**Morning Praise @ Home 2nd March 2025**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**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** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Luke 9:28 – 36

### Reflection from Sue Coyne The Transfiguration of Jesus

We often hear sermons where we are encouraged to apply the biblical narrative to our own lives. But the Transfiguration of Jesus, witnessed by his three closest disciples, is unique. We can’t frame it into our everyday life or ‘domesticate’ it. Instead, we simply need to imaginatively draw close to the event with awe and reverence, then contemplate its significance.

But why did it come about? Given that his Son often went up mountains to pray, why does God choose to transfigure Jesus at *this* moment? It is because God is inaugurating the next stage of the Saviour’s mission.

Challenging information takes a while to process. I remember reading a biography of a girl who was recruited into the Second World War Special Operations Executive. The selection process was stringent, then, as one of the very few chosen, she underwent more intensive on-the-ground training. Finally, the time came for her to be delivered behind enemy lines in Nazi-occupied France.

So far everything had been disclosed on a need-to-know basis, but now her superiors explained what she would actually undertake, which was desperately dangerous. As she waited a week for the right weather conditions to enable the parachute drop, the reality of her jeopardy came home to her. It was her final opportunity to bail out, or go for it, and the responsibility weighed heavily.

Earlier in Ch 9 of Luke’s Gospel, Jesus had just been recognised by Peter as the Messiah, God’s chosen one. Then, *for the first time*, Jesus has shared that he will need to suffer and die to achieve God’s mission. Like the SOE operative, the reality of the cost has been disclosed to him.

Now he’s had eight days to ponder the situation. It is a heavy truth being revealed - is that really what God requires? When a friend of mine went to her doctor with symptoms of breast cancer, whilst she was alarmed and had started down the ‘what if?’ mental by-ways, she wasn’t quite sure whether it was serious. Mammograms were taken, plus a biopsy, then she was recalled for the results. And the reality was made clear to her….

For Jesus, the Transfiguration was akin to getting the x-ray pictures - rather than dealing with presentiments, he is faced with a concrete diagnosis: this is what has led to the situation; here’s the reality of the cancer; and this is what will need to happen in order to deal with it.

Humans not only need time to process difficult information, they also need encouragement that, with support, they can face what awaits them. The Transfiguration also does that for Christ.

If Jesus is understandably bowed down by what he’s come to realise, here are Moses and Elijah, representatives of all the Old Testament Law and Prophecies, explaining how he will be the fulfilment of everything that God has been doing for his people so as to rescue them from bondage to sin.

And Luke frames the event with all sorts of signs signifying God is behind it.

1. Jesus is on a mountain, associated in Scripture with meeting God’s challenge, as when Moses received the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24:12) and Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:1-2).
* Soon Jesus too will plead with his Father in the Gethsemane Garden (on the Mt of Olives) not to face the agony of his own sacrifice and later, on that same Mt of Olives, the disciples will lose sight of their leader as the risen Jesus ascends into heaven (Acts 1:9,12).

Mountains are places of divine revelations - which are not always easy to bear.

1. V 29says:‘As Jesus was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning’, another vivid reminder that ‘When Moses came down from Mount Sinai … his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord’ (Exodus 34:29). Jesus is shining with divine light.
* Simeon has prophesised that he will be ‘a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of .. Israel.’ (Luke 2:32) and Jesus said of himself that he had ‘come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in [him] should stay in darkness.’ (John 12:46)
* Later this will be borne out in his revelation to Saul in Acts 9, Christ’s divine light literally blinding his persecutor.

Here, the disciples witness Jesus suffused with God’s light.

1. In v.31 there is reference to Jesus’ ‘departure’ and the word Luke uses is ‘exodus’ - that great Old Testament moment of costly liberation, of salvation from an enemy following the sacrifice of lambs.
* God’s agenda is to set his people free, not from physical oppression this time, but from bondage to sin - but it will again be achieved only through a sacrificial death.
1. The cloud which ‘appeared and covered them’ also signified God’s involvement, it having covered Moses on Mt Sinai (Exodus 24:15-16)and subsequently filled the Jerusalem Temple’s Holiest Place.
* We also know that the cloud of God’s presence will enfold Jesus when he ascends back to heaven (Acts 1:9) and that when he comes again in majesty at the end of time, it will be ‘in a cloud with power and great glory.’ (Luke 21:27).

