

*Common Worship in Separate Places  
For the people of Elmwood Avenue Presbyterian Church  
London, Ontario  
and their friends*

*The 6th Sunday after Epiphany  
(The Feast of the Transfiguration)  
14 February 2021*

*To cross the threshold into worship, light a candle and keep a moment of silence.*

*Opening Words*

L: God has shone in our hearts,

**P: to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, shining in the face of Jesus Christ.**

L: Let us worship God.

*Prayers of Adoration and Confession*

Holy God, eternal and infinite, you are beyond all knowing; your light is blinding. Yet we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ, whose love illumines the world. Transform us more and more into his image, who renewed our humanity so that we may share in his divinity; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be glory evermore.

Merciful one, bring your light to our eyes and show us what we hide in darkness, even from ourselves. We speak when we should listen; we act when we should wait. If we have been the source of pain; if we have spoken cruel words; if we have followed an easy path to sidestep the demands of your Gospel, do not condemn, but forgive, O Lord.

L: Lord, have mercy upon us.

**P: Christ, have mercy upon us.**

L: Lord, have mercy upon us.

God of glory, upon a high mountain you revealed Jesus Christ in the mystery of his transfiguration as your Son, the Beloved, to whom we must listen. By the Word of his Gospel, shining forever as a light in the darkness, give us hope in the midst of suffering, and faith to perceive in his passion and cross the glory of the Risen Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen*

*An Assurance of Pardon*

L: "Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." May God grant us pardon, true repentance, and bring us to eternal life.

**P: May the peace of Christ be with us all.**

***Prayer for Illumination*** Holy One, the unfolding of your Word gives light. Shine upon us now, illumine your truth, and enlighten our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
*Amen*

***The Psalm for the Day***

**Psalm 50: 1-6** (*God appears in fire and storm*)

The mighty one, God the Lord,  
speaks and summons the earth  
from the rising of the sun to its setting.  
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,  
God shines forth.  
Our God comes and does not keep silence,  
before him is a devouring fire,  
and a mighty tempest all around him.  
He calls to the heavens above  
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:  
'Gather to me my faithful ones,  
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!  
The heavens declare his righteousness,  
for God himself is judge.

*(Said together)* **Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen**

***A Reading for the Day***

**St Mark 9: 2-9** (*Jesus' Transfiguration on the Mountain*)

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.

L: This is the Gospel of our Risen Lord.

**P: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

### *Some thoughts on the Reading*

**St Mark 9:3** *"...his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them."*

What kind of vision was this? Jesus brought his 'inner circle' with him to climb a high mountain. At the summit, his appearance changed, as though he'd been lit from within by a bright incandescence. Even his clothes shone 'whiter than white' "such as no one on earth could bleach them." It was a vision of divine glory.

Suddenly, Moses and Elijah were there too, as though the whole of 'The Law and The Prophets' were behind this moment. Then a voice boomed from the descending cloud: "Here is my Son, the Beloved. *Listen to him.*"

Was this hallucination? People do see mirages and optical illusions. They imagine phantom noises and 'things that go bump in the night'. On the other hand, we're blind and deaf to vast swaths of reality most of the time, aren't we?

Psychologists ran an experiment a few years ago. They asked their subjects to watch a video. It showed some people moving about and passing a couple of basketballs back and forth to each other. The viewers were told to keep track of the number of times a ball was passed from one person to another. As they did this, an actor in a gorilla costume walked right through the group on the screen and waved to the viewers.

Almost everyone reported the number of 'passes' correctly. Few noticed the gorilla. Why? To focus intently on their task, they'd filtered out the waving gorilla. I wonder how much of the divine glory waves at us wildly, every day, as we pass by on the other side?

We never see and hear the world 'innocently', just as it is, do we? Our experience has many moving parts. Our frames of reference and our intense interests open one narrow door of perception at the cost of closing many others. Our blind spots are built in.

Perhaps the miracle on the mountain that day was more than a change in Jesus' appearance. Perhaps it was also a change in the disciples' *perception* of Jesus, opening a doorway within *them* to the divine glory that is *his*. In his poem, "The Transfiguration",

Edwin Muir hints at this. A disciple says: “*The source of all our seeing rinsed and cleansed... Gave back to us the clear unfallen world.*”

Before they climbed the mountain, Jesus had healed a blind man. He put saliva on the blind man’s eyes. “Can you *see* anything,” he asked.

