

The Sunday before Lent Year B Feb 15, 2015 (Transfiguration Sunday)

Once again Epiphany closes with the Transfiguration of Jesus – the turning point, the final affirmation before Jesus set his sights on Jerusalem and the coming confrontation and sacrifice. The challenge of this week is for us to learn to recognise God's glory – in Christ, but also in all people and all things. It is this capacity for glory that can make a massive change to how we live in the world, and then through us, make a change to the world itself.

May God's glory fill our eyes, our hearts and our lives as we worship this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

2 Kings 2 : 1-12

Today's readings all speak of the mystery of glory sometimes revealed when earth and heaven are united. When Elijah's great prophetic work was done, we are told he was taken up to heaven with wind and fire, and his powers were inherited by Elisha.

The Psalm - Psalm 50: 1-6

2 Corinthians 4 : 3-6

This passage is chosen to harmonise with God's theme of glory. Christ is glorious, says Paul, with the glory of God himself, and the light he brings shines in our hearts.

Mark 9 : 2-9

The Lord's closest friends see him transfigured upon a mountain-top, in a disclosure of his true identity. In the presence of the figures of Moses and Elijah, a cloud of glory comes upon him and the voice of the holy one is heard.

Click here to view the readings

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=2%20Kings%202:%201-12%0Acw%20Psalm%2050:%201-6%0A2%20Corinthians%204:%203-6%0AMark%209:%202-9

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O Lord,
who hast taught us that all our doings without charity
are nothing worth;
Send thy Holy Spirit,
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity,
the very bond of peace and of all virtues,
without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee;
Grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake.

Collect Two

Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
Give us grace to perceive his glory,

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that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

and/or

O God, our teacher and our judge:
Enrich our hearts with the goodness of your wisdom
and renew us from within:
that all our actions, all our thoughts and all our words
may bear the fruit of your transforming grace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Presider or deacon

Let us offer prayers to the Holy One, whose glory is a devouring fire and a mighty tempest.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy catholic church throughout the world, sharing the death and resurrection of Christ.

Lord, have mercy.

For *N* our bishop, for presbyters and deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the people of God.

Lord, have mercy.

For all the nations and peoples of the earth, and for justice, mercy, and peace.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who are needy, desolate, forgotten, suffering, lonely, and disconsolate.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead, and for those who mourn.

Lord, have mercy.

That all the world may reflect the splendor of God and all peoples share in the divinity of Christ.

Lord, have mercy.

Remembering *N*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

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Blessed are you, God of light eternal. Hear our prayers for all peoples and let your glory shine upon us, that our lives may proclaim your goodness and our works give you honor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

O Lord, whose mercy reaches to the heavens, whose faithfulness knows no end: let the greatness of your love be known to us, that we may worship you with wonder, joy and thanksgiving. Help us at every Communion service to look back, and remember your death for us on the cross; to look up, and know that you are the risen Saviour in our midst; to look around, and rejoice in our fellowship with one another; and to look forward in hope to the coming of your kingdom and the heavenly banquet.

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

Increase in us the sense of community that binds us one to another. Bless the work of our church that it may give a sense of identity where now there is none; provide a refuge to those who feel threatened or lonely; create a place of belonging where people know they are welcomed, remembered by name and valued as individuals.

We pray for unity: You have called us to be one, to live in harmony, and yet we are divided: race from race, faith from faith, rich from poor, old from young, neighbour from neighbour... Lord, help us to break down the walls that separate us, tear down the fences of indifference and hatred; forgive us the sins that divide us, free us from pride and self-seeking behaviour, overcome our prejudices and fears, give us courage to open ourselves to others; by the power of your spirit make us one.

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

We pray for the oppressed; for those who have been treated harshly by other people or by circumstances; for those who have no freedom; who were born in a poverty from which they cannot escape; for those who have never had a chance.

We pray for those who cannot wait; who have waited too long, for justice, for liberty; for those who feel that only by violence can they hope to gain what is theirs by right. In their impatience give them wisdom, and in their just struggle give them the charity not to deny justice to others.

