

## Call to worship

To God be all glory,  
the One who visits us in three persons,  
the Holy Trinity of hope and love.

For there is no place which is without God,  
and no time when God is not there.  
For in God is the beginning and the end,  
the source of all that is,  
in the wonder of universal life.

And yet, that same God takes us by the hand and leads us,  
as the life of Christ walks our human way  
and shows us that life is stronger than death.

In the Holy Spirit, we are gifted, again and again,  
and are called onwards toward a future.  
in which we are surrounded with love and grace,

Wherever you are – in a church building, at home or in another place, all that is true for YOU.

**Hymn** StheF 16 H&P 18 We give immortal praise

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U\\_DhtRqNP0M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_DhtRqNP0M)

<p>1 We give immortal praise to God the Father's love, for all our comforts here, and better hopes above. He sent his own eternal Son to die for sins that all have done.</p> <p>2 To God the Son belongs immortal glory too, who bought us with his blood from everlasting woe : and now he lives, and now he reigns, and sees the fruit of all his pains.</p>	<p>3 To God the Spirit's name immortal worship give, whose new-creating power makes the dead sinner live : his work completes the great design, and fills the soul with joy divine.</p> <p>4 Almighty God, to thee be endless honours done, the undivided Three, and the mysterious One : where reason fails with all her powers, there faith prevails, and love adores.</p> <p>Isaac Watts (1674–1748)</p>
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## Prayer.

God, who we know as Father, we adore you. In your presence we struggle for words to express your power in creation, the majesty of your being. We can never in the life grasp you, but you grasp us in your heavenly embrace.

God, who we know as Jesus the Son and Saviour, in you we see divine love and human greatness combined. By your birth, life, death and resurrection we have hope and purpose.

God, who we experience as Holy Spirit, through you we find it in ourselves to be people of faith, being a holiness we could not be of ourselves and doing what by ourselves we would never have it in us to do.

Almighty and eternal God,  
you have revealed yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,  
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,  
that we may truly worship you.  
Hold us firm in this faith,

that we may know you in all your ways,  
who are three Persons yet one God.

And this one thing we ask, that in this service may each of us know what we have been in the presence of a Living God and bless us with a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit that we may continue to live to your praise and glory. now and for ever. Amen

### All Age Address video

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SnnK3YP30oLDMnQjtEvv0p5vZgnjoLX0/view?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SnnK3YP30oLDMnQjtEvv0p5vZgnjoLX0/view?usp=share_link)

**Bible Reading Lectionary** Gospel reading Matthew 17 v 1-9

**Hymn** StheF 259 Jesus on the mountain peak H&P 155 (same hymn but begins Christ instead of Jesus)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y85VdUplqYs>

<p>1 Jesus, on the mountain peak, stands alone in glory blazing. Let us, if we dare to speak, join the saints and angels praising : Alleluia ! Alleluia ! Alleluia !</p> <p>2 Trembling at his feet we saw Moses and Elijah speaking. All the Prophets and the Law shout through them their joyful greeting : Alleluia ! Alleluia ! Alleluia !</p>	<p>3 Swift the cloud of glory came, God, proclaiming in its thunder, Jesus as the Son by name ! Nations, cry aloud in wonder : Alleluia ! Alleluia ! Alleluia !</p> <p>4 Jesus is the chosen One, living hope of every nation, hear and heed him, everyone ; sing, with earth and all creation : Alleluia ! Alleluia ! Alleluia !</p> <p>Brian Wren (b. 1936)</p>
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### Sermon

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QloRffPXo45\\_I1R\\_gWbvpvma-alrY6\\_ij/view?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QloRffPXo45_I1R_gWbvpvma-alrY6_ij/view?usp=share_link)

It seems such a short time ago that our eldest grandchild was a toddler and I was teaching him to play SNAP. Now he is at uni on a degree course for Finance and Accounting. I am able to follow the broad details of what he doing but some of the technical language he has to explain to me so that I can fully appreciate what he is experiencing. This is much the same for the lectionary Gospel reading today. The broad details of the story are easy to follow. Jesus takes Peter, James and John to a high mountain. There they see Jesus changed in his appearance. Then on to the scene come the long since dead Elijah and Moses. Peter wants to make 3 dwellings. They hear God speak and suddenly it is all over.

