**Morning Praise @ Home 27th February 2022**

**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 Readings Exodus 34: 29 – end Luke 9: 28 – 36

**Reflection from John**

My friend, who is not a Christian, once said that that when Christians speak about God, he can feel like a primitive tribesman who suddenly encounters London - he just can’t get his head around it.

If we want to begin to get our head around God, what one thing should we do more of?

Moses climbed up Mount Sinai - up ***that*** mountain - and disappeared into the cloud at the top, the cloud that somehow represents the presence of God.

There he stayed for forty days in that haze, time apart in the presence of God, receiving from God the Ten Commandments and other laws and teachings for the children of Israel.

Then… he climbed… back… down … the mountain.

But when he got down people won’t look at his face.

They glanced away; they averted their eyes. Something had happened to Moses while he was up the mountain, and his face was glowing bright, and the people were scared.

Four hundred years later…

Elijah climbed up the Mountain - some say that same mountain - there was no cloud, but thunder and earthquake that somehow represent the presence of God.

He covered his face with his mantle lest it too should glow bright like Moses’ did. He came to the mouth of the cave. And then the Voice.

Nine hundred years later - Jesus climbed up a mountain. An unknown mountain, though some say the same mountain.

With him he took three special friends - Peter, James, and John.

The four of them spend time apart in the presence of God praying. Peter, James and John were having the trouble that many of us will have when we’re praying.

Perhaps you’re praying, your mind begins to wander; perhaps you’re praying at home on a comfy sofa, and you begin to nod off. John, Peter and James were nodding off.

Then suddenly something happened.

Something happened to Jesus’ clothes - they were no longer the dull grey tunic of someone who of necessity had bought the cheapest cloth.

They were no longer dirty with the dust and debris of days on the road. They had become white - pure white - like a fresh coat of paint only whiter.

Then something happened to Jesus’ face - perhaps like what happened to Moses’ face - perhaps more so.

And two figures appeared.

Can it be? Yes, it is! Moses and Elijah!

The great law giver, the great prophet.

The two figures whom in days of old God met on the mountain. And here they were, Moses and Elijah, and Jesus was talking to them.

The disciples were afraid. Peter tried to say something. He didn’t know what he was saying. He stuttered out something about building shelters.

Then the Cloud - just like that cloud from Mount Sinai. Then the Voice.

And then it was all over, and the disciples didn’t know what to make of it, they didn’t know what to say.

Two thousand years later and here we are in the UK - where over half the population claim to have had a religious experience.

Quite a startling statistic when you consider that a huge proportion of people say they don’t believe in God and only 8% of the population go to church.

Yet according to surveys that have been done, most of this country claim to have had a Spiritual experience.

Some of you may have had quite potent experiences of the presence of God. I don’t know what because each one of them is unique.

For most people it will have been something less dramatic than Moses’.

Perhaps a sense of awe as you go up to receive the sacrament, perhaps a sense of overwhelming peace as you are praying or being prayed for.

But however dramatic your experiences of God may have been, I bet if I asked:

“How many of you have suddenly had your faces physically glow like something out of the X Files?”

I bet I wouldn’t get many hands up.

So, we need to take the unique experiences of God - of Moses, of Elijah and of the Transfiguration - and apply them to our more everyday experiences of God.

And the first lesson I’d like to take is that these experiences should have an effect on us.

Yet for a lot of people today it seems to be more a case of “Oh… that was interesting”.

Half the country in surveys say they have had a Religious, a Spiritual experience. They have had that sense of God, that sense of the divine, and yet in many cases, it seems to make no difference in their life

So many people who have an experience of God - yet so few who respond, by coming to worship.

It’s like the time when Jesus healed 10 lepers - ten people whose lives were turned around - and yet only one came back to say, “thank you”.

And even us - in the middle of Sunday Communion we can be caught up in the mystery and awe of the event - and yet by Tuesday morning how much of an impact will it be making on our lives?

Are we too missing the point?

So, firstly Spiritual experiences should have an effect on us.

Secondly, - if we spend time experiencing God’s glory we should begin to reflect God’s Glory.

“And all of us with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of God 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”

When Moses went up Mount Sinai and spent time in the presence of God, his face began to physically glow.

Now I wonder if you have ever had this experience meeting someone who is exceptionally prayerful. Their face may not physically glow, but they have an inward glow.

That is God’s call for all of us - that the more time we spend in prayer with him we should begin to develop an inward glow.

Moses spent 40 days on the top of Mount Sinai - we’re about to begin the 40 days of Lent - what an excellent time to spend in the presence of God.

