

**Circuit Service, Sunday 14th February 2021
Farnworth and Worsley Circuit**



Welcome and Call to Worship:

Welcome everyone to our online worship today. Thank you for being here, thank you for all that you do and, more than anything else, for the people you are, the people of God, loved by God.

So, as God's People, raise your expectations of what it means to encounter God in this place and at this time. Be open to God revealing something of God's divine nature to us, and changing the way we see the world.

Opening Prayer:

Almighty God,
we ask you to show us something more of who you are
and how awesome your presence is.
Overcome our fear of the unknown,
and lead us into a new experience of you.
May our worship today be as on a mountain-top,
a transforming encounter that empowers our lives, our faith,
our discipleship. **Amen.**

Hymn:

From all that dwell below the skies
let the Creator's praise arise:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Let the Redeemer's name be sung,
through every land, by every tongue:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Eternal are your mercies, Lord;
eternal truth attends your word:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Your praise shall sound from shore to shore,
till suns shall rise and set no more:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

Prayer of Praise:

Lord although we are distant from one another we thank you that you have called us here to meet and praise you through word, song and prayer. It feels so good to be in your presence.

But how can we praise you in life's ordinary moments when they are so full of concern for the world, for others and ourselves? Help us to praise you with a smile, a greeting, a shoulder to lean on and to give love and compassion. We praise and thank you Lord God of our salvation. You are our rock and refuge. Your radiant light is available to us through relationship with Jesus your Son and can transform our hearts.

We thank you for the many blessings we receive when we follow through on what you ask of us. Lord how great you are and worthy of our praise!

May we be a blessing to others in your name, by spreading the good news.

God of life-changing moments, we glorify you.
Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, we will be honest: this is really hard. It is really hard to wear masks, to avoid public gatherings, to spend so much time watching screens. We are sorry Lord if we sometimes lose patience and hope. Please help us. Help us to lean on you and each other when things get hard. Remind us every day that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Jesus' divine nature was confirmed on the mountain – he is God's beloved Son. He went on to suffer; he died and rose again for us, conquering sin and death. Now he sits at God's right hand, glorified in heaven – and thanks to him, we are completely forgiven. We ask this in Jesus' Name. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer:

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 this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive them that trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom
The power and the glory
For ever and ever
Amen.

Reading: 2 Corinthians 4: 3-6 (New International Version)

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds

of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Reading: Mark 9: 2-9 (New Revised Standard Version)

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, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then 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.' He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!' Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. 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.

Hymn:

God of grace amazing wonder
Irresistible and free
Oh the miracle of mercy
Jesus reaches down to me
God of grace I stand in wonder
As my God restores my soul
His own blood has paid my ransom
Awesome cost to make me whole.

God of grace who loved and knew me
Long before the world began
Sent my saviour down from heaven
Perfect God and perfect man
God of grace I trust in Jesus
I'm accepted as His own
Every day new grace sustains me
As I lean on Him alone.

God of grace I stand astounded
Cleansed forgiven and secure
All my fears are now confounded
And my hope is ever sure
God of grace now crowned in glory
Where one day I'll see Your face
And forever I'll adore You
In Your everlasting grace.

Reflection: Deacon Debbie Harkness

Special Moments To Treasure

Part 1 Mountain top experiences

I am sure we all have many special moments that we treasure, weather that's the day we met our first love, our weddings day, the birth of a child, passing your exams or driving test, Passing the job interview, your graduation, maybe even climbing your own physical mountain and I'm sure we will all remember Captain Sir Tom Moor who encouraged so many and raised extraordinary amounts of money for the NHS and other charities, and also his words of Hope that "tomorrow is a good day" then there is our own personal encounters with God etc the list can be too big to mention all our special moments.

Over lockdown I have been putting together three photo journals for my three boys. A reminder of special moments on our life journeys. It has been hard to decide what to put in and what to leave out. I have also acquired two little books for my granddaughters called letters to my grandchild. It is a small book that already has several letters and envelopes contained in it and you have to write your own letters on the pages enclosed. This book is what they call a paper time capsule. A gift for them to open when they are older, so that they too can recall some special memories.

In our reading from Marks gospel the setting of the story is on a high mountain, suggesting that something remarkable is about to happen. This is not the first such great encounter we hear about in the bible; 1 Kings 19:8 and Exodus 19: 3 both recall mountain top encounters with God, for Elijah and Moses and here they are again, only this time Jesus and a few disciples are there with them.

Some would say the timing of this great encounter is perfect, spot on, because earlier in Mark chapter 8 Jesus had just turned the disciples thinking upside down. The end of chapter 8 and this beginning in chapter 9 must leave the disciples feeling like they have just been on an emotional roller-coaster.

