

## Welcome to Worship

Welcome to worship here at St. Andrew's United on this Transfiguration Sunday, the feast that celebrates Jesus' radical change of appearance while in the presence of Peter, James, and John.

The Gospel of Matthew records that Jesus was "... transfigured before them, and his face shone like the Sun, and his garments became white as light."

It was a special event in which God allowed certain apostles to have a spiritual experience that was meant to strengthen their faith for the challenges they would later endure.

## Exodus 34: 29-35

### The Radiant Face of Moses

The skin of his face shone... an actual physical phenomenon... a man in the image of God, the glory which symbolizes internal purity and holiness granted to Moses on this occasion. A glory that teaches us that beauty and strength of character comes from communion with God.

Look at Him until you become like Him, and in doing so be changed. As the saying goes, "Tell me the company a person keeps and I will tell you their character."

When we worship what we declare to be good; when we worship what we long to be like; then what we worship we shall certainly imitate.

Let us then try to lose ourselves in Jesus Christ. Let us walk his tightrope of personal characteristics not by looking at our toes but by looking up at Jesus. We will rise to heights only to learn how much higher we have to rise. For the goal we wish to attain is infinite, thereby ensuring the certainty of our continual progress, accompanied here and there with the sting of imperfection, but also by sweetness, as we think of how much there is to be won.

## Psalm 99

### Holy is He!

God is holy... divine... hallowed... sacred... worthy of absolute devotion... This is a God that we must obey rather than use... a God before whom we willingly surrender our rights to ourselves rather than a God who will fulfill our wants. A God of mercy, not a God who is at our mercy.

We often look to God to provide us with inner peace, but the fact is that He is holy and therefore we must also strive to be holy.

Holiness is a fundamental definition of God's character, and this holiness should inspire his people to worship, to sustain their character, fuel their passion for truth, and encourage persistence in their efforts to do His will.

Psalm 99 calls us to worship God with reverence because He is holy. Sections of this Psalm end by stating, "HE IS HOLY." God is holy in everything that reveals him in His goodness and grace as well as in His justice and wrath.

God is called holy more often than any other title. We do not read of the angels crying out, "Eternal, eternal, eternal" or "Faithful, faithful, faithful" or "Love, love, love". His holiness is his beauty... holy justice... holy wisdom... holy truth... a holy promise... holy in all of his works.

The lesson here is for us to be holy in our behaviours because God is holy. We are to conduct ourselves in this way because we were not redeemed with perishable items like gold or silver but with the blood of Christ.

2.

We will fall short in striving to be holy, but verse 8 shows that God is merciful in forgiving sin alongside His righteousness in imposing punishment for sin so we do not take His mercy lightly. Fortunately for us, verse 8 also indicates God's faithfulness in receiving prayer in addition to judging our sins.

## 2 Corinthians 3: 12 - 4:2

Based on a sermon by Ryan Quanstrom

Moses used a veil to hide God's glory. Paul argues that this veil was still present when Hebrew readers approached the old covenant. They only saw God through a veil. They did not encounter God, as Paul did, when God was fully present in his son Jesus Christ. In Jesus we no longer see God through a veil. We see God as God.

Therefore, in our lives we do not merely see God, we can also reflect God.

Paul is revealing that God's work in and through us is not only covering us with Christ's blood nor even providing us with a moral example. Paul is arguing that when we repent and turn to the Lord, we are being transformed, in a slow but continuous process, into the image of God (as stated in Genesis 1) which is our true glory and humanity.

As Paul travelled in the Roman Empire, he cared intensely about how others perceived him. The core of his concern was not for himself but whether people would see Jesus when they looked at him. He wanted people to respect his messages as having come from God.

This church is a hall of mirrors in which Jesus Christ has placed a lit candle. Let all of us reflect that light, making the world bright with God.

## Luke 9: 28-36

The transfiguration of Jesus follows the scene where Peter recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah.

The scene ends with Jesus teaching on the coming glory of God's kingdom to be experienced by the disciples.

Then three of his disciples literally fall asleep at a crucial moment of opportunity. Jesus meets with Moses and Elijah, two great leaders in Hebrew history.

Despite the fact that the disciples didn't meet expectations on this occasion (as well as many others), Jesus continues to prepare them to be servants as well as leaders. His hopes did not reach fruition until after his death and resurrection. The proof of Christ's efforts shine in Acts, where Luke shows how God empowers ordinary people... like the disciples... like us... to do his work.

But the emphasis of this reading is on the dazzling affirmation of Jesus' identity. The transformation in the appearance of his face brings back the memory of Moses' face becoming radiant upon experiencing God's presence as recorded in Exodus 34. The description of the change in Jesus' clothes separates him from Moses. Jesus' clothes became "dazzling white". Jesus' transformed appearance is not merely because he is experiencing God's glory but because he is the very source of divine glory.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah adds to the verification of Jesus' identity.

## 2.

Then, in verse 35, God adds his own attestation. "THIS IS MY SON... LISTEN TO HIM."

In Luke's account of the transfiguration, these events occur in the context of prayer. This detail is absent in the gospels of Matthew and Mark. Prayer is a significant theme throughout Luke's writings. Luke has Jesus praying following his baptism, prior to selecting the twelve apostles, in the garden before his arrest, and on the cross. Prayer was not merely speaking words to God but was truly seeking a spiritual experience with God.

The transfiguration of Christ encourages us to strive towards something higher in prayer than speaking words in the hope that God is listening to us. Prayer can be seeking the powerful presence of God in our lives.