We pray for those who meet oppression with resignation; who assume that nothing can be done. Lord, give them hope, and give them self-respect, and give the knowledge that with you there is salvation.

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

We bring before you those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Encourage them when their hopes are eroded, that by their steadfast faith in you they may bring others into your care. Help us all to treasure the health we have, to care for our bodies as we would have others care for us, and to do nothing thoughtless or mean that would endanger the health of others.

Jesus Christ is the light of the World, a light which no darkness can quench. We remember before God all those who have died and light a candle to symbolise the light of Christ which eternally shines and brings hope. You turn our darkness into light. In your light shall we see light.

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Almighty Father, you understand the secrets of every heart. Strengthen and sustain those who know the sorrow of bereavement. May they experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit within them and the love and fellowship of the church family around them; and may they see before them the hope of glory, beckoning and leading them to their true home and the moment of reunion in your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ, our living Saviour and Lord

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

POST COMMUNION

Holy God
we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
May we who are partakers at his table
reflect his life in word and deed,
that all the world may know
his power to change and save.
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

Lord,
in this sacrament you have nourished us
with the spiritual food of the body and blood of your dear Son.
Not only with our lips
but with our lives may we truly confess his name,
and so enter the kingdom of heaven.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Holy God, mighty and immortal,
you are beyond our knowing,
yet we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ,
whose compassion illumines the world.
Transform us into the likeness of the love of Christ,
who renewed our humanity so that we may share in his divinity,
the same Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O God, as your Son drew apart
to be in prayer with you,
we offer our prayers
for the transformation of the world and the church.
You revealed your glory and presence
in your beloved Son, Jesus the Christ.
In receiving our prayers,
reveal the glory and presence of your Spirit
alive in the world today,

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free us from all doubts,
and empower us to act as a transfigured people. Amen.

Holy God,
you have revealed the glory of your love in Jesus Christ,
and have given us a share in your Spirit.
May we who listen to Christ
follow faithfully,
and, in the dark places where you send us,
reveal the light of your gospel. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

2 Kings 2:1-12:

Aside from the tongue-twisting of an Elisha/Elijah-packed reading, I like this selection - it is a transitioning of leadership - one who is leaving literally passing on the mantle to one who is stepping up afterward. In part, this was the theme of Rev. Safiya Fosua of the [General Board of Discipleship](#) as she preached at our ordination service at [Annual Conference](#) a couple years ago. She talked about how we need to step up in support when we have those in our midst who are called, even though they need to own their own calls as well. Who can you support who is being called? Especially look out for young people who are hearing God's voice, who may not have many avenues of affirmation coming their way.

"Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." When asked what he wants from Elijah, this is how Elisha responds. Sometimes we're afraid to ask for what we really want and need and could put to use. Elisha just goes straight for what will make him a leader as Elijah was. "You have asked a hard thing," Elijah says. Hard, but wise, and possible indeed! What would you ask for if you didn't put restrictions on your asking? If so equipped, what could you do for God?

"I will not leave you." - Compare this to Ruth's sentiments to Naomi and Ruth 1. What people would you be willing to follow anywhere?

Psalm 50:1-6:

"from the rising of the sun to its setting" - God calls us all the time - the image is an all-encompassing one. There is no part of our day/life where God is not calling to us.

"Our God comes and does not keep silence." That's comforting - God speaks. God speaks for God's people. Even when we don't want to hear God's words!

Read the rest of this psalm - it focuses on sacrifice, and what sacrifices God truly wants from us. A lot of "blood", gore, and enemies, but some good themes.

2 Corinthians 4:3-6:

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"veiled" - I'm not sure why verses 1 and 2 are left out of this passage - reading them helps Paul's argument make sense. Paul is talking about the truth and openness of the gospel and of his ministry in sharing the gospel. If the gospel appears still veiled, Paul argues, it is not because of the gospel itself, but because of unbelief or "the god of this world"

"god of this world" What do you think Paul means by this? What are the gods of our world that we try to substitute in place of the Real Thing?

