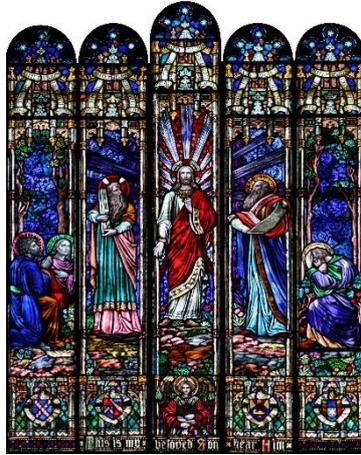


St Peter's Scottish Episcopal Church, Kirkcaldy



Sunday 14th February 2021, Sunday before Lent

- Introit Hymn:* Praise my soul the king of heaven
- Welcome:* Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**
- Collect for Purity:* **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.**
- Gloria:* **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.**
- Collect:* Almighty God, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross, give us faith to perceive his glory, that being strengthened by his grace we may be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**
- Collect SPB:* O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth: send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee: grant this for thine only son Jesus Christ's sake. **Amen.**
- First reading:* 2 Kings 2. 1-12 (SPB 1 Corinthians 13. 1)
- Second reading:* 2 Corinthians 4. 3-6
- Gradual hymn:* King of glory, king of peace
- Gospel acclamation:* **Alleluia! Alleluia! Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to mere children. Alleluia!**

Gospel: Mark 9. 2-9 (SPB St Luke 18.31)

When gospel is announced:
Glory to Christ our Saviour.

At end:
Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel.
Praise to Christ our Lord.

Homily:

What a beautifully strange and wonderful story we find in Mark today. Our gospel reading tells of Jesus' transfiguration, an event recounted by all three of the synoptic gospels. There's a lot to unpack here. There's the presence of Elijah and Moses. There's the fear and near comical reaction of the apostles. There's the uncreated divine light shining out of Jesus. And then, of course, there's the voice from the cloud declaring to the disciples the identity of Jesus and commanding them to listen to him.

Before moving through the riches in this text, let us take a moment to remind ourselves where we've been and where we're heading both in the text and in the church year. In the text, Jesus has predicted his death and set his face toward Jerusalem, where he will be betrayed, arrested, and crucified. Following the church calendar, we have arrived at the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany, the season that begins with the feast celebrating God's presence with us. In a way, we have climbed this liturgical mountain by hearing and basking in the stories of the Incarnation. And here we are at the mountain's peak. Here we are before descending into the valley of Lent, that season that prepares us as we journey together toward the remembrance of the cross and celebration of the empty tomb.

Ash Wednesday looms on the calendar, a day that points to our own death with those wonderful and dreadful words: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." But we're not there yet! We are here in the Spirit. We are here in the light of God on the mountain at the Transfiguration.

The gift of the lectionary helps us find our focal point; here on this mountaintop, we find transcendence, triumph, and divine mystery. And do take note that it is not on the cross or in the empty tomb.

Before we enter into the penitence and self-reflection of Lent, we are here bathed in light and glory. Theologians and authors like to look at this passage and employ words like "prefiguration," or foretelling of Christ's resurrected glory. And perhaps that is what is happening here theologically and literarily, but there is also something more. The impulse is to jump ahead and to say that this is a foretaste of the glory to come. The impulse is to jump ahead and look across the valley below to the next mountain peak. But there's something else here and now in this encounter between the disciples and Jesus and Elijah and Moses and the voice in the cloud that we must explore.

This transfiguration occurs before Jesus' death. It happens before his resurrection. Thus, literarily, this event occurs before even our knowledge of and hope in the Resurrection. The creed says, "We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come." And that is indeed our hope, and that hope colors all of our faith and our life. But even before that hope, there is a divine light shining here in our world. The light of the Transfiguration cries out: God is with us.

In this account, Peter's response is almost comical. Understandably terrified, he says to Jesus, "Let's throw up some houses for you, Moses, and Elijah." As hearers of this text, we have the gifts both of temporal and physical distance from the fear this event would have inspired in the disciples. We know you cannot house this kind of glory. You cannot capture this kind of event in a tent or a dwelling. This is a moment of beauty. Just like a camera cannot ever quite capture the magic in a special moment, one cannot set up a house for the miraculous and transcendent.

So, what does that mean for us today? The rest of our readings give us some guidance. In our reading from the Hebrew Scriptures, we encounter Elijah, his anointed successor Elisha, and the chariots of fire. We have a similar moment of miracle and of transcendence as Elijah ascends to heaven in the whirlwind. Elisha has been with Elijah step by step and has seen wonders and prophecies. And he knows that when Elijah's time to depart has come, the power of God is not housed in a body but in God's Spirit. It is for this reason that Elisha asks for

a double portion of the Spirit. Elisha reminds us that the power and wonder and beauty of God at work in our lives and in our world was happening before the church and before the Crucifixion and, indeed, even before the Resurrection.

Like Elisha, we look for that light and that power in the Spirit. And we look to be that power in the Spirit. From the second epistle to the church in Corinth, Paul's words give us some further guidance. "Let light shine out of darkness." Paul affirms that we are the bearers of the divine light. Jesus shines in our hearts, giving light and reflecting the glory of God from within us. That uncreated light that shone from the face of Jesus and terrified the disciples is now inside us. We are bearers of the divine light.

