

Sunday 11 February 2024

The Sunday next before Lent



Sermon © the Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Prayers of intercession © Katherine Smith.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

All the hymns are hosted on YouTube. Please click on the links to hear them.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 Christ whose glory fills the skies ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

When Christ appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

As he is pure, all who have grasped this hope make themselves pure.

So let us confess our sins that mar his image in us.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for the Sunday next before Lent

Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
give us grace to perceive his glory,
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,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Second Book of Kings

Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?' And he said, 'Yes, I know; keep silent.' Elijah said to him, 'Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho.' But he said, 'As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they came to Jericho. The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?' And he answered, 'Yes, I know; be silent.' Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.' But he said, 'As the Lord lives,

and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.’ Elisha said, ‘Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.’ He responded, ‘You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.’ As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, ‘Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!’ But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. *2 Kings 2:1-12*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians

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. *2 Corinthians 4:3-6*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Lord enthroned in heavenly splendour

[\(click hear to hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

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. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.

Mark 9:2-10

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

May I dare to let my breath speak of God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We've heard this before. In fact, the year so far has been bookended with this phrase from Heaven, 'You are my son, the beloved—listen to him.' We first heard it right at the start of the year when Jesus was baptised. I'm sure you know remember the scene. Jesus is baptised, comes up out of the Riven Jordan, and God says these words. And today much the same, though there are differences. This time, Jesus is up a mountain, so the farthest you can possibly get from sea-level in Palestine.

We might also note that baptism is a sacrament insofar as something is happening 'behind the scenes': it's an outward and spiritual sign of an inward and spiritual grace. God is filling Jesus with His Spirit and part of that 'something' is imparting Son-ship.

And Jesus is positioned up a mountain which, in Scripture at least, is always a metaphor for an encounter with God: think of Moses and the Ten Commandments or Elijah and the priests of Baal. It also speaks of prayer.

Actually, whenever I read today's passage—which is often for it's a favourite of mine—I'm always struck first by the way these disciples have been with Jesus for three years, and have until this point had no inkling of what will follow. They know that Jesus is a good guy, but never seem to have seen him as anything more. Even their idea that he might be the Messiah hasn't moved beyond an earth-bound *man*.

At the Transfiguration in today's Gospel reading this morning, the disciples see Jesus as *God*. To a Jewish mind, the manifestation of light—Jesus shining in glory—is a clear pointer to God. For example, in the beginning, God said, 'Let there be light' and there was. It wasn't the Sun, for that form of light was created only on the fourth day. No, God started with His own Glory. The glory of God looks like a blinding light. Look at the story of St Paul from three weeks ago: when he encountered God, what did he see? A blinding light in the sky. This story tells us that Jesus is God, which (incidentally) tells us why we say in the creed that he is, 'light from light.' But before he glowed, the disciples saw only a man—probably a man with dusty feet and sweat on his brow at that. The power of God still flowed powerfully within him, yet they saw only something somehow *exterior*. Then, in a moment cast aside from reality, the everyday world was split for one instant and they saw God. The veil was thin. Like St Paul, scales fell from their eyes, the blinkers were gone, and they saw him. They saw the spiritual reality.

What I want to know then, is: how can *we* see things as they really are, as they are in the spiritual world and not just showing itself in this earth-bound world? How can we see beyond our physical senses?

Before we start, we must recognise how this vision of Jesus was given to the disciples as a gift, as an act of grace. We can't earn it or engineer it. But as we read the story, we see how a clear pattern emerges. It comes in three interrelated phases. **Firstly**, the disciples realised that Jesus was God. In the case of the disciples, that realisation occurred in the passage immediately before the Transfiguration, when St Peter suddenly declared, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.' This realisation is no mere mental exercise: not just our reciting the Creed. It's that gut-wrenching feeling when you realise your whole world is just about to turn upside and inside out: *we see how **this** man is God, how **this** man is God, **this** man is God, **this** man is **God!***

The **second** clue follows from the first. Followers of Jesus *follow* Jesus, that is, follow him wherever he goes, wherever that might be. And this is where people usually draw back. For Jesus rarely follows the usual routes. He wants us to trust him in everything, so he takes us by routes designed to trust him. We might have to leave our baggage behind. The emotional crutches that prevent us from being reliable, committed and complete disciples. It's a matter of seeking to be the people

that God wants us to be. 'I'll try to be a better steward of my money; I'll try not to be proud; I'll try not to judge; I'll seek to pray more often, or for longer, or more sincerely.' We are invited to adopt practical and simple ways of growing toward Jesus and, if truth be known, ways of being more like Jesus. And Christ-like people have a knack of seeing Jesus. After all, we're walking away from our old lives and toward a new, better and holy life.

