

Sunday 2nd March 2025: 7th Sunday before Lent – The transfiguration

For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or some other suitable time.

Theme for today is 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!'

Our call to worship Psalm 99

Hymn StF 113 H&P: O Worship the King

Prayer:

God of Moses and Elijah, Father of Jesus Christ our Lord, we recall that awesome moment on the mount when Peter, James, and John heard your voice and saw the touch of glory on your Son. May we by faith behold his majesty and give him the obedience and reverence which are his due; and to him name be dominion and power, now and for evermore. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

When Christ appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is, so, let us confess our sins that mar his image in us: Your unfailing kindness, O Lord, is in the heavens, and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds: Lord, have mercy, Lord, have mercy. Your righteousness is like the strong mountains, and your justice as the great deep: Christ, have mercy, Christ, have mercy. For with you is the well of life, and in your light, we shall see true light: Lord, have mercy, Lord, have mercy. May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Collect for today:

Lord God, whose glory shines upon us in the face of Jesus Christ, and whose nature is made known to us in the mystery of the cross: number us we pray among his faithful followers for whom nothing matters but the doing of your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn 15 StF The splendour of the King

Introduction:

I find it interesting that the Sunday before the beginning of Advent and the Sunday before the beginning of Lent follow very similar themes. On the Sunday before Advent we reflect on Christ the King and now as we prepare for the journey through, we have the amazing story of the transformation of Jesus on the mountain top. Both these stories are there to remind us of the divinity of Christ and in both these experiences we start to emphasise that Jesus the man is Christ, the Messiah, God incarnate. Over the coming weeks people will give things up for Lent, while others will join Lent groups and study together in preparation for the events of Holy Week and Easter.

Bible readings: Exodus 34: 29-35 2 Corinthians 3: 12-4.2 Luke 9: 28-36

Reflection *brought to us by John Hull one of our Local Preachers.*

When reading Luke's account of the Transfiguration, I was reminded of an event of many years ago. I was 17, and holidaying in North Wales with two of my friends from school. As a break from travelling on all the railways in the area, we decided to climb Snowdon. The bus from Porthmadog took us to near the base of the mountain, not the main route from Llanberis, but the other side, to a route named Watkins Path. It was a bright, warm, even sunny day, and we set off with enthusiasm. After a while the path became narrower and steeper, and we began to realise that we were not properly equipped to climb a mountain. We didn't have any of those in Essex. Suddenly, everything changed. The path ended, we were on a scree slope, covered in loose, small rocks. The clouds descended, so we could hardly see in front of us. It was a bit scary. And then a surprise. A group of four 'proper' climbers, well-equipped and moving fast, appeared out of the clouds and passed us. In a minor panic we asked which way to go. 'Just keep going upwards' was the reply. So, we did, struggling on, until we reached piles of litter amongst the rocks, and realised we were nearing the top. We were very relieved to get there. There was no view, of course as the clouds were low, but we still felt that we had achieved something. Needless to say, we took the train back to the base of the mountain!

There were three friends with Jesus when they climbed the mountain to pray. Perhaps a strange place to go to pray, if it was as hard work to climb as our visit to Snowdon. The three disciples with Jesus were tired, or 'sleepy' as the NIV version says. But they did pray, and while doing so Jesus' face shone in the sun and his clothes turned dazzling white – the Transfiguration. To make matters even more strange, two Old Testament leaders appeared, Moses and Elijah, and were talking to Jesus.



The disciples might have been sleepy, but this brought them to life, and Peter, always the one to jump in first, blurted out a suggestion that three shelters should be built. The Bible, rather condescendingly, says that 'he did not know what he was saying', but considering what he was seeing, perhaps that's not surprising. At that time a cloud descended, and a voice said 'this is my Son, whom I have chosen, listen to him!'. The disciples were afraid as they entered the cloud, again, not surprising, but then everything suddenly returned to normal and Jesus was on his own again. Well, not really to normal, as the disciples had seen Jesus as he truly is, the Son of God, something they would never forget.

Climbing a mountain to pray is not something we need to do, though it would be worthwhile to be able to glory in God's creation. We don't need to climb a mountain to see Jesus, either. He's there with us every day, when we pray, when we worship, in acts of kindness and love. Like me and my friends on Snowdon, life can sometimes feel like walking through fog, or a thick cloud, but that cloud will lift if we let Jesus help us to see God's love, as we listen to him and trust him.

Hymn: 59 StF Lord, the light of your love is shining

Prayers of Intercession:

We remember creation, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit: places of beauty and brilliance, places of grandeur and spectacle, places of extravagant diversity. We pray, creating God, for places damaged and degraded, for people scraping a living from land made fruitless by human greed. Silence. Help us to live sparingly and to care for creation. Gracious God: Hear our prayer. We remember humanity, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit: people of beauty and brilliance, people of gifts and grace, people of extravagant diversity. We pray, healing God, for people whose lives are diminished because they live with their own or another's mental illness; for people facing the stigma caused by misunderstanding about mental illness; for people struggling to find help when they need it. Silence. Help us to be welcoming, helpful and more aware of those things that make for mental wellbeing for others and ourselves. Gracious God: Hear our prayer. We remember the Church, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit: a community of beauty and brilliance, a community of love and compassion, a community of extravagant diversity. We pray, inspiring God, for denominations working out how to be one family, offering an effective witness to your love in the world; for churches with projects that offer help to people struggling with mental illness; for ourselves and people in our own families and community who need to be understood, accepted and loved. Silence. Help us to be willing to change ourselves and inspired to change the world. Gracious God: Hear our prayer. In the name of Christ. Amen.

Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord's Prayer...

Hymn: 319 StF Christ triumphant ever reigning

Closing blessing –

Christ, whose glory fills the skies, fill you with radiance and scatter the darkness from your path. Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, gladden your eyes and warm your heart. Christ, the Dayspring from on high, draw near to guide your feet into the way of peace. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.