



Transfiguration

Gathering

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **white** cloth or scarf because today is a special celebration. Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

Light Candle

We light this candle...

Light the candle

And we breathe...

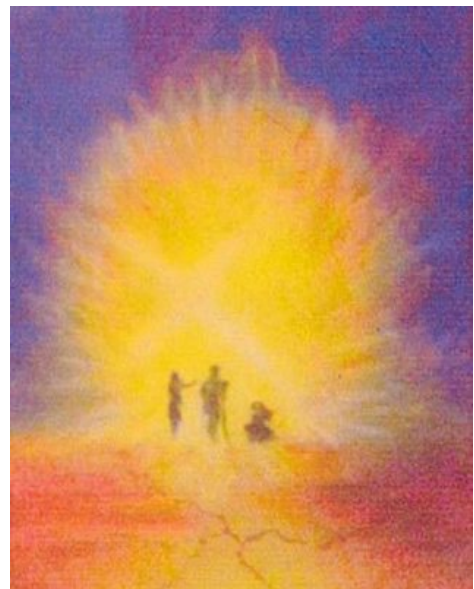
and we turn towards the one who is the Light of the World, Jesus the Christ.

We seek the light.

We celebrate the light.

We allow ourselves to be drawn to the light.

We wonder at what the light reveals to us.



Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, God our Creator, breathed life into this land and its peoples.

The land we gather on,

the land we live, work, play and worship on,

has been cared for since time immemorial by the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal Nation. It has never been ceded.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We commit ourselves to building relationships with those who carry the sacred stories today.

And we commit ourselves to pursuing justice for their communities, so that our reconciled life reflects the way of God here in this place.

Call to Worship

You are with us, God of sunrises:

***you awaken us with each bright new day,
overflowing with promise.***

You are with us, Inviting God:

***calling us to respond to all the chances
to share the spirit of grace and hope.***

You are with us, Glory of God:

***gathering us into the presence of your peace,
listening to the deep sighs of our hearts.***

Sing - Here I Am To Worship

Light of the world
You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes let me see
Beauty that made
This heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You

*So here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that You're my God
And You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me*

Ancient of Days
Oh so highly exalted
Glorious in heaven above
Humbly You came
To the earth You created
All for love's sake became poor
So here I am to worship...

And we'll never know how much it cost
To see your love upon that cross
And we'll never know how much it cost
To see your love upon that cross
So here I am to worship...

*Tim Hughes
© 2000 Thankyou Music*

Prayer

We can become so burned out by our hectic days that we lose sight of the One who gives us life. We can become so impatient waiting for God to astound us with wonders, when we have the simple pleasure of each day. In these quiet moments, away from all those things which distract us, we bring our brokenness to the One who listens to our hearts, and heals our souls.

Prayer for Forgiveness

The radiance of your grace is poured out in every moment, Shaper of mountaintops, but we dull its luster by living in the shadows. We indulge in fantasy games and watch shows which claim to be 'real,' but we have trouble simply sitting in your presence, in your healing silence. We can become so infatuated with your love for us, we overlook those who hunger for acceptance and hope.

Revealer of mystery, forgive us. Here now, may we hear your whispers of grace. In mercy, may we feel your forgiveness lifting the burden of guilt from us. In trust, may we serve your world, filling it with the light and love of the One who is the Light of the world, Jesus Christ.

Words of Assurance

The promise is true--God's Light has come into the world, and into our lives. We are graced with glimpses of God's glory, even as we are filled with mercy and forgiveness.

***Here we find the peace and quiet we need;
here we are set free from all that keeps us from serving;
here we are given mercy and hope.
Here we give thanks to our God. Amen.***

Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Mark 9:2-9

² Six days later, 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, ³and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' ⁶He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!' ⁸Suddenly 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.

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Sing - Ancient Words

Holy words long preserved
For our walk in this world
They resound with God's own heart
O let the ancient words impart

Holy words of our faith
Handed down to this age
Came to us through sacrifice
O heed the faithful words of Christ

Words of life words of hope
Give us strength help us cope
In this world where'er we roam
Ancient words will guide us home

Holy words long preserved
For our walk in this world
They resound with God's own heart
O let the ancient words impart

*Ancient words ever true
Changing me changing you
We have come with open hearts
O let the ancient words impart*

*Ancient words...
We have come with open hearts
O let the ancient words impart
O let the ancient words impart*

*Lynn DeShazo
© 2001 Integrity's Hosanna! Music*

Reflection

I want you to take a moment to think and reflect on your own life. Maybe your life has been like a path through the woods with twists and turns. It has had some level places that are easy to walk and also some steep climbs that leave you breathless.

Perhaps there have been wide-open vistas where you can see for kilometres ... and also places where you have felt confused or afraid – places you haven't known which way to turn. There have been highs and lows along this path.

This is your life we're talking about – this path you are traveling. So, think for a moment: what is one time in your life you had that wide-open-vista feeling? – a time you felt an emotional high.

Maybe it was a time you accomplished something (even a small thing) that went GREAT... or a time you were able just to be still and at peace ... or a time you experienced some remarkable clarity ... or a time you felt joy bubbling up inside of you. We sometimes call these mountain-top experiences.

Were you alone in this moment? If not, who was with you?
Allow the goodness of this moment to wash over you.

And now (you may have guessed this was coming) think of a time in your life that your path became particularly difficult – a time you felt an emotional low. Maybe you had suffered some accident or illness ... some setback or disappointment ... some loss or tragedy. Maybe you felt a blow to your confidence ... or a deep confusion about the next step you needed to take ... or an inability even to get out of bed in the morning.

Where were you at this low point?

Were you alone? If not, who was with you?

Take a deep breath in and let it out.

We'll come back to your own journey in a bit. But now ... let's think about Jesus' journey. Today we reach a turning point in the gospel according to Mark. Up until now, Jesus has been ministering in the northeastern part of Israel. He has been healing and teaching, stilling storms and feeding thousands, confronting authorities and raising up disciples. All the while people have been asking: who is he? For the first half of the gospel, the identity of Jesus has been obscured, even intentionally. Now he is ready to talk about it. Before they ascend the mountain we read about today, Jesus asks his disciples: who do people say that I am? But what he's really interested in, is who THE DISCIPLES say he is. Peter is the one to speak up, "You are the Christ," he says. Peter is right and also NOT right. The word Christ means Messiah, and it indicates Jesus as God's anointed one – the one in whom God's nature, character and purposes will be made known. So far, so good. But like most Jews, Peter must've had some clear expectations for God's Messiah. Specifically, he would have imagined the Christ to be strong and powerful in traditional ways: the Messiah was meant to provide leadership and protection to God's people – to restore the kingdom of David.

So, when Jesus goes on to say that the Messiah must suffer and be rejected and be killed and finally rise, Peter doesn't just object. He takes hold of Jesus, scolds him, and begins to correct him. He's objecting intellectually to the idea that God's Messiah would suffer and die. He's also objecting emotionally to the thought of this agony for his friend. But Jesus does NOT back down.

In fact he corrects Peter as sternly as anyone could, "Get behind me, Satan!" Jesus will spend the second half of Mark's gospel redefining "Messiah" for Peter and the other disciples and, ultimately, all the world.

But first, the mountaintop. Jesus leads Peter, James, and John up the mountain. There Jesus is transformed so that his glory shines through, his clothes become dazzlingly bright, and he is seen to speak with two of Israel's heroes: Moses and Elijah.

In our Bible Study group on Thursday night we were looking at John 17 and talking about the prayer Jesus prayed for his disciples and for us. He says: Father the hour has come; glorify your Son, so that the Son may glorify you. The question was asked: what does it

mean to glorify Jesus or God. The answer revolved around, showing God's character or nature, making God known to others through our behaviour, our Christ like nature. To get back to the mountain top, Peter, James, and John saw MOSES AND ELIJAH with Jesus. Moses and Elijah were eschatological figures – widely associated with the end times. Their presence, plus that voice from heaven ("this is my son, whom I love, LISTEN TO HIM) should have made it clear to the disciples that Jesus was NOT to be doubted, let alone scolded as Peter had recently done. His word was like God's word. They were meant to believe it.

In each of the gospels, Peter sees all of this and says, "It's good that we're here." He suggests they build some booths or shrines on the mountain – one for each prophet. When I thought about what seems like an impulsive suggestion to build tents/shelters on the mountain I realised that this is what Peter has known you should do. He falls back on the many years of history for the Jewish people and he suggests that because this is such a momentous occasion they should do what their ancestors did in the wilderness, built tents, not just for them to live in as they travelled around but also to house the ark of the covenant. Perhaps when you aren't sure what to do, you fall back on what has always been done.

Like the other disciples, Peter was terrified and didn't know how to respond to the transfigured Jesus. Peter's suggestion is often interpreted as a desire to stay up there on the mountain! He's seen as wanting to build a place to live where it's safe and shiny and reassuring. Think again about YOUR mountain – the emotional high you remembered earlier. Don't we all want to stay in places we feel good? I guess it is also possible that Peter's impulse to build shrines up there on the mountain may reflect his resistance to engaging the hard stuff below.

Over and over in Mark's gospel it's made clear that Jesus is both the Son of God, powerful agent of healing and subject of dazzling glory, and also the Human One, who will be betrayed and persecuted and crucified. Like many Christians throughout the church's life, Peter and the disciples wanted the glory they could see without the message they had to hear, and who could blame them? Who could blame the disciples for not wanting to believe Jesus "must" suffer?

WHY Jesus must suffer is a natural question to ask, and the answer is by no means clear. "Christ will give his life to liberate many," it says in chapter 10.

There are three motifs in the New Testament.

1. Christ died for the forgiveness of our sins.
2. Christ died to set us free from the things/people that enslave us, to liberate us (The Passover which our Holy Communion is adapted from is about freedom from slavery in Egypt).
3. Belonging, Christ died so that we would belong to God.

It is clear the death of Jesus on the cross was also inevitable because he clashed with the political and religious authorities.

A colleague has suggested that Jesus' death on the cross was also because suffering is part of what it means to be human, and Jesus was fully human.¹

¹ Leanne Pearce Reed, in her 2012 paper for the Moveable Feast

Jesus could have stayed on the mountain, but he chose to come down. Down, says preacher David Lose. “Down into the mundane nature of everyday life. Down into the nitty-gritty details of misunderstanding, squabbling, disbelieving disciples. Down into the religious and political quarrels of the day. Down into the jealousies and [rivalries] both petty and gigantic that colour our relationships. Down into the poverty and pain that are part and parcel of our life in this world. Down. Jesus came down.”²

He chose to share the difficulties common to humanity . . . chose to walk with people into the valleys of suffering and pain, along the paths of hardship and effort, even through the doorway of death.

Think again about your valley, your low point, your challenging path. When I asked if anyone was with you, did Jesus come to mind? One of the sure and certain tenets of our faith is that, whether we know it or not, Jesus accompanies us – mountain-top AND VALLEY, Christ is with us. Nothing in life or in death can separate us from Christ. And his company can make all the difference.

The story is told after an earthquake in Haiti – the worst earthquake, a truly devastating one. There was a young man named Joseph, whose parents both died in the quake. Joseph told about how his extended family had come to help him and his siblings with the burial. “They saw how upset we were,” Joseph said, “so they performed a burial ritual for us. They took my parents’ clothes and wrapped them around my waist.

Then they helped us stand up, hold the casket, and carry it over to the tomb for burial. We were so emotionally weak at the time. But after we wrapped [our parents’] clothes around us, we could complete the burial and try to move forward. The clothes [our parents] wore in life gave us the courage and the strength to stand at the funeral and put them in the earth.”³

I find that such a powerful image – a young man wrapped in his parents’ clothes, and thereby enabled to do the hardest thing he’d ever done. Then I think about Jesus’ transfigured clothes. On the mountain they became amazingly bright – brighter than anyone on earth could bleach them! This detail in Mark’s story tells us we have left behind the ordinary, for something completely outside of human experience. Jesus was human, but in this moment it’s clear: he has access to power from God.

Think again about your valley, your low point, your challenging path. Imagine, in the midst of that darkness, wrapping Jesus Christ’s garments of light around your shoulders.

The Apostle Paul imagines it (kind of) in today’s passage from Second Corinthians 4:6. He says, “God has shone into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ. We have this treasure in clay pots,” he says, so it’s clear that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn’t come from us. But we can wrap ourselves up in it, and when we do, he says, we may experience all kinds of trouble, but we won’t be crushed. We may be harassed, but we won’t be abandoned. We may be knocked down, but we won’t be knocked out . . . Even if our bodies are wasting away, Paul says, deep

² http://www.workingpreacher.org/dear_wp.aspx?article_id=557 He Came Down

³ <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/global/sacred-space-brother-provides/>

within we are being renewed. Deep within, we are growing more glorious. Deep within, we are being held safe and transfigured by God.

Even in the valley, Christ's presence and power are available to give God's people the courage and strength to do what we need to do, which is TO FOLLOW HIM. Peter learned that the hard way, as all humans do. Peter learned it by following Jesus down the mountain into places full of suffering and despair. Even there, he kept seeing Christ's glory shine upon all kinds of people, amidst various highs and lows. And Peter learned to thank God for a Messiah like that: a Christ who comes down.

Responding

Offering

This part of our service is not about the money.

It is about considering how we will respond to what we have seen and heard and experienced this morning, or perhaps throughout the week - how is God prompting you, nudging you, inspiring you - and what will you do about it?

We give your thanks and praise most gracious God for for your mercy and grace. We offer these gifts of money and those given electronically to show our community and beyond of your immense love. May our lives and gifts we offer be used in your work of justice and hope, we pray. Amen.

Holy Communion

If you would like to share in Communion and are unable to join with us in-person, please let Rev Kath or Rhonda Back know. We would love to bring Communion to you in your home at a time that suits you.

Prayer for Others

Take a moment to bring to mind people and situations that need to know the light of Christ, the presence of God, to touch, to heal, to transform.

Sending

Sing - The Heavens Shall Declare (TIS 746)

The heavens shall declare
The glory of His name
All creation bows
At the coming of the King
Every eye shall see
Every heart will know
Every knee shall bow
Every tongue confess
Holy holy
Holy is the Lord
See the coming of the King
Holy is the Lord

Geoff Bullock
© 1990 Geoff Bullock Music

Sending and Blessing

God sends us from this sacred space.

***We will go to share the good news of grace,
to offer healing to the broken.***

Jesus would not have us stay here forever.

***We will go to find our sisters and brothers
in the valleys of injustice and the neighbourhoods of addiction.***

The Spirit fills us with the gifts we need as we leave.

***We will go to help rebuild the lives of those around us,
to share feasts of hope and peace with everyone.***

Liturgy © Thom M. Shuman

Rev Janice Freeston
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