

Circuit Service 14/02/21

Welcome to our worship this morning, the service has been prepared by Paddy Jose, a local preacher from Tadley. The prayers have been adapted from the Roots resource.

Call to Worship. The glory of God shines in the face of Jesus, who is the image of God. We see the light of the Gospel in the glory of God, God shines in our hearts as a light shines in darkness. Come let us worship.

Hymn. Singing the Faith 175. Light of the World.

1 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.*

2 King of all 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 I'll never know how much it cost
to see my sin upon that cross.
And I'll never know how much it cost
to see my sin upon that cross.
So here I am to worship ...

Tim Hughes

Prayers.

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 discipleship. Amen.

Forgive us, Lord, when we drown out your voice with our own, when we avoid the mountain-top and stay in the valleys, when we share things that we should have kept secret, and keep silence when we should speak out.

Forgive us, restore us and keep us from failing. We ask this in Christ's name.

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 can know ourselves forgiven.

The Lord's Prayer.

All-age Address.

If I were to show you a red rose and a paper heart I wonder what word would spring to mind. For me it would be LOVE. A red rose in particular is important to me because whenever we had a celebration, for instance our anniversary, Frank would give me a single red rose and a box of posh chocolates, so now whenever I see a red rose it reminds me of the love we shared.

Today, as well as being the Sunday before Lent is also, this year, Valentine's Day. A day when people show their loved ones how much they care. So, who was Valentine? He is thought to be a Christian priest living in Rome in the third century who was executed by Emperor Claudius II. At that time a strong army was important but young men were avoiding joining up by getting married, you had to be single to join the army. So Claudius banned marriages and Valentine decided to continue to marry young couples in secret. When the Emperor found out he ordered Valentine's execution. Legend has it that before his death he sent a note to his jailer's daughter, whom he had befriended, and signed it "From your Valentine" Valentine's day has been celebrated as a feast for lovers since the fourteenth century and cards started to be sent by the Victorians but it is only in the last few decades that it has become the huge commercial occasion that it is today.

Love of course is not restricted to Valentine's Day, it is central to our lives. God is love and we are called to love. Jesus gave us the two great commandments. To love God and to love each other as we love ourselves. Jesus died out of love for us. So, as we feel God's love for us let us love each other, not just today but everyday.

Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for your love, we thank you that we have the guidance of your word in the Bible, that we can talk to you in prayer and know you are listening. We thank you for the example of your saints who show us how to follow you. Help us to follow you faithfully and to share your love with others. Amen.

Readings; 2 Kings 2 verses 1-12

Mark 9 verses 2-9

Hymn. Singing the Faith 259 Jesus on the Mountain Peak

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| 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 ! | 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 ! |
| 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 ! | 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 ! |

Brian Wren (*b.* 1936)

Sermon.

Back in the dark ages, when I was training to be a teacher we were expected to carry out a special school practice and I was allocated a school in a very deprived area of Portsmouth. Most of the homes were either Victorian back to backs or shoddily built blocks of flats. Poverty was a big issue and visits to the pawn broker were a fact of life. Most of the children came from this area and had not had the educational opportunities that we expect today. However, a small proportion were there because they were physically disabled. There was an Assembly every morning and one of the songs they particularly enjoyed singing was a song “The world looks very beautiful, and full of joy to me. The sun shines down in glory on everything I see. I know I will be happy while in this world I stay. For I will follow Jesus all the way.” There was something special seeing these children for whom life was hard singing with smiles on their faces. As part of the practice we had to observe one child in detail and I was allocated Susie. She was about 7 or 8 and had cerebral palsy and was a delightful little girl who walked with the aid of callipers and crutches, not that it stopped her trying to keep up with the others. I was watching her in Assembly and noticed that she loved that song and her face would light up when we sang it. Susie also loved to paint and would produce at least one picture a day. I noticed that whatever the subject, the painting always showed a large yellow sun right in the middle. When I asked her about this she said “That’s Jesus, like in the song, I love him” Somehow in her mind the sun shining down in glory and the Jesus she would follow had become one. In her own way she had seen the glory of God.

In this week’s readings, Elisha and the disciples, Peter, James and John, see examples of God’s glory but in different ways. Elisha certainly knew what was

happening to Elijah but he doesn't want to accept it, he is in denial, but he manages to remain calm, says the right thing and receives a gift that helps him throughout his life and ministry. The disciples' experience is very different, the sight of the transfigured Jesus leaves them dazzled and confused and Peter says the first thing that comes into his head. They glimpsed a new reality and when they heard the voice of God speaking the words that Jesus himself had heard at his baptism they begin to understand. I wonder, if we had been witnesses to God's glory in this way, how we would have reacted? Would we remain calm or be totally overwhelmed.

Mountain-top experiences have long been seen as a means of seeing the world differently. Perspective is altered and things that are large when we are at ground level look tiny when seen from above. Because they are likely to be remote, mountains are often a place where solitude can be found. Jesus himself often withdrew to the hills to pray and he, himself, chose to take the disciples up to the mountain-top to witness his glory. At height we see the world from a different place, sometimes it seems as if we are sharing God's view of the world. I imagine we have all at sometime been at the top of a high mountain or hill and looked around us to see the surrounding countryside. When the sun is shining it can be a pleasant experience but if the weather is not so good it can be frightening. I remember a group of us climbing Cader Idris, in Wales, and when we set off the weather was good. We got to the top and decided to walk around the summit, after a time a cold mist came down and we could not see where we were. It would have been easy to panic but fortunately, as geography students, we were well equipped with suitable clothing, maps and compasses so we found the right path down to where our coach was waiting, but it could have been very different. Before the mist came down, we were quite happy to spend time looking around us but once we couldn't see anything we couldn't wait to get off the mountain. When the disciples saw Jesus transfigured with Moses and Elijah beside him, they were terrified and Peter, in panic, wants to build shelters for them. Then the cloud overshadows them and they hear God's voice, and when the cloud lifts then just Jesus remains, I wonder how they felt. It would be easy to assume that they would want to stay in what had become a special place and a special time with Jesus.

As we go through life, we may have times when we feel especially close to God and may even see some of these as mountain-top experiences that fill us with such joy that we don't want to leave them behind and move on. But, just as

the disciples had to come down the mountain and face all that the journey to Jerusalem would bring, we have to return to the world. How can we take the intensity of the moment into the everyday? These experiences can make us more alive to God and can strengthen us and give us courage to share our story with others, to do as we are commanded, to go out into the world and share the gospel story and ultimately to make new disciples of Jesus Christ, a task that would be impossible if we were to remain on our mountain-top.

At the moment with the current Covid restrictions we may feel that we are living under a cloud of loneliness and fear, with little expectation that things will change soon, but the cloud will lift and we will be able to see a new and different future where there is hope and we can take up the challenges that freedom brings. So, while we wait, spend time listening to God, expecting to see his glory and listening for that still voice that will guide us and bring us joy.

Let's pray:

God of the mountain-top and the valley, when the mountain is steep and we are tired, bless us with your strength. When the mountain is misty and we are afraid, bless us with your peace. When the mountain is covered with the snow of uncertainty, bless us with your courage. When the mountain is beautiful, bless us with gratitude and a sense of wonder that you are with us always. Amen.

[Hymn. Singing the Faith 117. Sing praise to God who reigns above.](#)

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| 1 Sing praise to God who reigns above,
the God of all creation,
the God of power, the God of love,
the God of our salvation ;
with healing balm my soul he fills,
and every faithless murmur stills :
to God all praise and glory ! | 3 The Lord is never far away,
but, through all grief distressing,
an ever-present help and stay,
our peace, and joy, and blessing ;
as with a mother's tender hand,
he leads his own, his chosen band :
to God all praise and glory ! |
| 2 What God's almighty power has made
that will he ever cherish,
and will, unfailling, soon and late,
with loving-kindness nourish ;
and where he rules in kingly might
there all is just and all is right :
to God all praise and glory ! | 4 O you who name Christ's holy name,
give God all praise and glory :
O you who own his power, proclaim
aloud the wondrous story.
Cast each false idol from its throne :
the Lord is God, and he alone :
to God all praise and glory ! |

Johann Jakob Schütz (1640–1690), Frances Elizabeth Cox (1812–1897) and Honor Mary Thwaites (1914–1993)

Prayers of thanksgiving and Intercession.

Loving Father, we thank you for revealing yourself to us through Jesus, for allowing us to see your glory on the mountain-top, for revealing the depth of your love for us and for the world you created. In the transforming power of that love, we bring into your presence those people and situations that we long to see transformed.

We pray for countries around the world that are being torn apart by war, for refugees looking for safety, for those imprisoned for their faith and for those who will go hungry today and those who struggle to bring democracy to their land.

We pray for this country and those in power, particularly those who are working to bring this pandemic to an end. For those who are in control of the economy who are seeking ways for people to survive financially when they are unemployed or unable to work. For foodbanks and other charities who reach out to help the hungry and homeless.

We pray for those who are sick, for those affected by the pandemic, those who are ill, for those who suffer from long Covid and for all who have been bereaved. We pray for those whose treatment has been delayed because of the virus and who are in pain and whose condition is deteriorating. We give thanks for all health workers who have given so much over the last year and for those who have developed and those who are delivering the vaccine.

In the silence of our hearts we bring before God those we know who need our prayers.

Silence

Finally, we pray for ourselves, for our own journey of discipleship, for courage, steadfast faith and wisdom in all we do and say.

Amen.

[Hymn. Singing the Faith 94 To God be the Glory](#)

1

To God be the glory, great things he
has done,
So loved he the world that he gave us his
Son,
who yielded his life in atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in :

2

O perfect redemption, the purchase of
blood,
to every believer the promise of God !
And every offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon
receives :

*Praise the Lord ! Praise the
Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice !
Praise the Lord ! Praise the
Lord!
Let the people rejoice !
O come to the Father, through
Jesus the Son:
and give him the glory — great
Things He has done!*

3

Great things he has taught us, great
Things He has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus
the Son,
but purer, and higher, and greater will
be,
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus
we see:

Frances Jane van Alstyne, (Fanny Crosby) (1820–1915)

Blessing. Lord of light, we go out in your name to bring your glory into your world. May we shine with the joy, peace and hope of your Holy Spirit, so that people see in us the face and glory of Jesus Christ. Amen.