

## Church at Home

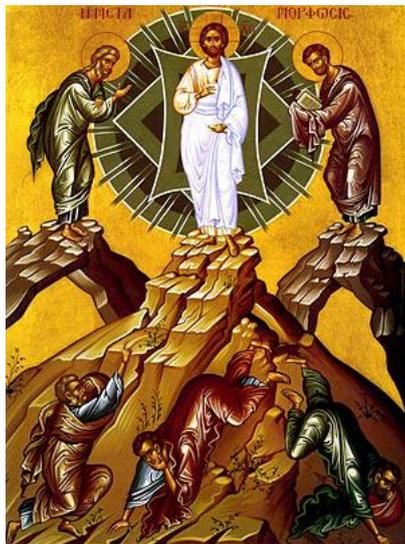
**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

### **The Sunday before Lent - *The Transfiguration of Christ***

‘Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus’ Mark 9:8

This has been a long hard winter so far for most of us, and this time, it’s not just because of the weather, although that hasn’t helped! Being locked down for the third time has seemed especially energy- and morale-sapping, and maybe, particularly at this moment, when we are beginning to feel there is hope on the horizon, it is even more difficult to be reconciled to this continued waiting. We are now approaching Lent as well, and the anniversary of the first lockdown isn’t far off, which means we have been away from church services far more than we’ve been at them this past year. So, how can we regain some perspective, living in the chilly shadowlands of these days? Maybe this week’s Bible story can help us. It’s in isolation on the cold mountaintop that Jesus gives Peter, James and John a glimpse of the bigger picture beyond the ministry in Galilee and even beyond the coming events of the passion, for which we prepare in Lent. It’s a glimpse of heaven’s glory breaking through for us in Jesus, and with the appearance of Moses and Elijah, the assurance that those who we thought had died, are in fact alive with God in glory. May this mysterious story inspire us with new energy and hope to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus only.

#### **The Bible readings for this Sunday:**



[2 Kings 2: 1-12](#) – Here we read the mysterious story of Elijah being taken up into heaven in a chariot, leaving Elisha to carry on his work

[Psalm 50: 1-6](#) – The Psalmist sings of God who ‘shines forth’, reminding us of the Shekinah glory that lit up Moses’s face on Mount Sinai and which is a sign of the presence of God.

[2 Corinthians 4: 3-6](#) – Paul writes about the light of the gospel that has shone in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This is also the first light of creation that has now shone into our hearts too.

[Mark 9: 2-9](#) – This is Mark’s account of the transfiguration of Jesus. It marks a turning point in his gospel story as Jesus now prepares to travel south to Jerusalem and the events of Holy Week and Easter. This unforgettable moment prepares these disciples and us to get ready for the Lenten journey ahead.

#### **Before we sing, read or pray**

Today of course it’s also Valentine’s Day - maybe you have sent or received a special card or gift? Although it’s hard for many of us to believe this of ourselves, the truth is that God loves us with an extraordinary and never changing love every day of the year. He longs to pour his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whenever we turn to him.

Take a moment to reflect on this amazing truth, as you bring all of yourself - those parts you like and those of which you are ashamed - before God in silent prayer.

Remember that the Lord is patient and kind, slow to anger, and full of steadfast love. God understands what we are going through and offers in Christ to come alongside and inside us by his Holy Spirit to pick us up and help us start again, all because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

**The Lord is here – *God’s Spirit is with us!***

### Suggested hymns:

[Be still for the presence of the Lord](#)

[Christ whose glory fills the skies](#)

[At the name of Jesus](#)

[Majesty, worship his majesty](#)

[Turn your eyes upon Jesus](#)

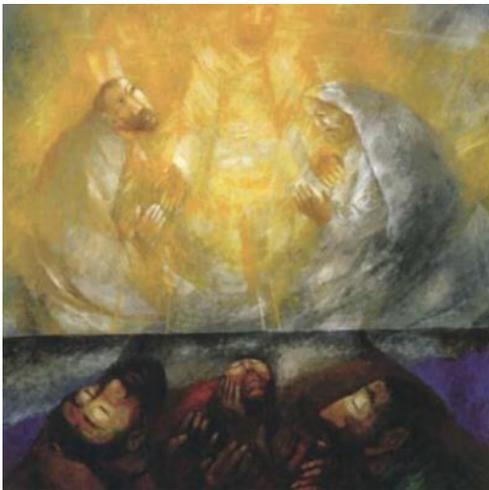
[I stand amazed in the presence](#)

[Transfiguration](#) (Hillsong)



### First thoughts on today's Gospel

Just as the beginning of Lent this coming Wednesday marks a new season in our pilgrimage through the Christian year, so this story is a turning point in the gospel narratives. Our Lord's ministry in Galilee is coming to an end and now the long journey south towards Jerusalem begins. It's a journey towards his 'departure' as it is described in the conversation between Elijah, Moses and Jesus here on the mountain. This is a remarkable way of describing the pain and the shame of the cross!



And this whole intimate and overwhelming experience of who Jesus really is shared with only three disciples so that they might hold onto its deep truth through the time to come. We certainly know that Peter remembers this later in life – he refers to it in one of his letters as a moment of revelation. It is the moment when these three hear God speak, just as he had spoken at Christ's baptism which we remembered at the beginning of the year. And the appearance of Moses and Elijah on either side of Jesus remind us how the Old Testament points to the coming of Christ who will shine a cleansing light into our hearts just as the prophets predicted, through the mysterious work of the cross for the whole world.

Peter wanted to turn that mountaintop into a shrine in order to hold on to the experience, but that is not the way God works. Instead the experience of God's presence needs to be one which we carry within us everywhere we go. During this pandemic, which it seems still has a way to go before it has run its course, may we experience the transfiguring glory of God surrounding us and keeping us, whatever comes our way.

### For our prayers, let us remember:

- Our friends and neighbours in Abridge who are struggling to hold things together during this ongoing lockdown
- For parents having to juggle work commitments and child care during half term.
- For those we know who are sick, at home or in hospital, and those whose mental health has suffered during this crisis
- For all health care professionals and the vaccination teams working so hard at this time
- For world leaders as they work out how best to support developing countries who also face this pandemic

Add any particular people and situations that The Holy Spirit brings to your mind as you have been praying and then say our family prayer, **The Lord's Prayer**.

End your time of church-at-home by saying out loud the words of **The Grace**, reaching out your hands to include in your imagination all those you know and love, who live here in the village and beyond

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## A reflective poem on today's story



*Detail from The  
Transfiguration by Duccio*



*Transfiguration by  
Lewis Bowman*

It was a strange accompanying that quiet afternoon;  
Not taken aside for secret talk or special work,  
But led instead skyward, until there was nowhere else to go;  
Above life's ordinariness, beyond the everyday,  
To arrive in silence, shivering with the cold and a certain dread.

But there came no words, no explanation and no warning.  
Instead the day's dusk began to dawn anew with a sunrise of blinding light  
That shone in and with and from and through their special friend  
In glorious splendour that took their breath away.  
So this was what they're coming was for, whatever it was or would be;  
Not some new knowing but another way of seeing.  
And so they gazed in silence, stunned with the brightness and in holy awe.

Dazzled and bewildered they lost their sense, uncertain of each other  
And of their footing in that lonely place, where all familiarity fled.  
It hurt their eyes to look for long at the One they loved but now barely knew.  
In the confusion of strange perspectives and distorted, blurred dimensions,  
Their balance lost, they tripped and fell about awkwardly  
Like tumbleweed before the wind, like skittles scattered in a game,  
Until at last, anchored by a rock or shrub, they came to rest within the glory  
And dared in silence to turn their eyes to Him who now was three.

For within that unearthly light, still He stood, but with two others now,  
Solemn attendants at his sides, at ease and yet slightly bowed,  
Conversing wisely within the brightness, talking of the departure and a day to come.

The one a prophet by his look, with courage lined and battle scarred;  
The other a patriarch by his meekness, at peace within the Promised Land.  
And both on familiar mountain heights, places of triumph and the Law;  
Each reflecting now the longed-for light which once had been a distant dream  
And now is theirs forever; and all their words come true - no wonder they were glad.

While the three listened in silence, struggling to give the vision sense.

They could only marvel to be there, counted worthy of such company.  
And reasoning that this was a moment to be treasured, never to be forgotten;  
It needed lasting memorial, marker and making permanent;  
And so the cry was for shelters to be made and nothing lost,  
For surely others would want to visit here and stand as they on holy ground  
And catch at least a reflection of this heavenly light,  
To bathe in its glow and bow beneath its weight of wonder.  
But this was not to be. A cloud came down to disappear all  
As suddenly as the light had come, and left them in the dazzling darkness,  
Watching in hopeless silence, fearing all was lost and they most to be pitied.

Until they heard the voice, older than time and whose sound the heart alone can hear:

'This is my Son. Listen to him'.

This was the meaning of it all;

Words to be remembered and not just by them.

They had heard the Almighty speak

As once on Sinai when the mountain quaked.

They had had their teaching, their intimate tutorial up on high;

And it was enough - enough for a lifetime - and enough for all, forever.

They stood in silence and looking now, they saw,

Jesus only.

## For further reflection and activities for the whole family

[Here](#) is the story on video using Lego™

[Here](#) is a song about the story

[Here](#) is a reflective version of the story with wooden figures and wondering questions

[Here](#) is a film version of the story with Polish narration

### Questions to consider together:

1. Why do you think Jesus chose these particular disciples for this special experience?
2. What was this light on the mountain? Can you think of other times in the Bible when a bright light was the sign of the presence of God?
3. Why did Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus? What did this mean?
4. This was the second time God's voice is heard in the gospel story. Can you remember what God said about Jesus at his baptism?
5. How do you think this experience would have helped the three disciples in days to come?

### Visual aid:

Use the bright light of an unshaded 100W bulb and place it between two mirrors opposite each other. See how the light is bounced endlessly back and forth between the mirrors adding to its brightness and mystery.

### Activity idea

On a piece of A4 paper, draw an outline of Jesus on the mountain. Colour this in with felt tips in bright colours. Now turn the paper over and brush the back lightly with an even coating of olive oil. Let it dry. When you hold this up to a window, the light should shine through in a very powerful way.

### Here is a picture to decorate as you talk about this story



The Mount of Transfiguration  
Mark 9:2-9