

**St Nicholas Church, Sighthill
Transfiguration Sunday
and St Valentine's Day
14th February 2021**

*Whoever does not love does not
know God, because God is love.
1 John 4:8*

Today is Valentine's Day. The name Valentine goes back to 269AD when two Christians named Valentine from Terni and Rome were martyred. February 14th was the day chosen to honour them. It is widely argued that Valentine's Day only became associated with romantic love during the late fourteenth century, when Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343-1400), author of *The Canterbury Tales*, made the association in his poem 'The Parliament of Foules.'

Whatever the true reason is for this holiday celebration, I believe it's a great one because the greatest fact about the nature of God our Father is that **GOD IS LOVE!** We read in John 3:16, 'For **God so loved** the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. So, and with those last words in mind, **Happy Valentine's Day!**

Approach to God/ Call to worship

Leader: 'Let light shine out of darkness'. Creator God who spoke light into primordial darkness, who 'speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting', we gather to You, Your faithful yet fragile ones.

All: With 'the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ': Give us eyes to see and ears to hear.

Leader: Acknowledging that You dwell beyond our comprehension, worshipped by the universe itself, we thank You for emptying Yourself of glory in the person of Jesus Christ, and through Him illuminating our path back to You.

All: We name Your blessings to us. Recalling that You first loved us: Give us grateful hearts to receive Your blessings

Leader: We confess that the light of the gospel, Your divine image in Christ and His people, is veiled to us when we pursue the empty promises of our idols. Our daily preoccupations obscure the sacred bonds You created between us the church, the one household of God; while our projects of self-advancement cause injury to the body of Christ. We know that we fall short of this calling every day and name in our hearts those ways in which we have sinned in thought, word, deed and in what we have failed to do...

Moment of silence...

All: Confident in the righteousness of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, lift up our heads in the life-giving knowledge of Your forgiveness.

Song: Who paint the Skies (River of Fire) – Stuart Townend

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ7bEl8vhcg&feature=emb_logo

A brief reflection (1) – based on this song

We are pre-occupied with the question 'why?', and often end up frustrated because we can't find a satisfactory answer. But when we ask 'who?' – Who is responsible for all the wonder of Creation? Who has won for us forgiveness and the promise of eternal life? Who is with us and loves us and gives us peace, and hope for the future? There is only one answer to all those questions. It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God who loves us all very much, equally and without any conditions. Thank you, Jesus.

Call to Prayer: Sunday 14th February 2021 Prayer @ 7pm

In the Gospel of Mark, we find the disciples of Jesus journeying with Him and experiencing something which they struggle to comprehend and express. Jesus takes Peter, James and John to 'a high mountain' and there He is 'transfigured before them' in the company of Elijah and Moses. How do the disciples respond?

Peter, as ever, tries to respond but truly he 'did not know what to say, for they were terrified'. (Mark 9: 2-9) In the midst of all we face at this time, we are confronted by that for which nothing has truly prepared us as a society. As the experience of Lockdown continues, we are learning a great deal about the strengths and weaknesses of our society. As we do so, we are coming to understand that the future will not simply be a reversion to the 'normal' of the past.

As the disciples struggle to comprehend what they see before their eyes, they are overshadowed by the presence of God and hear the words of affirmation: 'This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to Him!' Then, in an instant, 'when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus'. As we journey into the future, we do so in the company of the One who transforms our present and who invites us to share in the promise of the coming Kingdom of God.

Leader: Living God, speak to us in the place where we are today. Make Your presence known. Speak to us the words of affirmation, that we may know that we are loved by you. Lord, in Your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer

Leader: Living God, speak to us in the place where we are today, even in the face of darkness. Speak into the uncertainty of our times. Reassure us that You hold the future. Lord, in Your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer

Leader: Living God, speak to us in the place where we are today. Bring hope for days to come. Speak words of comfort and of healing; words of compassion for those who mourn. Lord, in Your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Living God, speak to us in the place where we are today. Speak that we might speak a word for our times. Speak into the future that lies before us. Grant us grace as we seek to live out that future. Lord, in Your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Living God, speak to us in the place where we are today. Speak that we might hear again Your voice. Speak to us on the highest heights, and in the deepest depths. May we know, and be known by, the One whom You love. Lord, in Your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Bible Reading – a Bible Expository song
The Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-6)
'A face that shone' by Michael Card**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IdzKOBMefA>