As the psalmist writes, "Our God will come and will not keep silence." That same Spirit who rested on Elijah and Elisha is the same Spirit who was celebrated by the psalmist. And it is that same Spirit who shines in us. God thunders from the heavens and speaks in the whirlwind and moves as a consuming flame, but God also makes God's presence known to us in the light that shines within each of our hearts. The knowledge of Jesus is that same light. The light within us is divine, for it is only the divine that can open our hearts and our minds to the mysteries of God. Our knowledge of God is always accompanied by an encounter with God. Let that sink in. It is God who shines in our hearts giving us knowledge of the glory of God. Yes, God is always with us. But there are moments when God makes Godself especially known to us. Every time our thoughts turn to God, we have an encounter with God. Every thought we have about God is indeed a thought in and with God.

And so, as we move out of the season of Epiphany, let us hope and pray that we find that divine light. Let us look for that light within us that radiates out with the love of God. For that light is divine. Let us bask in the glory of the transfigured Christ. Yes, he is the one who has died and risen again. But today, he is the one who came to earth, emptying and humbling himself, walking this earth with his family and friends and even his enemies. Let us bask in the mysterious and terrifying light of Jesus, who loved his creation so much that he became incarnate and fully human – God with us.

We look to the resurrection and the life to come. But first, here and now, we look for those moments of divine transfiguration—that transcendent light, beauty, and terror that come with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Nicene Creed: **We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one substance with the Father. Through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father.
With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.
Amen.**

Intercessions: *Composed and prayed on behalf of the congregation by a member of the Intercessors
Group*

We pray to our heavenly father, who knows us so well and loves us completely.

Lord God, as we prepare for the season of Lent, we ask that you will inspire us anew; take away all that which clouds our vision of you and instead makes us focus on earthly things. As Jesus shone before Peter, John and Paul on the mountain, we ask that you shine your light on us that we may reflect your glory and boldly speak your gospel of love to the dark corners of this world. The hope that we have in you is everlasting and we ask that you give us the strength and determination to take that hope out to wherever it is needed.

Lord Hear Us

We pray for the Church throughout the world, as it seeks to lead all those who confess the name of Jesus as Lord on a course true to your calling. Make your Church a church that serves wherever it is needed. We pray for Bishop Mark our Primus and Bishop Ian our Diocesan Bishop; for Christine our Rector and all those involved in worship at St Peters. We pray that you will give us all strength and maintain the bonds of community while we are apart.

Lord Hear Us

Lord God we pray for all people, especially in areas where there is unrest, oppression or cruelty. We ask that those who bear the responsibility of leadership among the nations of the world have regard for your laws, respect for people from all backgrounds and the grace of humility, to promote equality rather than the selfish advancement of a few.

Lord Hear Us

Lord we are all too aware that there are many in this world who suffer, carrying the daily cross of illness or infirmity. We remember all those known to us who are in need of our prayers at this continuing difficult time, and we pray particularly for those involved in the delivery of the vaccine programme across the world; work that provides hope of a return to more normal life. We bring them all to mind in a moment of silence. We ask that your healing presence will be felt by all who are burdened, that your light will scatter the darkness that overshadows their lives.

Lord Hear Us

Lord we remember those who have passed through this world to be gathered into the safekeeping of your kingdom. This morning we remember particularly Henry Philp, Colin Campbell, Margaret Lees and George Wilson whose years mind falls at this time. We ask that your peace and comfort be felt by their families and all those who grieve their passing. Help us and them to remember that if we are all in you then we never be far from one another, even when some have departed this earth.

Lord Hear Us

Lord we ask that you accept these prayers, for the sake of your son Jesus Christ, our light and our inspiration. Amen

Confession

and Absolution:

God is love and we are his children. There is no room for fear in love.
We love because he loved us first. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Silence

**God our Father, we confess to you
and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ
that we have sinned in thought, word and deed,
and in what we have failed to do.
We are truly sorry.
Forgive us our sins,
and deliver us from the power of evil.
For the sake of your Son who died for us,
Jesus Christ, our Lord.**

(May) God, who is both power and love, forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Peace:

We meet in Christ's Name let us share his peace.

Offertory hymn:

Father of heaven whose love profound

Communion Prayer: **God of infinite mercy. We thank you for Jesus our Saviour who feeds his people and gives them eternal life. Though we cannot consume the gifts of bread and wine we thank you that we do receive Christ's saving presence, the forgiveness of sins and all other benefits of his passion. Grant that we may continue for ever in the risen and ascended life of our Saviour. Amen. (This prayer is said during the online Provincial service).**

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 those who 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.**

Communion hymn: And now O father mindful of the love

Concluding Prayer: **Holy God, we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. May we who are partakers of his table reflect his life in word and deed, that all the world may know his power to change and save. We ask this in his name. Amen.**

Blessing: Christ our king make you faithful and strong to do his will, that you may reign with him in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Dismissal: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Recessional hymn: O for a thousand tongues to sing

7pm Candle Prayer

**Everlasting God, Creator of the ends of the earth,
We are those who wait And we confess that we have grown weary.
Speak to us we ask and hear our cry.
Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

**Everlasting God, Creator of the ends of the earth,
We are those who wait And who have come to the end of our own strength.
Lift up the weary and strengthen the powerless.
Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

**Everlasting God, Creator of the ends of the earth,
We are those who wait And who have heard your Word echo in our hearts.
Grant us grace for this time and faith to believe your promise.
Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

**Everlasting God, Creator of the ends of the earth,
We are those who wait And who ask that your promise will be fulfilled.
Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

**Everlasting God, Creator of the ends of the earth,
We are those who wait
Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**