In Mark chapter 8 Peter finds words to articulate who Jesus is "You are the Messiah says Peter. Jesus accept this" but then tells them not to say anything. I wonder what Peter was feeling right then? Jesus then begins to tell them of his forthcoming suffering and death. Now he even rebukes Peter for his questioning of what is to happen. Poor Peter there he is top of the class one minute and then being told off the next!! Have you ever found yourself in such a situation?

If that's not enough emotion going on then hang on because here they are now on the top of the mountain with Jesus, Elijah and Moses and despite the recent goings on poor Peter just cannot contain himself and so he chatters on again, as he says " Rabbi it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters- one for you, one for Elijah and one for Moses".

I wonder have you ever been so full of excitement that the words you come out with at that moment are rather silly when you look back at the situation, I know I have. I remember visiting my mum in the hospice, she was very poorly and very near to death. She would not say she was a religious person and like many she went to church for the usual hatch, match and dispatch. However we had had a few conversations about Jesus in the past few months and years and I had bought her a prayer book to put by her bed, so she could read them for comfort. Anyway on this particular day I went to see her she said “you look well love” and I replied “so do you mum” (Not too sure I actually believed it myself as she really looked quite poorly) she then said “I have something to tell you” or “lovely” I said “what’s that mum?”. She replied “I have met with Jesus and I’m not afraid to die” my reply “That’s not fair you will get to see him before me!!” Not my finest moment that is for sure.

Like Peter and I’m sure many others, the words just tumbled out of my mouth, a mixture of excitement at what mum had revealed and the need to reply immediately to such a profound statement. But although I feel I could have said something more eloquent, this is most certainly one of my treasured moments in life. The moment was much more than the words my mum spoke, they were an inner transformation of someone who had feared death for many years and so to look at her and to suddenly see her through the eyes of Jesus and notice the peace that filled her and remained with her right until she passed is something I will never forget.

Peter’s stumbling words are eclipsed by the voice of God and cloud comes down the mountain reminding us of the Jewish tradition that linked cloud and the glory of God. God speaks “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!!” And then poof everything changes again and it’s just Jesus, Peter, James and John standing on the mountain. No more bright dazzling clothes, Elijah and Moses were no longer with them and the voice of God was silent! And if that’s not enough as they descend down the mountain Jesus gives them order not to say anything!! I mean what a day, what a range of emotions they must have encountered that day.

Part two: changed by the encounter.

The disciples have certainly had an array of mixed messages on their journey recently. Their trust in Jesus shocked as he explained what lay ahead, then their mountain top encounter and now back to earth with a bump. I guess we can all relate to life being like this on more than one occasion.

We will all have our special moments that we treasure, but they are only one part of lives rich tapestry. It is the ups and downs of life that make us what we are. If we didn’t have the normal boring bits or the off days, then we wouldn’t appreciate the special day’s would we?

I guess life has certainly been a rollercoaster of emotions for us all over the last year or so that’s for sure. One thing we do need to be mindful of is the way these events and moments change us. Let’s face it the disciples might have been told not to tell anyone of their encounter on the mountain that day, but I am sure they could not possibly be the same people who went up the mountain that day encounter what they did and not be changed in some way.

I wonder if that’s the same for us? Are we the same people we were a year ago, a month ago or even a week ago? I know I’m not. Hopefully people will have different priorities now, what was important to some before lockdown, might not be the same at the end of it. Especially when it comes to climate change and poverty.

I would like to hope that all of us who call ourselves Christians, encounter change in ourselves and our behaviour both towards God and others on a regular basis because without that change there is no growth.

In our reading from Corinthians Paul explores the image of light as a sign of God’s presence. Paul also draws on the story of Moses whose face shone so brightly after he had spoken to God that he needed to wear a veil. Exodus 34: 29-35. Yet the light of God present in Christ is even brighter. Moses’ face reflected God’s glory, while Jesus is the true image of God.

Paul recognises that for some the light of Christ is dimmed by a veil that prevents them seeing his glory. When someone turns

to the Lord, the veil is removed (2 Corinthians 3:16) I remember one of my older sisters questioning why mum had suffered so much with cancer and why hadn't God healed her. Unfortunately, she couldn't see that God had healed mum, God had removed her fear of dying, God had met mum where she was. My prayer was and still is that in time my siblings too would have their veil removed. But that is to be in God's timing and not mine. My job like all of us is to be patient, show love and plant the seeds.

Turning to Christ is the gift of God's grace, and this unveiling depends on that initiative. My mum like many of her age believed God to be a distant God, a God of wrath and punishment. It was only through us having the time to sit together and talk about God's love and how my own journey with God had developed over the years that she began to turn to him with her pain, her suffering and her questions knowing there was no judgement to be feared. A few weeks before mum died I had the flu so couldn't visit her in the hospice so she read her prayer book each day and began to realise she too was worthy to be in the presence of God, to receive his healing.