However, when we look into the text there is so much there for us to understand about the meaning of this story. So what we are going to do is to firstly, look a bit closer at what we might call the technical language of the text and then secondly ask what the story might mean for us today to take into the coming week.

The story of the Transfiguration starts with **6 days later**.

The number 6 would have had a significance for the people of the time that it may not have immediately for us today. We will have in our minds that in the Genesis Creation story, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day that Creation was completed, so the number 6 became a number of completeness. Something was going to happen which would show the full glory, the full majesty of God's work. What you may not be so familiar with is this: 6 days was the preparation time needed for the high priests to prepare themselves for entering the Holy of Holies on Yon Kippur: the time when the most sacred person – the high priest- entered the most sacred place- the Holy of Holies- at that most sacred time of Yon Kippur, the Day of Atonement. So we know immediately at the start of this passage that we might well be in for a 'close encounter' with God. And all this reinforced by the next bit of text which says they went up a high mountain. In Jewish life a high mountain was traditionally the setting for meetings with God/revelations:

**mountaintops were high above the clouds the Jewish people discerned that this is where God could be experienced par excellence.** Think Moses, think Elijah!

Then the story says he was **transfigured** before them. The literal meaning is 'to change ones form'. So they saw, just for a short time, Jesus in the glorious form he might have in heaven. The same Greek word is used in passages in Philippians and in Corinthians: glory was thought of an actual shining ethereal substance. It says his clothes became dazzling white- but that translation doesn't do justice to the Greek word used (exastrpto) which is used of *flashing like lightening*.

Now on the scene come Moses and Elijah- long since dead. Moses the great law giver, Elijah the great prophet. The very last two verses in the Old Testament, the end of the book of Malachi, tell the people to remember the teaching of Moses and that in the end times Elijah will appear once more. Here we see the Old Testament fulfilled as they stand with Jesus.

Peter now wants to preserve the moment, to make three dwellings. The Jewish feast of Tabernacles Sukkot commemorates the years that the Israelites wandered in the desert after their Exodus departure from Egypt. There they had built a Tabernacle – a shelter – *to contain the Glory of the Lord*.

But shelter building is not going to happen! There is a bright cloud, the Shechinah – lots of references in the book of Exodus to God being in the Shechinah. And God speaks. Then suddenly it is all over.

So what does all this mean for **us** for the days to come? This morning, I draw you attention to this:

**V8 And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.**

Suddenly all that mountain top experience was gone. We may yearn for an otherworldly experience. Some people have had them and can give testimony to them – I have had one or two myself. We could say WOW that must have been the most significant encounter of their discipleship to have been part of seeing that glory .....that glorious mountain top experience BUT as amazing as they are, those mountain top experiences, they go as suddenly as they arrived. So now Jesus and the disciples come down from the mountain.

Jesus is now turning his face to Jerusalem....and the beauty, the majesty, the wonder they saw on that mountain is going to be as nothing compared to where Jesus is taking them: to a place where God would be revealed TO ALL in all his wondrous majesty. And there the disciples would see the glory of God not on a mountain, not in Shekinah clouds, not in dazzling garments, but in a glory far greater; in a glory that would not be a just temporary experience for a few but a for all time and all generations to follow after. The majestic glory of God was going to revealed where Jesus was lifted up ..... The majestic glory of God is going to be revealed on a small hill. Not in the mystery of a Shekinah cloud but on a rough- hewn, blood soaked planks of woods.

On Wednesday we begin again our Lenten journey. The voice from the clouds will be echoing through our Bible Readings – Listen to him...not for instructions how to live your life: He is going to tell you over and over again how he must suffer and die.... There will not be the greatest prophet or the greatest law giver by his side, there will not be a transfigured appearance, there will not be clouds of glory

JUST JESUS

And in his outstretched arms upon the cross we shall see that the zenith, the pinnacle, of glory is not its overwhelming otherness but in its overwhelming sacrifice.

