



The Sunday next before Lent 11th February 2024 The Transfiguration of Christ

The Transfiguration Window in Durham Cathedral in memory of Lord Ramsey former Bishop of Durham and Archbishop of York and of Canterbury for whom the transfiguration and glory were theological well springs. It is immensely detailed with images and scenes etched into the glass as God's glory sheds light on the events of daily life. (view online)

In the name of the + Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

HYMN

1 Come, let us join our cheerful songs
with angels round the throne;
ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
but all their joys are one.

2 'Worthy the Lamb that died,' they cry,
'to be exalted thus';
'Worthy the Lamb,' our lips reply,
'for he was slain for us.'

3 Jesus is worthy to receive
honour and power divine;
and blessings, more than we can give,
be, Lord, for ever thine.

4 Let all that dwell above the sky,
and air, and earth, and seas,
conspire to lift thy glories high,
and speak thine endless praise.

5 The whole creation joins in one
to bless the sacred name
of him that sits upon the throne,
and to adore the Lamb.

Introduction to confession

Let us prepare ourselves to receive God's Word.

Lord God,
we have sinned against you;
we have done evil in your sight.
We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us

and restore us to the joy of your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Absolution

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse you from your sins,
and restore you in his image +
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Collect

Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
give us grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

A Reading from The Old Testament
2 Kings 2 1-12

2 Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. ³ The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent."

⁴ Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. ⁵ The company of prophets^[b] who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent."

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. ⁷ Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. ⁸ Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." ¹⁰ He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." ¹¹ As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. ¹² Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

- ¹ The mighty one, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.
- ² Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.
- ³ Our God comes and does not keep silence,
before him is a devouring fire,
and a mighty tempest all around him.
- ⁴ He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:
- ⁵ "Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"
- ⁶ The heavens declare his righteousness,
for God himself is judge.



A reading from the New Testament
2 Corinthians 4. 3-6

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. 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 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, "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.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

HYMN

1 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.

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

The Gospel
Mark 9 2-9

Alleluia, alleluia.
I am the light of the world, says the Lord
Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness
But will have the light of life

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

Glory be to thee O Lord

² 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 white, such as no one^[b] on earth could bleach 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 make three dwellings,^[c] 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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to thee, O Christ

Reflection

One aspect of the story of the transfiguration, common to all accounts, is the reaction of Peter. He says: "*It is good to be her...*," and then offers to build three tents. It sounds like the unthinking things we say when overwhelmed. Mark is kind and covers his human reaction and embarrassment, '*They did not know what to say for they were terrified*'. Wanting to build tents was a way to hold the moment. Did they fear that Jesus would be suddenly taken from them like Elijah?

Moses and Elijah lived many hundreds of years apart in history, but appear together with Jesus. Traditionally they are thought to represent the Law and the Prophets which is why they are there. But might it also be because both men had known the cost of loneliness and suffering in fidelity to God and were able to strengthen Jesus at this pivotal moment in His life and ministry? What is significant is that they are recognisably 'alive' and equally present in that moment.

The vision fades and Jesus is alone. We are to understand Him now as the emblematic embodiment of both the Law and Prophets in his person. Jesus is the focus, in Him is 'found all the law and the prophets'. He is the fulfilment.

The disciples cannot hold this moment, but they are changed by it. They are looking at a new way to understand God's presence. Jesus is changed and they are changed. In this event the disciples see the glory of God. They also see in Moses and Elijah a glimpse of existence beyond the bounds of time and space.

Jesus tells them to speak of this to no one until He is risen from the dead. That would probably have seemed improbable hours before, but not now. Their eyes may be dazzled but the first glimmer of a different knowledge is there. A knowledge of Jesus which they are still digesting and must be kept secret.

There is an extraordinary statement in one of Paul's letters; he writes: *(God)...has predestined us to be confirmed to the image of his Son.*" *Romans 8.29*. It is God's purpose that we become like Jesus. I don't think it is something we can force or try and do. All that we can contribute is love, willingness and obedience brought about by a change in our thinking which is why the Collect prays for '*grace to perceive*' – to understand.

Hand in hand with our growth is our sharing with Christ in the suffering of the world. It matters to us, for we know the world is deeply loved by God. The collect for this week alludes to this. '*Give us grace*

to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with Him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory.'

The transfiguration is a preparation primarily for Jesus but also for the disciples. From this point Jesus turns towards his passion. From this point the disciples begin to grasp something of what lies ahead – for Jesus – and for themselves.

Suffering is unavoidable for us all. But understood in the light of our discipleship as Christians, it takes on a different interpretation. C S Lewis writes:

We shall draw nearer to God not by trying to avoid the sufferings inherent in all loves, but by accepting them and offering them to Him, throwing away all defensive armour. If our hearts need to be broken and if He chooses this as the way in which they should break, so be it. (from *The Four Loves*)

Jesus instructs them not to speak of this experience until after he has been raised from the dead. Imagine someone saying that to you. The experience of the vision of the glory of Jesus will from now undergird what happens. They cannot speak of it and perhaps initially it was unbelievable and inexplicable, but after this experience their minds were not closed to the unimagined.

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Intercessions

Gracious god, we pray:

For our nation, and its well-being,
for our King and the government
We pray for those places people suffer
through the results of natural disaster,
climate change, famine war and disease
persecution for their faith.

We pray for the leaders of nations
and governments seemingly indifferent to the common good
we pray for the honouring of human rights,
and for the relief of the oppressed.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.

We pray for the renewal of the church in faith, love, and service.
for Martin, our Bishop and for the life of this church and community.

For all people in their daily life and work:
for the young and the elderly,
for neighbours, for families,
for all who are worried or fearful,
for those who feel cut off and alone.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.

We pray for those who are in any need.
for the lonely, the, sorrowful, the sick and the troubled ...

For all who bring comfort, care, and healing.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.

We pray for those who have died in recent days, ...
and all whom we remember with love and affection.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.

Let us commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.
Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your
Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
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.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty, +
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMN

1 Forth in your name, O Lord, I go,
my daily labour to pursue,
determined only you to know
in all I think or speak or do.

2 The task your wisdom has assigned,
O let me cheerfully fulfil;
in all my works your presence find,
and prove your good and perfect will.

3 May I find you at my right hand;
your eyes see truly what I do.
I labour on at your command
and offer all my works to you

4 Give me to bear your easy yoke
and every moment watch and pray
and still to things eternal look,
and hasten to your glorious day.

5 For you I joyously employ
whate'er you in grace have given:
I run my daily course with joy
and closely walk with you to heaven.

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