For the **third** clue, we look at the disciples themselves that day. What do we see? We see their gaze is captured—absolutely captivated—by Jesus. They seem unable to look elsewhere. At this stage in their journey, they realise that Jesus is everything, and will do anything to avoid losing sight of him. Do you know the chorus, I wonder: 'Turn your eyes upon Jesus, and look in his wonderful face ... and the things of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.' We see him because we want to and because we're not letting him out of our sight.

Jesus led his disciples up a mountain. When there, they realised that they could look at Jesus and at the same time they could see God. From that moment on, they wanted to see more of God—wanted to see God in everything. To be sure, they made mistakes, they denied him at first, but came back for more. In order to see God in their lives, they followed Jesus, they went with him into odd places—places they would never have gone before. It meant changing their lives and jettisoning the God-less bits. And all this time they kept their eyes fixed on him. All the time, looking only at Jesus. Without holiness, they would never have seen God.

Do we want to see God? Do you want to see Him in situations and in other people? Do you want to grow so the veil between this world and the next grows thin? If so, you must look at Jesus and see that he is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. You must declare that truth in deed as well as in word, and follow him; and you must gaze on him—meditate on his actions, his word, his creation—on *him*. Develop a holy obsession with this Jesus Then—then, we can see God.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

Please click [here](#) for more prayers of intercession inspired by the Transfiguration.

'And while he was praying the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white' (Luke 9:29)

Lord Jesus, as we pray to you this morning help us to know the glory of your presence among us and to see more clearly the beauty of your holiness.

Lord Jesus, in your mercy

All hear our prayer

'Suddenly they saw Moses and Elijah, talking to him' (Luke 9:30)

Lord Jesus, you are the fulfilment of the law and the prophets of Israel and in you the hopes and fears of all people are met. Give us grace to receive from you all that we need for today and the coming week. Bring rest and refreshment when we're exhausted; hope and faith when we're despondent and doubt you; and the assurance of your love and forgiveness when we're overwhelmed by our own weaknesses and failures.

Inspire your church today with a renewed vision of your glory so that we and all your people may walk as children of light and, by your grace, reveal your presence in the world.

Lord Jesus, in your mercy

All hear our prayer

‘To Jesus are given dominion and glory and kingship that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him’ (based on Daniel 7:14)

Lord Jesus, we pray to you for the life of this nation with its joys, its sorrows and its wrong doing.

We pray for all those who are involved in the administration of justice. Give wisdom to all those in authority over others—members of the police force, sit in judgment, prison and probation officers—and those who support the victims of crime.

We pray for all who walk in the darkness of crime whether as perpetrators or as victims living in the shadow of the wrong done to them. Reveal among them your glory and power to bring resurrection and new life out of even the deepest evils and sufferings.

Lord Jesus, in your mercy

All hear our prayer

‘They saw his glory and heard a voice that said “This is my Son, my chosen, listen to him” ’ (Luke 9 parts of vv. 32 and 35)

Lord Jesus, as we go about our daily routines this week help us to see your glory in the people we work with, our neighbours and friends and in those we fear or find hard to get on with. In all our conversations help us to listen carefully not only to what others are saying but also to what you are saying in each encounter.

We pray for the young people of our community who are on holiday from school or college. Keep them in safety and be a strengthening presence in those families where the holidays bring difficulties in coping and put additional strain on relationships.

Lord Jesus, in your mercy

All hear our prayer

‘They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem’ (Luke 9:31)

Lord Jesus, you know what it is to experience the joy and wonder of God’s presence and then to go down into the depths of despair and to suffer rejection and pain.

In a moment of silent prayer we give thanks for your compassion and bring to you the needs of those who are in our thoughts and hearts today. We pray for ...

Help them and us to know that you are with us when we descend from the mountain top and that although your presence may be hidden from us you are still there with the power to bring comfort and healing of body, mind and spirit.

Lord Jesus, in your mercy

All hear our prayer

'They appeared in glory' (Luke 9:31a)

Lord Jesus, we pray for those who are now with you in your eternal glory. As we rejoice in the fellowship of those who now see the fullness of your glory, be with us in our journey and transform our lives with the promise that you will grant us, with them, a share in your eternal kingdom.

Lord Jesus, in your mercy

All hear our prayer

Lord Jesus, we give you thanks and praise because the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour and the majesty belong to you and you reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God for ever and ever.

All Amen

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

Christ will transfigure our human body
and give it a form like that of his own glorious body.

We are the body of Christ.

We share his peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Lord I lift your name on high [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)
Lord I lift your name on high [\(different version\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

Great God of dazzling beauty and overshadowing majesty,
overshadow us with your power and grace,
that we may keep your commandments
and speak your truth with courage and love;
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now
and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Longing for light

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ.
Amen.**

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after 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.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.