So the last Sunday before Lent – and where will we find the glory as we journey with Jesus to Jerusalem? We may have a mountain top experience but more likely we will encounter it on the ordinary paths we tread before we see it in its fulness on Calvary - and I borrow these final words from the poet Malcolm Guite

“Tune your music at the door he is about to open. Beat the ground with light and loosened feet, for all his ways are glory, and all places hallowed ground.”

**Hymn StheF 486 Who would true valour see H&P 688**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVIM4\\_gan4E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVIM4_gan4E)

<p>1 Who would true valour see, let him come hither ; one here will constant be, come wind, come weather ; there's no discouragement shall make him once relent his first avowed intent to be a pilgrim.</p>	<p>3 Hobgoblin nor foul fiend can daunt his spirit ; he knows he at the end shall life inherit. Then fancies fly away, he'll fear not what men say ; he'll labour night and day to be a pilgrim.</p>
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<p>2 Whoso beset him round with dismal stories do but themselves confound ; his strength the more is. No lion can him fright ; he'll with a giant fight ; but he will have a right to be a pilgrim.</p>	<p>John Bunyan (1628–1688)</p>
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### Prayer

Lord God, as we have sung our commitment to you, we are conscious that you often must weep over our sins and our pride. And as we prepare for Lent we see the outstretched arms of Jesus on those blood-soaked planks of wood. We confess before you and before one another that we have sinned in thought, and in word, and in deed and also in what we have left unsaid and left undone. We thank you in more than our words can express that in your compassion you bring us forgiveness. We thank you that we have the promise of an inheritance that no one can spoil, for we have a sure and certain hope in victory over death and the resurrection to life with you in the heavenly Jerusalem. Through the mighty working of your Holy Spirit may we honour you with our whole lives until there comes that day in heaven when we see you face to face and share fully in the life of your kingdom. Amen

**Hymn** StheF 370 Breathe on me breath of God H&P 280 TO BE SUNG SITTING DOWN AS A PRAYER CONTINUING FROM THE PRAYER ABOVE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9s8BFHThfc>

<p>1 Breathe on me, Breath of God ; fill me with life anew, that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.</p> <p>2 Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure, until with thee I will one will, to do and to endure.</p>	<p>3 Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am wholly thine, until this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.</p> <p>4 Breathe on me, Breath of God ; so shall I never die, but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity.</p> <p>Edwin Hatch (1835–1889)</p>
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### Prayers of intercession

Gracious God, hear us as we bring our prayers before you that your ways may be known over all the earth and your will be done in all places.

We pray for leaders of the nations, those who govern communities and those who authority over others. Give them the gift of your wisdom and a right discernment in all things. We pray especially for.....  
Lord hear us..... Lord graciously hear us

We pray for your church, that the love of Jesus may richly dwell within us, enabling us to be a sign of your presence in every place. We pray especially for.....  
Lord hear us..... Lord graciously hear us

We pray for this community that for those who live and who work here that their needs be met and all feel valued members of society. We pray especially for.....  
Lord hear us..... Lord graciously hear us

We pray for those whose lives are affected by illness of mind or body, those who are bowed down with worry, those who are struggling with their situations. We pray especially for.....  
Lord hear us..... Lord graciously hear us

We pray for those who are nearing the end of their lives and those who mourn the loss of a loved one. May they hold fast to the words of Jesus that He has gone to prepare a place for us.  
We pray especially for.....  
Lord hear us..... Lord graciously hear us

**The Lord's Prayer** Our Father...

**Closing hymn** StheF 459 Captain of Israel's host and guide H&P 62

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nt4CpbkXMg>

<p>1 Captain of Israel's host, and Guide of all who seek the land above, beneath your shadow we abide, the cloud of your protecting love ; our strength, your grace ; our rule, your word ; our end, the glory of the Lord.</p>	<p>2 By your unerring Spirit led, we shall not in the desert stray ; we shall not full direction need, nor miss our providential way ; as far from danger as from fear, while love, almighty love, is near.</p> <p>Charles Wesley (1707–1788)</p>
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Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.