

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 8C

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Ordinary 8 - Year C
27th February 2022



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

3 STF – Eternal God, your love’s tremendous glory OR

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Opening Prayers

The Lord’s Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

113 STF – O worship the King, all-glorious above OR

15 STF – The splendour of the King

Readings: Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-36

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

356 STF – Jesus shall take the highest honour OR

261 STF – Transfigured Christ, none comprehends

What am I being called to?

Hymn:

559 STF – Lord, you have my heart and I will search for yours OR

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

59 STF – Lord, the light of your love is shining OR

260 STF – Swiftly pass the clouds of glory

Blessing

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Call to worship

The doors have been opened, the people are gathered, the Lord's Day is here and we have come to worship.

Open our hearts, Lord, that we may come to know more of you this day.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

3 STF – Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory OR

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Opening Prayers

Here we are Lord, come to encounter you.

Come amongst us, Lord God, and may we be open to your presence. Shine in our hearts, transform us by your love and your grace, that our faces might shine with your glory, that your love might be seen in our eye-contact, our gentle smile, our encouraging nod, our warm embrace.

Lord of light, come amongst us by your grace.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

For our prayers of thanksgiving, we are inviting us all to share something we are thankful for. Each of us have received so much and, no matter how we feel right now, there is something we can be thankful for. Let's just take a few moments now to share those - what are you thankful for this day?

[Give people time to share and encourage other responses].

Living God, for all we have heard, for all the thanks offered out loud; and those we have thought of but perhaps not had chance to share, we are truly thankful. You, O Lord, are the provider of blessings and giver of gifts. We are your thankful people.

And despite all you have done for us, despite all we have received, we have failed you and fallen short of your desires for our lives. We have stood with the apostle Paul when we have done and said the things we wish we hadn't, and regret the missed opportunities to do and say the things we wish we had.

We'll hold a moment of quiet now, in which you are invited to reflect on your mistakes and regrets from this past week, offering them to God in prayer.

[Hold quiet for a minute or two]

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

Living God, you accept us just as we are, you welcome us into your presence, no matter what we have done or how we have let you down. Thank you for your forgiveness for us and for continuing to use us for your glory.

We bring all our prayers in the name of the Creator God, the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Have you decided what you are giving up yet!? Lent begins on Wednesday, after the excitement of Shrove Tuesday, with all the pancakes – will anybody be making pancakes? After that, comes the season of Lent.

Can anybody tell me what Lent is about?

[Take a suggestion or two].

Lent is the season in the church's year that leads up to Easter – we spend the six weeks before Easter reflecting on Jesus' story, with each Sunday taking us closer to the climax of that story in Jerusalem. Because of this, Lent (like Advent in the run-up to Christmas) is typically used as a time of prayer, preparation and reflection, giving us time to get ready to go through the emotions of loss and grief on Good Friday, then hope and resurrection at Easter. It is also a good time to try to control our diets so we can handle all the chocolate and rich food that comes along at Easter time!

Therefore, many people have begun a tradition of giving something up for Lent.

Perhaps you have already decided what that is, perhaps you try the same thing every year, or perhaps you don't follow that particular practice and don't find it helpful. This morning, I wonder if I can encourage you to 'take something up for Lent'. This is a time when we are supposed to be preparing to meet with God, and sometimes that can be by starting something new, a new habit that will help us to be better followers of Jesus.

I wonder what that might be for you: some people feel they need to spend more time in quiet prayer by themselves, some people want to read the Bible more, some people want to start attending a new class, group or service at church, or it might be something like going for a walk every day or taking time to listen to the birds singing in the morning. I invite you now just to spend a few minutes talking to the people sitting near you – you don't have to make any promises at this point, but what are some habits you could introduce into your life to make you healthier, happier and more connected with spirituality?

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

[Give people time to talk].

Does anybody want to share some of the examples or ideas they had?

[Give time for some reflections and sharing, perhaps share some of your own ideas or something you might be doing this Lent].

Our friends at the Methodist charity All We Can are inviting us all to 'Let Wisdom Speak' this Lent, and they have put together a booklet for you to follow each of the days during Lent (also available as an email series), which you can order from allwecan.org.uk/lent

These resources feature the voices of women from all around the world, sharing their stories and their glimpses of wisdom with us.