Brief Reflection on the Transfiguration (2)

Friends, in Peter we have a perfect example of what human weakness and sinfulness looks like, and how God's grace alone overcomes it. When Peter spoke up during the Transfiguration, James and John must have thought "What are you doing? We're in God's presence and we're witnessing a miracle. Keep quiet man!" Maybe it was Peter's pride that caused him to make the silly suggestion he made. He was in awe of God's glory, but didn't want to feel left out. Did he want Jesus to recognize his presence there? I don't know! But whatever his intentions, he helped us to learn the following;

- When we're in God's presence, it's often the case that the best thing we can say is nothing, because we can only hear God's voice in total silence. That's why when Elijah was on Mount Horeb, God came to him not in the wind, the fire, or the earthquake, but in a gentle whisper. It's only when we have a total inner stillness that we can be completely receptive to God's grace and then unite our will to His.
- We should use prudence before giving unsolicited advice or help. Peter told Jesus "If you wish, I will put up three shelters" Only one problem: Jesus didn't wish it. Peter wanted to do his own will more than God's, and isn't that the case with us so often? We should always help people when we can, but we should first ask if they want and/or need our help, because sometimes they don't. Also, we should examine our motives for wanting to help them. Is it because we want to do God's will above all else, or because we want something in return from them, or to make ourselves feel good? I love how it says "While Peter was still speaking, a cloud enveloped them, and a voice said "This is My beloved Son, in

whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" I think that was God's way of telling Peter, "I didn't ask for your help, so shut up and listen". But He's God, so He said it in a nicer way.

Lastly, the overall lesson I learnt from Matthew 17:1-6 is that often 'stumbling blocks' can serve us well as 'stepping stones', as tools for serving God, His people and His good creation. Many of us have served God (and continue to do so) not because we are strong, powerful or well resourced, but in moments of hopelessness, emptiness, powerlessness, loss and vulnerability. We have come alongside others during their times of need, because we know well what it means to be in need. We also know the One we can turn to for help in times of need. Like Apostle Paul, we have seen God's strength being made perfect in our weakness. We have also seen our sacrifice and pain (together with that of others) become more bearable, as we turn to God in prayer or as we support others during their times of need. Whatever the situation, the time or place, may God find useful, willing and usable vessels for His glory, Amen.

The first/introductory part of this reflection was taken from Chris Antenucci's reflection of the Transfiguration

Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession

Loving Father, why do I feel that I am left muttering helplessly about things. I want to stamp my feet and ask "Haven't they heard? Don't they know?"

- We pray for the people in France as the Government suggests a thoroughly tested vaccine is not suitable for over 65's.
- We pray for the farmers in India amid escalating violence and viciousness of the barricades
- We pray about the increasing violence in Afghanistan, increasingly focussed on females of all ages.
- We pray for the people of Myanmar, suddenly finding the military has staged a coup against the Government.
- We pray for the people of Bolivia as the Government refuses a lockdown and hospitals are overwhelmed.
- We pray for the people of the USA, finding a new way with a new Government, already seeing changes in their foreign policy and a task force established to re-unite separated adult migrants with children.
- We pray for our own nation, with one of the worst Covid-19 outbreaks in the world also dealing with the changes to border controls following Brexit.

Lord, renew our strength to soar into battle over all the problems we hear about; to run to deal with those things we each, as individuals and countries, can sort out; and finally to walk in your way. Amen

Closing hymn: How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoPlwPUYWaw>

Final blessing

May the light of Your glory illuminate our path this day and every day, showing us the truth of Your presence, amid the lies of the unjust kingdoms of this world. Turning to the tasks You have prepared for us, And the people You have set us among: Make our feet sure and fleet, the bearers of good news. Amen



Alice and Jack Campbell

Sixty years of giving happiness, love and loyalty to each other must not go unmarked. We wish you many more years of love and good health together.