Here the cloud is frightening for the disciples. Like driving into a thick bank of fog, when all the markers we use to orientate ourselves suddenly disappear, Peter’s babbling is silenced and, according to Matthew’s narrative (ch 17), Jesus’ friends fall ‘facedown to the ground, terrified’. God’s presence is awesome.

5. Finally Luke tells us that‘A voice came from the cloud’ commanding attentiveness to Jesus (v35). The disciples would have recalled that

* ‘a loud voice’ had dictated the [Ten] commandments to Moses (Deuteronomy 5:22) and an audible voice ‘from heaven’ was heard when Jesus was baptised in Luke 3:22, proclaiming God’s affirmation of his Son

The message of each of these occasions is essentially ‘Take note! Don’t ignore what God is doing!’ and that is emphasised again here: ‘This is my Son, whom I have chosen; *listen to him*.’

Through all these manifestations that God is in it, Jesus is being assured - ‘Don’t doubt or be deterred by the faithless, my Son. You are the culmination of Scripture and I adore, honour and trust you - What’s more, I’ve got your back.’

Luke is also showing us that this dramatic transfiguring of Jesus is the hinge point in *his* story and in all of history - the recognition that everything from the past is pointing towards what Jesus must achieve next. If the Old Testament predicted his arrival, and his baptism was the start of his mission, here is the illuminating x-ray that foretells what must come next for Jesus - giving up his life to defeat death, rising once more and ascending to heaven, until he comes to claim the ultimate victory and establishes a world without sin and decay.

And God’s delight in him is because, like the girl whose biography I read, Jesus chooses to accept the mission. Just 20 verses later, Luke tells us that ‘Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem’ (v51), the place where he’s now sure he will be killed as he fulfils what his Father has wanted from the start - a restored relationship with all of humanity.

And what does witnessing this awesome moment do for the disciples present?

* It confirms Peter’s earlier realisation that their leader is indeed the Son of God, His chosen Saviour for the world, pre-eminent of all God’s servants, to whom they must listen.
* But they also learn that the liberation they associate with the Messiah won’t involve glorious victories over the occupiers but will come via Jesus’ descent into death.

This mountain-top experience is not exhilarating but scary and overwhelming. Even chatterbox Peter cannot speak of it.

It is only *after the Resurrection* that the disciples can see how this dramatic encounter was ‘Good News’. It is then that Peter can write excitedly (in 2 Peter 1:16-18) that ‘we were eyewitnesses of [Jesus’] majesty. He received honour and glory from God the Father’. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.’

It has stayed with him. And by waiting, trusting and obeying what his Lord commands, Peter and the other disciples have come to realise how great God is; how deep is their Saviour’s love.

Luke’s portrayal of this event reminds us that there is a time when we need simply to shut up before the God-head, simply fall before his greatness and acknowledge that he’s Almighty and transcendent. God is not our ‘mate’. Even when we are called into intimacy with his Son, we should keep in mind that Jesus is already enthroned as the Lord and judge of our World; that his Father is the Creator and sustainer of the Universe.

We all need to come back to the source of our faith. It’s never about us, and how we’d like to frame it, but always about Christ the Lord. Let’s take time to bow down, contemplate this event and come back to the heart of worship. **Amen**

### Affirmation of faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

Lord, we bring before you the needs of our church, our world, our communities, and ourselves.

Bless and guide John and our lay leaders as we enter the Lenten season of penitence and discipline.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We pray for peace in our world. We know that we are part of the problems that the world faces, and we know that wherever there is resentment between people there will be tension.  We pray that those who lead us and the other nations of the world will always try to solve issues in a peaceful way, and intervene in the world’s conflicts with forethought and common sense. We especially pray for those meeting at this time to try to resolve the situation surrounding the Ukraine.

 Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We thank you for the joy of human love, and for all those among whom we live and work. We pray particularly for loved ones for whom we are worried whether about their health, or circumstances, or life direction. May we always be able to help each other just as you love and help us.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We remember with thanksgiving before you those who have died, in particular at this time Father Mark Turner and Alan Hudson. Comfort those who grieve and those who are worried about how they will cope on their own; reassure them that you will never leave them to carry the burdens of life unaided.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**