The next six weeks are an invitation to be transformed, to make small changes in our habits and our lives and to find ourselves becoming better people. Each of us can learn and grow, no matter how old or young, big or small, if we commit ourselves to being transformed by God's love for us. This Lent, let us remember to travel lightly and love with all our hearts, so that we might have a better church, a better society and a better world.³

Hymn:

113 STF – O worship the King, all-glorious above OR

15 STF – The splendour of the King

Readings: Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-36

Reflections on the reading

These three passages - Old Testament, Gospel and a passage from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians - are Biblical moments linked intrinsically to each other. They speak of God's glory as something that materially changes us and the world around us.

They show us two things, amongst many:

Firstly, through Jesus we come to see God's glory unveiled in a new way.

Secondly that we are called to be changed by God's love so that we become mirrors, reflecting God's goodness.

These two points help us understand how we might live today as Christians. In a nutshell, these passages call us to be mirrors of God's glory. Not to veil it, but to magnify it and to become signposts for the Kingdom of God.

Of course, the Transfiguration and Moses's radiant face after he comes down from Mount Sinai in Exodus 34 are mirrors and signposts in and of themselves; they are

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

reflecting each other and pointing to each other across the rich unfolding of God's plan that is shown through the Bible.

Moses climbing down Mount Sinai with the 10 Commandments is a pivotal moment for Christianity – indeed it is for Judaism and Islam too. German biblical scholar Julius Wellhausen described it as “the document which formed the starting point of the religious history of Israel”. God's commandments to his people in exile began the formation of Abrahamic religion, showing us how to live.

I'd argue that the New Testament passages that we're focusing on today do the same. They too instruct us on what it means to be Christians and show us how to live as such. In this sense the passages mirror each other in purpose as well as in content.

In some ways, then, the way Paul speaks about Moses in 2 Corinthians is somewhat surprising. There's something a little distasteful in his description of Moses – he's arguing that the early church in Corinth, to whom he is writing, ought *not* to do what Moses did when he veiled his face. He certainly doesn't want them to be like the Israelites with their 'minds made dull' by the veiling.

Instead, Paul wants the pulling away of the veil, he is seeking full revelation of God.

I would argue that we ought to be like Paul, seeking to encounter the fullness of the glory of God. “We are very bold”, he says, “we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image”.

This is a very different retelling of the story in contrast with Moses. Why the difference? Why the tension between the veil and the unveiled?

Why? Well like all good questions in a sermon, the answer, of course, is Jesus.

Moses didn't do anything wrong by veiling his face, but Paul is speaking to the Church in Corinth after the revelation of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Jesus changes the way we relate to God.

This brings us to our Luke passage. Jesus' transfiguration demonstrates that through Jesus everything is changed. Our relationship with God is materially different.

NT Wright explains how in his book 'Simply Jesus':

“What the story of Jesus on the mountain demonstrates, for those with eyes to see or ears to hear, is that, just as Jesus seems to be the place where God's world and ours meet, where God's time and ours meet, so he is also the place where, so to speak, God's matter – God's new creation – intersects with ours... It forms part of a new set of signposts, Jesus-shaped signposts, indicating what is to come: a whole new creation, starting with Jesus himself as the seed that is sown in the earth and then rises to become the beginning of that new world.”

Isn't that a beautiful description of what we learn in the transfiguration? That through Jesus, our signposts to the kingdom of God become 'Jesus shaped'.

Perhaps this explains why Paul is so keen on the unveiling of God's glory. The tearing down of the veil mirrors the veil that is torn down in the temple at the crucifixion of Christ – Jesus is a great revelation, revealing God's glory through himself. Jesus shaped signposts, I think, are signposts that unveil God's glory and provide a fuller picture of it.

What does this mean for us as Christians in the 21st Century?

I'd argue that Paul spells this out for us. It's all about allowing the Spirit of the Lord to enter our own lives and change us just like we see Jesus and Moses literally changed by these moments of God's glory. When we are shaped and changed by the Holy Spirit we, too, become sign-posts for the Kingdom of God.