"we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ" So simple. And yet, a real problem. So often, we let ourselves get in the way of the message of the gospel. We forget our place as messengers and think we are the message.

Mark 9:2-9:

Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up the mountain where the three disciples witness Jesus' 'transfiguration' - Moses and Elijah appear and Jesus is changed, dazzling and dressed in white. Transfiguration Sunday is generally under celebrated and underappreciated, I think, but there are lots of ways we can relate to this story.

"tell no one" Why do you think Jesus wanted to keep the transfiguration hush-hush for all but these three? Perhaps he knew it wouldn't make as much sense to them until later? What do you think? What would cause you to keep a really awesome experience of God quiet? When and why would you tell or would you not tell what you saw? Maybe Jesus wanted people to believe in him/follow him not because of fantastical events like this, but because of a desire for a deeper relationship with God based on a real, personal experience. But look for this "messianic secret" as a repeating theme in Mark.

"he did not know what to say, for they were terrified" The disciples' response to what they see is fear, causing Peter to say anything. Has an experience of God and who God is ever caused a response of fear in you? We often fear what our relationship with God might require of us. Seeing God and God's glory face to face in such an undeniable way would leave us with an undeniable responsibility to act, wouldn't it?

By Beth Quick

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

The Transfiguration is the obvious focus of this week, which is both exciting and challenging. The excitement comes from the wonderful celebratory possibilities that this amazing event offers. The challenge comes from having to choose how to approach this week with all the options, but also in how to ensure that our worship avoids the familiarity which so easily dulls the transforming potential of the theme. When all of the readings are placed together one strong message emerges – God allows God's glory to be seen in order that God may communicate with human beings. In the Kings passage, Elisha seeks to see the glorious departure of Elijah in order to receive Elijah's spirit. It also offers an opportunity (if we keep reading past the end of the set pericope) for others to recognise God's anointing on Elisha once Elijah has gone. In the Psalm, god's radiant glory is accompanied by God's voice calling God's people to God. In the letter to the Corinthians, Christ is praised as the glorious image of God – communicating the knowledge of God to whoever will receive Christ. Finally, in the Gospel reading, the glory and affirmation of God is communicated both to Jesus but also to the disciples who witness this event. It is clear

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that the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets (represented by Moses and Elijah) which Jesus brings is to be recognised by the disciples, and with the coming death and rising to which Jesus alludes at the end of this passage, they will need to memory of God's glory and God's communication to and through Christ to sustain them on the road to and through the cross.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: God's glory and God's communication are two ideas that may, at first glance, seem to be thoroughly theological and philosophical, with little real connection with the very real and pragmatic work of justice and peace in the world. However, it is the loss of our ability to perceive God's glory and to hear God's voice that has resulted in much of the injustice we encounter in the world. When we fail to see, as the Psalmist describes it, God's glory shining over and through the created world, it becomes easy to use the earth and its resources as commodities, forgetting their sacred nature. When we fail to recognise that Jesus is the image of God, revealing God's character and values, God's ways and God's purposes, it is easy to believe that God calls us to actions that contradict Christ's sacrificial life and teaching, and to ignore Christ's message of God's Reign as the basis for faith and life – the peaceful, compassionate, gracious and just Jubilee-style Reign. When we fail to recognise that God's glory is also revealed in all people – that Christ hides within them in a "distressing disguise" (as Mother Teresa put it), it becomes easy to abuse, dehumanise and exploit others. But, when we learn to recognise God's glory in Christ, we also learn to recognise God's glory in all things and in all people – and this changes everything. The moment our lives become flooded with glory we grow more celebratory, more compassionate, more careful of other people and of the earth, more just and more selfless. God's glory draws us inexorably into a life that seeks to reflect that glory – which is what Paul testifies to in his letter to the Corinthians. More, when we become aware of God's glory, and begin to reflect it, we also become those who, like Christ, call glory out of everyone we meet, inviting them to radiate as God has created them to – listening to hear the voice of God's affirmation even as Christ did, even in the darkness journeys of our lives. How different our world would be if we could develop an international culture of awareness of glory. It's certainly a dream worth striving for!

