

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Wagga Wagga

Transfiguration of Our Lord

14th February, 2021

We meditate on the song 'O Father, My Father'

1. **O Father, my Father, I call on your name;
My heart it is heavy with sorrow and shame,
For I've been a coward, my courage has flown,
And love lies within me as cold as a stone.**
2. **No word can excuse me, no word that I say,
No place that I run to can hide me away,
For nothing is hidden; yes, all is revealed -
You see how I'm sick, Lord; I want to be healed.**
3. **O Father, my Father, I call on your name,
Your promise is with me to carry my blame,
You came as a servant, your road it was clear;
No coward was Jesus for love knows no fear.**
4. **O, how I do wish that my last day was here,
That I might be with you where all is made clear;
Where sorrow is over, the world is set free,
And that which we hope for we finally see.**

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The Triune God meets with us

God said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', and made his light shine in our hearts
**to give us the light of the knowledge
of the glory of God in the face of Christ.** (2 Cor 4:6 NIV alt.)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

We meditate on the hymn 'Fairest Lord Jesus'

1. **Fairest Lord Jesus,
ruler of all nature,**

**O thou of God and man the Son,
Thee I will cherish,
Thee I will honour,
thou, my soul's glory, joy, and crown.**

**4. Beautiful Savior!
Lord of the nations!
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor,
praise, adoration,
now and forevermore be thine.**

*Schonster Herr Jesu
Anonymous, Munster, 1677
Tr. Joseph Augustus Seiss, 1873
Revised, Hymnal Compilers
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We confess our sins to God the Father...

We lay down our sins and burdens before God

Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and of each other.

We confess to you, almighty God, before the whole company of heaven, and to each other, that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, by our own fault. Have mercy on us, for Jesus' sake, forgive us all our sins, and bring us to eternal life. Amen.

...and God forgives us

May the almighty and merciful Lord grant us pardon and forgiveness of all our sins.

Amen.

Jesus leads us as we pray

The Lord be with you

And also with you.

Let us pray that we become like Christ. *[silence]*

Almighty and loving God, we thank you for revealing your Son Jesus in glory before he suffered and died.

Give us faith to recognise him as your dear Son, and strengthen us to suffer with him, until we come to share his glory. For he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

1st Reading – God speaks through his prophets

2 Kings 2:1-12 Elijah is taken up to heaven

¹ When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the Lord has sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

³ The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "so be quiet."

⁴ Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the Lord has sent me to Jericho."

And he replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho.

⁵ The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," he replied, "so be quiet."

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the Lord has sent me to the Jordan."

And he replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on.

⁷ Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. ⁸ Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"

"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

¹⁰ "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not."

¹¹ As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹² Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The

chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

We respond with Psalm 50:1-6

¹ The Mighty One, God, the Lord,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to where it sets.

² From Zion, perfect in beauty,
God shines forth.

**Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.** (Ps 50:2 NRSV)

³ Our God comes
and will not be silent;
a fire devours before him,
and around him a tempest rages.

⁴ He summons the heavens above,
and the earth, that he may judge his people:

⁵ "Gather to me this consecrated people,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

⁶ And the heavens proclaim his righteousness,
for he is a God of justice.

**Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.** (Ps 50:2 NRSV)

2nd Reading – God speaks through his apostles

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 *The light of the good news of Christ's glory*

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as

your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Gospel reading – God speaks through Jesus

Mark 9:2-9 *The transfiguration of Jesus*

² After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, Light of the world.

Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for revealing your glory as God's Son.

Lead us to follow you in faith.

Amen.

God speaks to His children

Put on the reading glasses.

What am I wearing? Why do I need to wear them?

Jesus is like a pair of glasses for us. He helps us to see God. Jesus said "anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

Change glasses.

What am I wearing now? Why do I wear these?

The sun is very bright. No-one can look directly at the sun without hurting their eyes. When the sun shines brightly we put on sunglasses so the glare won't hurt our eyes. God made the sun, but he is much brighter and stronger than the sun.

We can't look directly at God. Jesus is like sunglasses for us too. Do you know why?

We have to look at God through Jesus, just as we look at very bright things through our sunglasses.

Do you know what we see when we look at God through Jesus?

We see a Father who made us, who loves us, who takes care of us and who wants us to live with him forever.

PRAYER

Dear Father God, thank you for creating us, loving us, and taking care of us.

