



Email: manseltonurc@gmail.com

Weekly Letter – 11 February 2024

Mark 9:2-9

Not the last Epiphany

I remember going on a Christian youth event which was an amazing experience. The leader led a prayer at the end as we prepared to get on the minibus to go home. He talked about our time together as a 'mountain top experience' which had given us an experience of God and changed our perspective on the world. He referred to the transfiguration and said that mountain top experiences could change the way we saw daily life.

The transfiguration rounds off the series of epiphanies or revelations that we began with the wise men being led to Jesus and dreaming of a better way home. It comes as we move into Lent and journey to Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

There is lots of symbolism in the accounts of Jesus being transfigured.

Going up a mountain, light and cloud all point to an encounter with God and the presence of God. The voice from the cloud says, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" which reminds us of what God says at Jesus' baptism and of Psalm 2:7. It is remembered and retold here to assure us that whatever happens to Jesus, we can hold on to who he really is, and who he is revealed to be here, and anything that does happen is to be interpreted in the light of that.

Jesus talks with Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets, the pillars of Jewish theology at the time. We can also see Moses as the founder of the nation and Elijah as the herald preparing the way for the Messiah, so they also represent the formation of the people of God and the coming Kingdom of God. They reveal that Jesus is part of God's eternal purpose.

We can sometimes try to hold on to mountain top experiences, as Peter does, wanting to preserve the moment. That's not possible, but we can take that changed perspective into our daily living, seeing the world in a new way, and remembering the experience can help us see God at work in later events.

Have you had a 'mountain top experience' literally or spiritually? Call it to mind and ask God to be with you through today.

Simon

**Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Rev Simon Walkling
Bible Readings: Mark 9.2-9: 2 Corinthians 4.1-6.**

Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Christ Well

A Calendar of Care - Sunday 11th February

Through the year there are suggestions for remembering concerns in our world, as well as marking events in the life of Jesus. This year Racial Justice Sunday and Church Action on Poverty Sunday both fall on this coming Sunday. We can't cover everything in one Sunday service, so you may like to look at the resources which help us to pray about these issues:

Racial Justice: <https://ctbi.org.uk/category/witnessing-together/racial-justice/racial-justice-sunday/>

End Poverty: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/31603/church-action-on-poverty-sunday-2024-resource-booklet.pdf>

Tea and Chat – Tuesday, 13th February – 2-4 pm – Valentine Day craft

And God saw that it was good . . . reflecting on God's Creation Hall Street United Church 24th February

The Church in Community Project is organising a reflection day as part of developing a response to the climate crisis. Adella is promoting it as part of her work in churches across the region.

The day will be led by Jason Askew, the URC Synod Training & Development Officer. The Synod is covering the cost of the event which will run from 10:30am to 3:30pm and includes lunch.

There are a few spaces for people from each church, and some of us from Christ Well will be going as members of the Steering Group.

Transfiguration Sunday – The blazing glory of God

(Lectionary Readings 2 Kings 2.1-12: Psalm 50.1-6: 2 Corinthians 4.3-6: Mark 9.2-)

God who blazes with glory,

At times we recognise that you burn with anger, a devouring fire before you

around you a raging tempest testifying against our flinty hearts

consume and consume and consume in us that which brings dishonours your name.

At other times you burn such that we might glimpse something greater

the gospel of your Son and his eternal salvation as the darkness of our minds flee from your light,

call us to shine likewise – Gideon's jars hiding Heaven's torch.

And sometimes you burn just because you can,

the humble Saviour in radiant display, shining into the midst of our ordinary lives

silencing us with wonder and amazing us with Your power.

Ignite in us again a fire in your Kingdom. Amen.

Matt Rigden

(URC Prayer Handbook 2024)

Ash Wednesday
(with St Valentine)

14 February 2024

Matthew 6.1-6, 16-21 with Psalm 51.1-17

It is sometimes said, “We humans struggle to change our old habits and look again at what we believe is true”. I am of course not suggesting you are ‘an old stick in the mud’, because of course we humans also love a bit of adventure. ‘Change’ can often be great fun and open new doors. So this year, perhaps you would like to see Lent as a daring enterprise, for Lent is a precious gift of God – a period of time, full of meaning, and the journey leads you to saying, “alleluia”.

The journey starts today, and our readings give us lots of ideas of what to do while we are travelling. The psalm refers to the ‘spirit’ in which it would be wise to enter into Lent, ‘create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51.10). But, perhaps Jesus’ words trump these? For Jesus poignantly says, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6.21). In other words Jesus is saying to you, “Do you long for yet more possessions, or do you yearn for eternal life?” Or put it this way, ‘What are you looking for, what lights you up?’ Would you like God’s magnetising offer of Him revealing to you what your heart really desires? If so then Lent is for you.

For Lent is another opportunity to make a little more progress with moving away from a self-centred relationship with material goods, that take you away from giving your time, energy and heart to God and therefore all that is eternal.

Therefore at the beginning of Lent, you are asked to make a decision. Do you wish to give more energy to letting God lead you, or do you wish to cement your role as focussing on your schemes and goals? You have a choice between these two.

Lent in this context is an opportunity for you to look at what truly nourishes you, remembering God only proposes to you, never imposes.

Stephen

RESTORATION

*(Lectionary Readings Joel 2.1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58.1-12:
Psalm 51.1-17: 2 Corinthians 5.20b-6.10: Matthew 6.1-6, 16.21)*

Isaiah 58.11 reads, 'The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs, in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be liked a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail'.

This day, dear Lord.
When we might think of earthly love,
bring near your word
that we may heed the dove whose offering of peace,
and restoration,
will urge us cease this endless war of nations.
In the midst of all parched places
give us strength now to restore
the long neglected spaces,
and refill the hearts of people torn
by hate and grief with hope, so springing
from the ashes may come a love forever shining.

Elfreda Tealby-Watson (URC Prayer Handbook 2024)