In 1 Corinthians Paul reminded the people of Corinth that whilst Paul may plant the seeds it is God who gives the growth through the power of God's spirit.

When we see the light for ourselves, we acknowledge the link between Jesus and God's glory. The Corinthians like many still today looked for knowledge in many places. Here in today's passage Paul reminds them of the only kind of knowledge that really matters.

And so to sum up:

We will all have our mountain high and valley low experiences after all that's what makes us, us, all unique and individual beings made in the love of God.

There will be times in our life when we are to share our story with others on the journey, so they too can experience the love of God, and be transformed by His grace. There will also be time when it is wise not to speak despite our bursting with excitement. In

Ecclesiastes we are reminded that there is a time to speak and a time to be quiet, a time to sow and a time to reap.

Remember all is done in God's time and not ours. We are called to sow the seeds that God himself will bring to fruition. May we all be guided by God's spirit each day and in each situation be that a mountain top high or a valley low. Let's us remember God is always with us and that tomorrow is a good day. **Amen.**

Hymn:

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of Righteousness, arise,
triumph o'er the shades of night;
Day-spring from on high, be near;
Day-star, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn
unaccompanied by thee;
joyless is the day's return,
till thy mercy's beams I see,
till they inward light impart,
glad my eyes, and warm my heart.

Visit then this soul of mine;
pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
fill me, radiance divine;
scatter all my unbelief;
more and more thyself display,
shining to the perfect day.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Prayers for others and for the world:

God of glory,
open our eyes and open our hearts.
Help us to see Jesus.

God of glory,
change us and renew us by your Spirit.
Make us more like Jesus

God of glory,
As we look at the events in our world,
help us to see where you are at work.
In our homes and in our daily lives,
help us to notice the glimpses of your glory
shining through the ordinary fabric of our lives.

You are the God who comes close to us:
though we are far apart from each other
Surround us with the light of your presence.

God of glory,
we live with so many uncertainties.
Today we pray for people whose lives are always uncertain:
for people in war torn parts of the world;
for all who wonder where their next meal will come from;
for people who are jobless or homeless;
for all who are fleeing from domestic violence.
Help us to love one another as you have loved us.
May we be ready to respond to the need of others
and to do what we can to tell the story
of the love that will never let us go,
the love that can change us and the world.

You are the God who comes close to us:
though we are far apart from each other
Surround us with the light of your presence.

God of glory,
we pray for situations in the world that need hope and healing.
And in particular for Yemen, for Russia, and for Myanmar.
We ask for words and actions that are full of hope and not hate,
of forgiveness and unity and not division.
May we all be mindful of the power of our words,
and use our speaking to build others up, not to tear them down.
This week, may we seek to respond to the needs of others
with messages, words and actions of hope and comfort.

You are the God who comes close to us:
though we are far apart from each other
Surround us with the light of your presence.

God of glory,
we thank you for the tireless effort of all who are caring for patients,
especially those who are suffering from Covid-19.
We ask that you would give all hospital staff peace as they care for
the sick
and bring comfort to those who are at the end of life.
As discussions begin about a future return to school,
we pray that the needs of children and young people would be
central to the thinking.

We pray for all who have been kept apart from those they love;
and for those who are grieving for friends and family who have died—
surround them all with your healing presence.
In a moment of quiet, we remember people in our own communities
who are suffering
asking that you would lighten the pain and distress.

[Silent prayer]

You are the God who comes close to us:
though we are far apart from each other
Surround us with the light of your presence.

God of glory,
open our eyes and open our hearts.
Help us to see Jesus.

God of glory,
change us and renew us by your Spirit.
Make us more like Jesus. **Amen.**

Offering:

*(For those who are setting aside their offering each week this prayer
may be said:)*

Bless the offering we bring, Lord God, and bless us too,
that our money and our whole lives might be for you;
that your will be done and your Kingdom come,
even through us.
In Jesus' name.

Amen

Hymn:

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in your Church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Christ, be our light! ...

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in your Church gathered today.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

Christ, be our light! ...

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

Christ, be our light! ...

Bernadette Farrell (b.1957)

Blessing:

Lit up by the love of God,
we go to shine hope and joy in all the places we go.
And the blessing of the God of love
encircle each one of us now and forever more

Amen.

**After Service Telephone Chat:
Sunday 14th February 11:45 AM**

Telephone Number: 0333 011 0616
Access code: 623 5908

Please note the call asks you to press the '£' key after entering the access code. You can either press the '#' key, or just wait, and you will be connected to the telephone chat.

**After Service Zoom Chat:
Sunday 14th February from 11:45 AM**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?
pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1SlI3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1SlI3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09)

Meeting ID: 217 268 7931
Passcode: RevDazzer

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