Thank you for sending your son Jesus so we can live with you forever in heaven.

Amen.

We meditate on the song 'The Light of Christ'

***The light of Christ has come into the world,
The light of Christ has come into the world.***

***The light of Christ has come into the world,
The light of Christ has come into the world.***

- 1. All men must be born again to see the kingdom of God;
The water and the Spirit bring new life in God's love:**

***The light of Christ has come into the world,
The light of Christ has come into the world.***

- 2. God gave up His only Son out of love for the world,
So that all men who believe in Him will live forever:**

***The light of Christ has come into the world,
The light of Christ has come into the world.***

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God speaks to us

The LCA provides this sermon edited for lay-reading, with thanks to the original author.

The Text: Mark 9:2-9

Today's sermon is brought to you by the numbers 6 and 3, and the word 'listen'. Six days.

God made the world in six days...and on the seventh He rested.

We're to work for six days...and then on the seventh we're to rest in what God does for us.

The glory of the Lord surrounded Mt Sinai in the wilderness for six days before Moses could enter into His presence on the seventh day.

Six times Joshua and the people of Israel walked around the city of Jericho, and on the seventh the walls came down in a shout.

And the transfiguration of our Lord happened after six days.

When St Mark has a habit of saying everything happened immediately, it should surprise us when there's a break in this pattern – in fact we hear there's a six-day break in the immediacy of Jesus' work! But as we've just heard, the number six is significant in God's story of salvation because it sets us up for what happens on the seventh day. We should stop and witness what God is doing on this seventh day.

So, while we're surprised there's a break in Mark's narrative, it shouldn't come as a surprise there were six days between what happened just beforehand and this seventh day where He was transformed in front of the disciples; where God revealed Jesus to be His beloved Son whom we should listen to.

But what happened beforehand?

Well, it was six days ago when Peter had confessed Jesus to be the Christ. No sooner had he made this Spirit-led confession that Jesus announced He would suffer many things; be rejected by the elders, priests and scribes; be killed; and then rise again after three days.

But this troubled Peter. After all, Peter had witnessed all the miracles of Jesus – all the healings (including the healing of his own mother-in-law), raising people from the dead, and how Jesus cast out demons – which no doubt had led him to the conclusion Jesus is none other than the promised Messiah spoken about in

the Scriptures.

So, what Jesus was talking about shouldn't happen. Peter figured this is now the time when the Scriptures would be fulfilled and when everything was set right. This is the time of Israel's freedom and glory! This is the time when the glory of God is revealed so the nation of Israel could rule and bless all the nations!

So, this is why Peter tells Jesus off!

But in response, Jesus tells Peter off! He said Peter's got in mind the things of man and not the things of God. The work of God isn't all about health and wealth and glory and power, but it also includes suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection.

So, it seems Peter pondered Jesus' words for six days, and on the seventh he saw the glory of God reflected in the person of Jesus Christ. But he still didn't get it.

And neither do we. We often struggle to understand what it all means, which is why the number three enters our meditation.

You see, there were three.

There were three disciples: Peter, James and John.

There were three people in front of them: Jesus, Moses and Elijah.

The number three is a number of community – just like there were three visitors who visited Abraham before God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, and it's also the number of persons who form our Triune God.

But it's also a number of completeness – for example, a complete journey of three days between one place and another (which is mentioned many times in Scripture), a three-day meditation for Jonah in the belly of a fish, and it's also the number of days before Jesus would rise from death.

Peter, not quite getting the significance of what it meant for Jesus to be the promised Messiah, offers to build three shelters – one each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. After all, this is a great place and great time for God's people! Here we have a gathering of the greatest prophets of all time: Moses the Law-giver, Elijah the mighty prophet who was taken up into heaven, and now Jesus the powerful teacher and miracle-worker!

So, let's retain and preserve this holy moment in time and space! Let's all come to hear the wisdom of these mighty men! Let's all come near this holy place to have our diseases healed, our demons cast out, and our loved ones raised from death!

Let's all bask in the glory of our mighty and awesome God for the rest of time!

If only!

Isn't this what we also want?

Wouldn't we love to meet Moses, or Elijah, or Jesus face-to-face?

I mean, wouldn't we love to ask them questions on what it's like to have such strong faith? Wouldn't we love to know more about their mighty victories over Pharaoh and the Egyptians, the prophets of Baal, or about Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil?

Wouldn't we love to come near and have each of them teach us, touch us, and encourage us in a world gone crazy? Wouldn't we love to go to one of those shelters to have our bodies restored to its youthful vigour, or to have our bodies healed from cancer or tumours or from dementia? Wouldn't we want to bring our departed loved ones to the tent of Jesus, so He could raise them from death for our pleasure and comfort?

But Peter doesn't know what he's asking...and neither do we.

So often our wishes are all about us—what we want. So often, sinful human beings have in mind the things of a rebellious humanity.

But this isn't what Jesus is about. He's here to do the will of God; not the will of humans.

God's plan seems backward and strange to us. We see or hear a moment of glory thinking this is God's plan for us which is supposed to last, but it doesn't – at least, not on this earth. What often lasts are our troubles, sicknesses, fights, and deteriorating bodies as age takes its toll .

The moment of Jesus' transfiguration was a glimpse of God's glory to strengthen Jesus for His journey through His own suffering and death, but it was also for frightened, confused and slow-to-learn disciples like us who look for assurance of God's glory and power during our own sufferings and journey toward death.

When we see or experience suffering and rejection and death, we often reckon this isn't part of God's plan. We want the glory and health and strength and power and joy to last, but it doesn't. God's glory doesn't match our own ideas of glory. Jesus told us His glory comes through suffering and rejection. His glory comes through sacrifice and death. His glory also comes in resurrection and restoration for those who trust Him.

Which brings us to the word of today: listen.

In this case, it's not supposed to be a passive word where we just listen and not respond. It's intended to be matched with a trust in what we listen to which also responds in obedient action.

You see, when God speaks, things happen.

When He speaks: light appears, waters divide, and worlds are created. When He speaks, people like Moses and Elijah respond in faith and pass on the Word of God.

Similarly, when His holy name is spoken over the waters of Baptism sins are forgiven, faith is stirred, people are adopted as God's own, our bodies receive the benefits of Jesus' resurrected body, and the promise of eternal life is given. When Jesus' Word is spoken over bread and wine it also becomes His body and blood to bring to troubled sinners His forgiveness, life, and salvation.

In other words, the Word of God is powerful and active. The trouble is, we often don't listen, and if we do listen, we don't always respond in faith and trust.

We're more likely to listen to our own fears and believe them. We're more likely to listen to the latest feel-good motto or advert. We're more likely to listen to what our itching ears want to hear. We're more likely to listen to the lies and deceptive whispers of the devil who still asks: 'Did God really say...?'

In other words, the call for us to listen to Jesus places us on a collision course with spiritual warfare which is just as volatile as the battle between Moses and Pharaoh and between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Because of our selfishness, our flesh resists God's Word, and so does the world. In the end it's a question of who we're going to listen to, who we're going to trust, who we're going to follow, and who we're going to obey.

So, the call to listen is a call to deny our own selfish will and let God's will be done in our life, even if His will involves suffering for His sake, patience in times of trouble, endurance in faith when the world criticizes and condemns, willing service to the outcast and troubled, and forgiving those who don't deserve such grace.

It's also a call to believe something we struggle to believe. That Jesus did this for you and me. That we're not as good as we make out we are. That our actions, words and thoughts are motivated by selfishness, greed, pride, and fear. That Jesus would choose to come into this cruel and heartless world to suffer and die

at the hands of His own faithful people. That He wouldn't defend His innocence or call for justice from the cross, but instead cried out to His Father to forgive us because we don't know what we're doing.

While God spoke His Word through Moses and the prophets like Elijah, He now speaks to us through Jesus. We're made His disciples through faith and we're to respond to His teachings of glory through suffering, love through service, and forgiveness by grace.

We listen to His words of forgiveness, and through faith we learn to forgive those around us. We listen to His sufferings and learn our own suffering serves a purpose to strengthen our trust in Him. We listen to His death and learn death no longer has a claim on you or me because we believe in the resurrection of the dead through Christ.

Yes, after six days Jesus is transfigured before his three disciples, and in this momentary glimpse of His true identity we're called to listen – to listen to what God is doing for us as Jesus journeys toward the moments He was betrayed, denied, whipped, crucified, died, and rose again.

We listen as the glory of God is revealed through blood and sacrifice and as His love pronounces everything is finished. We listen so we can rest from our own work and witness what God has done for us through Jesus, the Son of God, with whom the Father is pleased.