Theologian Laura Tack hones in on 2 Corinthians 3:18 and explains that you can translate the Greek in two ways, so that either Paul is telling us that we ought to 'behold' God's glory 'as in a mirror' or to 'reflect' God's glory 'as in a mirror'.

For me this is the crucial point and I agree with Tack when she says that she thinks that the biblical imperative is to 'reflect' God's glory not just to 'behold' it. By reflecting it we become an active part of bringing about God's kingdom here on Earth; signposts to the new creation God promises.

Just like Moses and Jesus are physically changed by coming face to face with God, we are changed when we meet with God.

That's certainly my experience of meeting with God. I can think of people whose faces I genuinely think glow with the glory of God, but more often than that, the people I know who spend time encountering Jesus show it in their actions.

My friend has begun in the last few years to start each day in contemplative prayer. She's worked up to doing 20 minutes of prayer before she starts her day. She reports noticing that she is more patient, more thoughtful and more likely to obey the 'nudgings' of the Holy Spirit.

In this way we reflect the glory of God and become a mirror and a signpost for God's glory.

I think this is what Tom Merton meant when he said 'there is no way to tell everyone that they are all walking around shining like the sun'. I certainly see that in my friend.

It is not a small ask to be changed by God. Meeting with God is something we're called to do as disciples; in worship, in service, in prayer, in fellowship we are called to experience the glory of God.

The trickier part, of course, is to come away from those moments changed. Reflecting the glory of God out into the world. Signposting in word and deed that God is good, and that through Jesus the veil is torn down and we are invited into the coming kingdom that is a whole new, glorious creation.

Jesus showed us how to do that in his own life. By speaking of God's goodness; healing and holding the sick; by welcoming the stranger and the outcast; by speaking out against injustice and railing against corrupt and self-serving politicians and religious authorities, Jesus lived a Kingdom of God shaped life.⁴

Hymn:

356 STF – Jesus shall take the highest honour OR

261 STF – Transfigured Christ, none comprehends

⁴ Reflection written by Lucy Zwolinska

What are you being called to?

It might be a lot to ask of ourselves to live a life that mirrors and signposts Jesus' Kingdom-of-God-shaped-life, but in the Transfiguration, we learn of where to start, by spending time with God. If in doubt about where to begin in living a Jesus-shaped life, begin with following in the footsteps of Moses, of Jesus and of Paul. Spend time in the presence of God.

May each one of us follow the Jesus-shaped signposts towards the glory of God and find ourselves changed.

Hymn:

559 STF – Lord, you have my heart and I will search for yours OR

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling

Prayers of intercession

Disconcerting God,
there are times when we do not understand
what is happening to us,
or where we should go next.

We recognize that we often take a wrong turn
on our path to you
and sometimes wilfully go our own way.

We know that we are your people,
but at times you feel so far away
and we guiltily wonder what we have done wrong,
or refuse to admit that it is our own fault
and that we have separated ourselves from you.

So now we come to ask for forgiveness,
for guidance and for renewal.

Show us what it is that you want us to do
and help us find the humility
and the ability to start again
as we find our way back
to our commitment to heartfelt worship
and to the work you have called us to do
for your world and for your people.

Amen.⁵

We pause now, to bring our prayers for those we know and the world around us to God. In the quiet, just spend some time praying for those who we feel need to know God's presence close to them this day.

[Quiet]

⁵ Taken from the Full Worship Service by Andrew Pratt and Marjorie Dobson

We bring these, and all the prayers of our hearts, in the name of the Creator God, the cosmic Christ and the Spirit of the living God. May that triune God bring freedom to us and to the world.

Amen.

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

As we come together to encounter the living God, so we also recognise the world has so much need. As we present you our gifts, we make our commitment to be a part of the response to that world – taking the freedom of your Spirit with us wherever we go.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

59 STF – Lord, the light of your love is shining OR

260 STF – Swiftly pass the clouds of glory

Blessing

Go out with joy, seek peace.

Go out with love, seek hope.

Go out with comfort, seek to be a blessing to others.

Go out with the Spirit of God in your hearts, seek a better world,

In Jesus' name...

Amen.⁷

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker