesus rather than being sucked into the way those patriarchs worked in their time. The disciples on the mountain top are being challenged to either go against the popular mind-set of their time or follow the ministry of Jesus, which from here on leads to those final days in Jerusalem.

There are significant differences in the message shared by Jesus and the messages left by Moses and Elijah. This contrast can have a big impact on the way that we view our faith today. Both of those patriarchs confronted significant issues which were present in their communities in their day. Even today people want to draw on their actions in order to justify personal agendas that they are promoting. These people then link those approaches with Jesus in order to justify their actions.

Jesus doesn’t need to co-opt the actions of those patriarchs for His message to stand out from the crowd. We also need to be careful today that we are not drawn back into ancient times. We need to compare Jesus’ ministry with that undertaken by Moses and Elijah we need to put each into context.

Moses’ place as a patriarch largely comes from his promulgating Jewish Laws. His was a judicial approach aimed at enforcing a legal system as part of their faith and dealing harshly with those who transgressed. If the disciples had seen Moses as a person to follow then their actions in building a hut for him would have stood to reinforce and refine the Law handed down through Moses. Consequently discipleship would have included enforcing the multitude of statutes which had built up in the Jewish community over the intervening years.

We can tend to want to attack those who we consider as rivals and make them appear as being unworthy of full membership with Jesus' followers. Those who were ready to stone the woman caught in adultery were relying on Mosaic Law to support their actions. Equally this approach was used to push aside Gentiles and those who had diseases like leprosy or suffered from demonic possession.

Those who wanted to make a scapegoat of Jesus for the benefit of their ideas of how the community should look also uses Mosaic Law. For this reason, Jesus did not support any system which relied on sacred violence. Jesus' image of how God works calls on us to be the ones who seek mercy, not judgement.

Again the voice says: "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to Him!"

Now let's look at Elijah. Apart from being a name regularly touted as a patriarch we best know Elijah as the one who won the contest with the followers of Baal to see who could light a fire on an altar. Once Elijah won that contest he slaughtered all the losers. In this way Elijah can be connected with an approach to religion which honours those who prove God's supremacy by being warrior patriots and annihilating anyone who takes a different world view. This to me is not the good news that Jesus taught us. Jesus sought to reach out to those lost people isolated by a hard line Jewish faith.

In Mark's Gospel Jesus now turns His face towards Jerusalem, not to kill His enemies, not to have a god who controls a religious state, but to fulfil God's love and truth and mercy, even going all the way to the cross. The message from Jesus ministry is to expose God's light and therefore countering religious persecution and damnation.

Once again that voice says: "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to Him!"

While there may be some debate as to whether this approach was Mark's intention in recounting the transfiguration on that mountain top I am sure that Jesus calls on us to become disciples who promote a gospel which is evidenced by acceptance, love, grace and hope for the future.

We are not called to become holy warriors who decimate all those who won't agree with our interpretation of the Gospel. Jesus is calling on us to invite others in love and mercy not delivering judgement and punishment. Rather than being promoters of war and attrition we need to become examples of mercy and peace.

Next Wednesday is Ash Wednesday where we commence our journey through Lent to the Easter event. During that time I would invite you to start to reflect on the struggles of a world which is broken by hate and over consumption and people seeking to dispossess others of their hope for life.

And as we do, it is my prayer that we will again and again be given startling new insights into who Jesus is, so that he may be transfigured in our eyes and we may be converted yet again to a deeper life in his mercy and love.

HYMN 675 Lord, the light of you love is shining
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4hXJ9ax2FY>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

Love has come to us. Let's give from this place of love and generosity. Loving God, receive the offering of our gifts. Spread your love and generosity throughout the earth. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

As we come to God in prayer this morning we bring to mind that it is Jesus who brings light in the darkness; who shines as light even today in so many places where trouble abounds. And like those disciples that day when Jesus was transfigured before them, we will pray that when we ourselves look upon Jesus, we will be transformed too, by his presence with us. So we will pray for the world that has so much need of our Lord's light; and for ourselves as we discern his will for our lives; and we'll remember those who are especially close to us. Let us pray:

Loving God, we come before you this morning as our only hope in the darkness of the horror of the wars and conflict that are across our globe at the present time. All we see is revenge and terror and pain and death with no resolution in sight. What has become of us? Lord take our sorrow and turn it into compassion, take our despair and turn it into hope, take our lives and transform us, correct us, change us into something beautiful for you.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Loving God, we pray this morning for all who are caught up in difficult situations, and particularly for those where wrongdoing is not of their own making and yet they are impacted. We pray for those who are suffering from family and domestic violence, for those who are homeless and living on our streets, for those impacted with environmental issues of flood, fire, cyclone, earthquake. We pray that we who have much will have generous hearts to those in need, both corporately and individually, as we are able. Give to those who volunteer their time to help others, strength and stamina, understanding and love.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Loving God, for all your mercies we give thanks, but most of all for the gift of your Son, Jesus. We give thanks that Christians across the world can come to you in His name with our prayers. At this time we join with our brothers and sisters in Christ, to pray especially for Christians living in Ukraine, Gaza, the West Bank, Israel, and right across the Middle East. We pray too, for the Christian churches and organisations as they endeavour to administer aid, at the same time being in great danger themselves. We give thanks that the light of Christ cannot be extinguished whether by war or any other evil. In all circumstances may the light of Christ shine on in the darkness.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Loving God, we thank you for our community of faith here. We give you thanks for this home to which we belong. Thank you that we can come to worship you freely with joy in our hearts. O God, just as you commanded the disciples on that mountain to listen to your Son, so we pray that our ears will also hear what you say to us here in this church, and that then our hearing will be transformed into action of love for others. This morning we also pray for the selection of our Community Engagement Co-ordinator: guide with your wisdom those tasked with interviewing, and we pray that the outcome will enhance our ability to minister in Jesus' name.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Loving God, we come with our prayers for those we know personally who particularly need your care at this time. We pray for your courage and strength to be with them, that you would help them overcome their fears; that you would hold them, comfort them and be near them always. (We'll have a time of silent prayer now as you name and remember loved ones.) O God, we trust you and leave our loved ones in your hands because we know the love you have because of Jesus. We pray for doctors, nurses,

aged care staff, paramedics and all who care for our medical needs. Grant to them wisdom, patience and gentleness and, to us all, your peace. We ask these prayers in the wonderful name of Jesus, who taught us the prayer we will now sing together:

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 231 At the name of Jesus

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7w-tDjlpqk

BENEDICTION

God has gathered us here and has blazed into view.
We have seen beautiful Jesus and have held a glimpse
of the brilliance of God's presence and love in our lives.
And now it is time to carry this love with us into our ordinary lives.
This love goes before us, surrounds us, and fills us.
Mercy and goodness follow after us.
Listen to Jesus' voice and trust in God's faithfulness,
let it guide you, wherever it might take you.
May the grace and peace of Christ be with you always.
Amen.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH_HdkWs74