“I can see people, but they look like trees, walking,” he said. He can *see*, in other words, but he only *half-sees*. So, Jesus healed him a second time. Then he sees perfectly.

That’s an acted-out parable of the very next scene. Jesus asks Peter, “who do *you* say I am?” Or, as we might put it, “What do you *see* in me?”

“You’re the Christ,” he says. Peter uses the right words but he still only *half-sees*. Jesus says he must go to Jerusalem to die on a cross. That’s the gorilla in the room, waving at Peter. But Peter can’t see it. He rebukes Jesus. He can’t understand *why* Jesus should suffer. Peter doesn’t ‘get it’. He doesn’t yet see. “Get behind me, Satan,” Jesus shouts.

But then, still stinging from this scolding, Peter follows Jesus up the mountain, along with James and John. There at last, if only for a moment, he *does* see, perfectly. Jesus’ face is lit by uncreated light, and it’s a glory like none other.

Why is it a glory like none other? Not just because “his clothes became dazzling white.” It’s because this glory refuses to bypass suffering. Jesus is *transfigured* on the mountain only to be *disfigured* on the cross, and the glory those two places share – on the mountain and on the cross – is *all one glory*.

Only this glory could make our lives full and whole again. It’s not Disneyfied razzle-dazzle or the Prosperity Gospel’s pizzazz. We’ve had too much artificial glory, the counterfeit joy of capitalist consumption, the shiny spirituality that panders and coddles us, massaging our selfish egos even as it lightens our heavy wallets. We’ve had enough of those false feelings of superiority that fuel moralistic religion too. These are poor substitutes for divine glory. They blind us to the real thing.

Followers of Jesus perceive a different, deeper glory; one that refuses to slip the bonds of history, the travails of the body, life’s tragic complexity, and the horrible hurt of life. Having had our eyes opened and our vision healed, we can’t be happy with a glossy, phony spirituality anymore.

Divine glory deals with us by *transfiguring* our perceptions. “You find real life by dying to selfishness,” says Jesus. “You lead by serving. You deal with money by sharing it, with sin by forgiving it, and with enemies by loving them. Just try it,” he says, “and *see* if your life isn’t gloriously transfigured and the ‘clear unfallen world’ becomes visible to you.”

“The Christ must suffer.” That’s what Jesus tells Peter. Peter sees, but he only *half-sees*. He knows, but only in part. He doesn’t yet know as he himself is known – not until that one brief, shining moment on the mountain. The moment came, then it went. But it happened.

It’s *we* who need transfiguration, isn’t it?

The poet Margaret Avison says, "It's impossible either to be bored by or to reject Jesus Christ."

"But I *am* bored. And much of the time I *do* reject Christianity," we whisper.

"No," she says. "You're bored by some notion of what Christianity is. You're put off by a blurred picture. It's a Person with whom you will have to do, and he is not boring. *Seen clearly, he could not be rejected.*"

### ***Prayers of Intercession***

Holy Lord, you revealed your glory and presence in your Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In receiving our prayers, reveal the glory and presence of your Spirit alive and work in the world all around us.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

Save your Church from despair and fear. Give us the light we need to take the next steps on our journey. Inspire us with the vision of a world transfigured by your glory, and cause us to pray and work and give until your will is done on earth as in heaven.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

God of grace and God of glory, on your people pour your power. Crown your ancient Church's story, bring its bud to glorious flower. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

Eternal God, source of life, you delight in all living things. Grant us that reverence for life that is in keeping with those who love you, lest we despise it, degrade it, or callously destroy it. Rather, help us save life, to secure and sanctify it, according to the example of your Son.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are sick, sad, or suffering any kind of distress. We pray for those who are dying, that as their life draws to a close, God may draw close to them.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

We pray for all who work for justice in the world, that hope shall not fail them. We pray for those who are following in the steps of Jesus Christ, and for those wish they could share this faith, but cannot.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

We are grateful even in our sorrow, for those we have loved and cherished, who have died. We feel their loss. Remembering the whole communion of saints, now transfigured by the light of God's presence, we keep a time of silence in God's presence...*(keep a time of silence in God's presence)*...

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

Holy One, glorious and faithful, to those who seek you with a sincere heart you reveal the beauty of your face. Strengthen us in faith to embrace the mystery of the cross, and open our hearts to its transfiguring power; that, clinging in love to your will for us, we may walk the path of discipleship as followers of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

As our Saviour has taught, so we pray:

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever. Amen**

***Benediction***

*(Said together)* **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever. Amen**