And, as we listen to Him, we're called to respond in faith, because it's through trusting the words and actions of Jesus that the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

We confess our faith in the Triune God

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.**

**The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty,**

**from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.**
Amen.

* 'catholic' here meaning 'universal'

We meditate on the song 'Listen to Him'

- 1. Breezes whisper without meaning,
sands lie silent on the beach;
earth has no self-explanation -
only one can give it speech.**

Listen to him - Jesus, the eternal one.

Listen to him - angels sang when he was born.

***Listen to him - now the word of God is known
in his only Son.***

- 2. He must show the truth about us -
sin has made us deaf and blind.
We could never understand him,
so he comes, a man in time.**

Listen to him - Jesus, the eternal one.

Listen to him - angels sang when he was born.

***Listen to him - now the word of God is known
in his only Son.***

- 3. How does Jesus break the silence?
With an offer to the lost:
Come, a home is ready for you!'
Opens heaven with a cross.**

Listen to him - Jesus, the eternal one.

Listen to him - angels sang when he was born.

Listen to him - now the word of God is known

in his only Son.

Listen to Him!

Words and music: Robin Mann

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We give of ourselves

Great and glorious God, thank you for revealing your Son, and for showing the light of his glory.

Let us always reflect his glory. And as Jesus was willing to die for us, may we give of ourselves to others.

Amen.

We pray for others

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the beloved Son of God, the chosen one. So, let us pray in his name with boldness, knowing that the Father will hear us for his Son's sake.

Almighty God and merciful Father: thank you for all your goodness and love - to us and to all people. We bless you for our creation and preservation, and for all the blessings of this life. But above all we thank and praise you for the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. Give us such an awareness of your mercy, that our hearts may be thankful and that we may praise you all the time – not just with our words, but with our whole life.

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

Almighty and eternal God, you have let us share in your glory. Increase in us a life of faith and love so that your glory may shine through us in the sight of others. Bless our bishop and district bishops, our clergy and all congregations. Pour out your continual blessing on them that they may truly please you.

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

Almighty God, ruler of all – in your kingdom there is peace and righteousness. We pray for nations now in conflict. Take away prejudice, cruelty and revenge. Grant that barriers which divide may crumble, suspicions disappear and hatreds cease.

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

Lord of the nations, we pray for the parliaments of our Commonwealth and State, in particular our Prime Minister (insert name). Direct their work and influence

their decisions to the advancement of your glory, and the safety and welfare of this country. Let peace and happiness, truth and justice be established among us.

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

Heavenly Father, your Son Jesus shared in Nazareth the life of an earthly home. Bless our homes, we pray, that parents and children may be bound to each other by mutual love and honour, and come to knowledge of your love for them.

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

Other petitions may be inserted here

Lord God, hear the prayers we offer, and let your grace and mercy flow to us, and to all those for whom we pray. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

We pray the prayer of Jesus

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

**Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.** Matt 6:9-13

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.

Amen.

The Triune God sends us out with blessing

Go in peace. May the light of Christ shine in our hearts.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

We meditate on the song 'Shine Jesus Shine'

1. **Lord, the light of your love is shining
In midst of the darkness shining;
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;**

**Set us free by the truth you now bring us;
Shine on me, shine on me.**

*Shine, Jesus, shine;
Fill this land with the Father's glory;
Blaze, spirit, blaze;
Set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow;
Flood the nations with grace and mercy;
Send forth your word, Lord,
And let there be light.*

- 2. Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
From the shadows into your radiance;
By the blood I may enter your brightness.
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness.
Shine on me, shine on me.**

*Shine, Jesus, shine;
Fill this land with the Father's glory;
Blaze, spirit, blaze;
Set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow;
Flood the nations with grace and mercy;
Send forth your word, Lord,
And let there be light.*

- 3. As we gaze on your kingly brightness,
So our faces display your likeness,
Ever changing from glory to glory;
Mirrored here, may our lives tell your story.
Shine on me, shine on me.**

*Shine, Jesus, shine;
Fill this land with the Father's glory;
Blaze, spirit, blaze;
Set our hearts on fire.*

***Flow, river, flow;
Flood the nations with grace and mercy;
Send forth your word, Lord,
And let there be light.***

Words and music: Graham Kendrick

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