LOCAL APPLICATION: In homes, communities and even churches, relationships, systems and structures break down when we fail to recognise their glory. At the heart of this truth is the belief that God revealed God's glory in Christ, and that Christ taught us to recognise God's glory in all things and all people. When we fail to be aware of glory, we start to take one another for granted. When we fail to see glory, the "broken windows" syndrome that Malcolm Gladwell described kicks in, and our environment begins to deteriorate for lack of care. When we fail to see glory, we lose our sense of connectedness with God, and God's voice grows silent for us – or we become blinded by the things of this world and its systems as Paul describes. It is glory, however, that stirs us to care and reverence for other people and for the world. It is an awareness of glory that reminds us that God is always with us, and that enables us to recognise what God is saying to us at any point in time. Further, when we have learned to recognise God's glory around and within us, we, like Jesus, are inspired, strengthened and given the courage to face the darkness, knowing that, whatever we may suffer, the light will never be completely extinguished. It may sound naive, but what the world needs is people who have learned

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the capacity to recognise glory wherever it may be found. This is the capacity that sustains relationships, that maintains communities, that unites people and that drives us into selfless service of one another and of our world. Without a vision of God's glory, of God's glorious Reign, it becomes very difficult to work for true justice and healing. But, with this vision, no sacrifice is too much in the quest to let God's Reign be manifest among us – not even the cross.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Day 1 - Sermon for Transfiguration Sunday : It's good for us to be here. Brings together contemporary situations in USA and in a missionary situation in Africa.

http://day1.org/979-sermon_for_transfiguration_sunday

Day 1 - A different kind of dream

http://day1.org/3551-a_different_kind_of_dream

Day 1 - Epiphanies

In any congregation of Christians there are some people who can say they have been blessed with an Epiphany, a powerful manifestation or experience of God. There are many more people who fervently wish that such a gift would be granted them and who imagine that if only they could have a conversion or they could have a 'mountain top' experience, then their faith would not be so difficult.

<http://day1.org/1200-epiphanies>

Buechner - Transfiguration

An excerpt from Frederick Buechner's book "Beyond Words."

<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-transfiguration>

Sermons from Seattle - Takes the analogy of mountaintop experiences and life on the plains, and examines the Transfiguration account as a means of interpreting these. Useful illustrations.

http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/series_a_mountains_valleys_and_plains.htm

CHILDREN

Sermons4kids Theme: Only Jesus can forgive sin and give us eternal life. Object:

"Where's Waldo?" book or use picture provided on site

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

Worshipping with Children, Transfiguration B, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/year-b-transfiguration-of-lord-february.html>

Transforming Vacation, SermonSuite.

I want to tell you a story of a family who went on a vacation. This family went on a trip to the mountains. They packed their car. The children took games to play in the car, books to read, and crayons to color with. They finally came to the mountains. The scenery was beautiful. The view was wonderful.

www.churchnewsireland.org

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<http://www.sermonsuite.com/freecss.php?i=16163&key=DCaszgxyq2jc0tmz>

"Retreat and Go Forth!" - On the Chancel Steps

<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2012/02/05/retreat/>

"Sermon of the Week," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Colouring Pages, Puzzles.

Sermons4Kids.com.

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Crown Him With Many Crowns
At The Name Of Jesus
Christ, Whose Glory Fills The Skies
Transfigured Christ, None Comprehends
Fairest Lord Jesus
O Wondrous Sight, O Vision Fair
Voices And Choices
The Mountain
We Bow Down Before You
Now And Forever
How Great Is Our God (Link to YouTube video)
Out Of The Darkness (Link to YouTube video)
Shine Jesus Shine