Thirdly we learn that spending time in the presence of God gives us new understandings.

Moses spent time in the presence of God and came down with not just the Ten Commandments but reams of instructions and laws.

Elijah spent time in the presence of God and was shown he was not alone and given a new mission to anoint Kings and prophets.

John, Peter and James spent time up the mountain at the transfiguration and came to a new understanding of Jesus as God.

And as St Paul puts it, when someone is not yet a believer, when the scriptures are read, it is as if a veil was over their minds. “But when they turn to the Lord, the veil is removed”

Now that may sound arrogant, but don’t forget, St Paul is writing out of his own experience – from being a Pharisee, having spent years studying the Torah, and yet completely missing the point of the Scriptures.

Then he had the Damascus-road experience, and in a flash, he had a radical new knowledge of what they were all about.

So - if that is a lesson to be learnt from our Spiritual Experiences, that still leaves one question burning like the burning bush - How do I get a spiritual experience?

You may be like the many people who answered the survey and said they had had a spiritual experience. Hopefully what I have said will have helped you to interpret it and workout how to respond. Or alternatively you might be feeling a little left out, you may never have had an experience like that, and you wonder why not and how to get one.

Well firstly remember that God is sovereign. If he wants to act, he will, and if he doesn’t he won’t.

But, if such a huge proportion of the country say they have had a spiritual experience, then the chances of God acting in this way must be higher than you or I would initially think.

There are lessons from the bible passages. When Moses wanted to hear God, he took time and went alone up Mount Sinai.

Elijah might have been quite burnt out and angry with God, but he still took time and went up the mountain and there he heard the still small voice.

John, James and Peter might have been so exhausted that when they tried to pray, they fell asleep, but they still followed Jesus’ lead, took time and went up the mountain.

Paradoxically, if you think you’ve got it, you are probably not there yet; while the more people genuinely have that glow, the less aware they are of it.

If we want to hear God, we too need to take time to pray.

There’s an internet meme that says:

“If you want to hear God, make time for silence because the world shouts but God whispers”

Sometimes of course God does speak loudly - like in the voice from the Cloud that the disciples heard on the mountain top.

Or in the voice at Jesus’ baptism, but if we’re too busy to hear, we won’t.

That’s why it’s important to take time each day to pray.

Never think:

“Because I can’t set aside much time it isn’t worth it.”

That’s one of the Devil’s classic lies.

He loves to make the perfect the enemy of the good.

He’ll tell you that, because you forgot to pray yesterday and the day before, there’s no real point trying today - just face it, you’re a failure at praying - and that too is a lie.

Every day is a fresh day to pray.

Taking time out regularly to be with God is worth it.

That’s what Jesus and James and John and Peter did when they went up the mountain to pray - and look what happened to them.

God wants to meet with us. God wants to speak with us.

But if we are too busy, how can we expect to hear him?

**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 led by Tony**

**Let us pray for the church and for our world**

Heavenly Father, you promised to hear us when we pray in faith. We bring before you now those things on our hearts as we open ourselves to you.

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

We pray for the church around the world. For those who face hatred and violence for their faith, for those whose churches are under threat, for those who put their lives at risk to declare their Christian faith.

We pray for the General Synod who meet this month and we ask for your loving guidance on the way forward for your church in the world. Bless all church leaders and remind them of your unfailing love, and remind them that you, Lord, are at the heart of all they do.

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

We pray for our community here in Burton and Puddington; for those who call this place home and for all who visit or pass through. May your face be seen here in the works and actions of all Burton and Puddington people, in acts of kindness, hospitality, friendship and love.

We pray for all who are working to assist in finding someone to lead our church here in Burton and Shotwick.

We pray for those who are facing health issues or who are worried about loved ones, especially those who are waiting for a diagnosis or who are waiting for treatment.

We pray for all who mourn the loss of loved ones. We especially pray for John and the whole family. Be with them, Lord, as they remember Sue.

We pray for those whose lives are blighted by debt, addiction, poverty, anger and all the things that make it difficult to feel loved by you, Father. We ask that as members of this church we stand as beacons of hope in an uncertain world for many. We give thanks for all our interactions with our schools and for everything we attempt either in groups or as individuals to reach out to others in your name. We ask your continued blessing on all that we do.

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

We pray for our world. For those who seek to find peace, for those who work to protect our environment, for those who run into troubled areas as others flee from them.

We pray for peace in Ukraine and all those who seek for peace in your name.

Our world can appear to be a broken place, but we ask you, Lord, to remind us that in your love, we are one people and we offer our thanks to those who put themselves at risk of violence or ridicule when they try to bring about healing and change.

**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**