

14th February 2021 - Gloucestershire

Methodist Circuit

Morning, afternoon or evening, midweek or weekend, Saturday or Sunday, we gather as God's big family, and we are all welcome. Today we reflect upon the intriguing occasion when Jesus went up a mountain with some of his disciples and there he was transfigured before them, he radiated, he shone out. The words of Psalm 50 written many years before, refer to the shining of God.

Psalm 50 .The Mighty One, God, the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to where it sets.

² From Zion, perfect in beauty,
God shines forth.

³ Our God comes
and will not be silent;

We sing.....STF 20

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here;
Come bow before him now with reverence and fear:
In him no sin is found - we stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;
He burns with holy fire, with splendour he is crowned:
How awesome is the sight - our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place;
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace -
No work too hard for him. In faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

The reading that we have now from Mark ch9, is perhaps one of the strangest events in the life of Jesus. After all the business, the healings, the miracles, the discussions about who he really is, everything stops. Jesus stops, the disciples have to stop and they have to look and listen. I wonder if there have been moments when you have had to stop, and look and listen. You may have been somewhat annoyed by this interruption in your schedule, but later you have seen the value.

Let's go up the mountain.
Let's go up to the place where the land meets the sky
where the earth touches the heavens,
to the place of meeting,
to the place of mists,
to the place of voices and conversations,
to the place of listening. We will listen and then pray

Reading- Mark 9 -The Transfiguration

² After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Prayer of Adoration and Forgiveness

I stop, I open my eyes and look up,
I see Jesus, dressed, pure, snowdrop white.
I listen and I hear God's voice of love for him.
I stop, I open my eyes and I look down.
I see my own dirty, dusty rags.
I listen and I hear my words, a right confusion,
some better than others.
I stop, and I look up and I see you Jesus in loving
forgiveness, holding out your pure, snowdrop white
clothes in exchange for my dirty rags.
I hardly understand how I could possibly wear those
clothes but I hold out my hand – yes please.
You take my rags. And I hear your voice of love.
I stop, I look up and see that you,
even though you have my dirty rags,
are still as pure white as a snow drop.
Amen

Shine Jesus shine STF 59

Lord, the light of your love is shining,
In the midst of the darkness, shining;
Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us;
Set us free by the truth you now bring us,
Shine on me, shine on me.
*Shine, Jesus, shine,
Fill this land with the Father's glory;
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, Set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,*

*Flood the nations with grace and mercy;
Send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light!*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
From the shadows into your radiance;
By the blood I may enter your brightness,
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness.
Shine on me, shine on me.
Shine, Jesus, shine,

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
So our faces display your likeness.
Ever changing from glory to glory,
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story.
Shine on me, shine on me.
Shine, Jesus, shine,

Sermon

The sunrises have been gorgeous recently, certainly occasions to stop, look and listen, pinky orange glows that no paint box could ever recreate, but I am sure that not even the most amazing sunset would have been a patch on what Peter, James and John saw, when Jesus was 'transfigured' when his clothes, his face, his whole being radiated out before them. Peter in typical fashion wants to say something about the experience, being blown away by it, but he can't think of anything to say except, let's box this up, let's get the camera out and freeze the picture. You can't box up a sunset, you can't do that with Jesus.

What is that Peter wants to put in a box? Was it that light radiating out? Peter has been trying to figure out who Jesus is. In the previous chapter he has exclaimed that Jesus is the Messiah, but he is confused about the fact that Jesus says he will have to suffer and die. That's not in the Messiah's job description he argues. Peter is half right, Jesus is the promised Messiah, but he is not going to fulfil the role as the people expected. Instead of warrior like qualities, he will act as a servant and instead of holding onto his life he will give it.

Peter needs a moment to stop, look and listen.

And maybe there are times when we need to do so too, for I am sure that there is a bit of Peter in all of us - how many times have we questioned God over the last twelve months,

had a rant, or been confused or annoyed, and the sound of our own voice or thoughts have taken centre stage? It is only when we stop, look and listen that we hear his answers. One of the answers on that Transfiguration day came in the shining of Jesus. As John's gospel tells us 'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.' And it will not!

Yes, we need a moment to stop, look and listen, to see our Lord and to hear what he is saying. But we cannot stay there. We cannot freeze the frame. Peter, James, John and Jesus came back down the mountain as there was still work to do. Their homes, their lives, their duties lay below the mountain.

Would they be different after the experience, would they stop, look and listen more? Well they might, but they would still make the same mixture of mistakes and right actions, but surely having seen the radiance of Jesus, the holiness, the purity represented by those whiter than white garments, surely that was going to rub off onto them, to reflect onto them.

I have always been humbly fascinated by the fact that Jesus said of those who follow him, 'You are the light of the world'. Really? We thought you were the light of the world Lord! But he wants to share that light, he wants us to go up the mountain and to see it in him, the hope, the promise it brings and to reflect that light as we trundle down the slope to all that lies at the foot, to our homes, our lives, our duties - he wants us to be moons to his sun, or maybe even just to be 3 watt night lights.

Our light will only ever be there because of him. He is our power source. Our calling is to stay connected to the light of Jesus, not box it up and keep it safe, but to spread it to all we meet. So yes the account of the Transfiguration reminds us of the need to stop, look and listen, to God, and how you do that this week will be different to me, but it

tells us more than that, we must also stop, look and listen those we meet at the foot of the mountain, and by stopping, looking and listening reflect the love of Christ, people will know that we have been mountain climbing and most of all they will know they are loved.

Hymn HP 158

Stay, Master, stay, upon this heavenly hill;
A little longer, let us linger still;
With all the mighty ones of old beside,
Near to God's holy presence still abide;
Before the throne of light we trembling stand,
And catch a glimpse into the spirit land.

Stay, Master, stay! we breathe a purer air;
This life is not the life that waits us there;
Thoughts, feelings, flashes, glimpses come and go;
We cannot speak them—nay, we do not know;
Wrapped in this cloud of light we seem to be
The thing we fain would grow—eternally.

No! saith the Lord, the hour is past, we go;
Our home, our life, our duties lie below.
While here we kneel upon the mount of prayer,
The plough lies waiting in the furrow there!
Here we sought God that we might know His will;
There we must do it, serve Him, seek Him still.

As we come to our prayers we remember the most important Valentines message you could ever have

**For God so loVed the world
thAt he gave his
onLy Son, so that
whoever bElieves
iN him
should noT
perish but have
eterNal
lifE**

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

As we come down the mountain to our homes , our lives, our duties, we stop, look and listen.

Such love pure as the whitest snow, paying the debt I owe...we pray for those who do not feel that they can receive the snowdrop garments you offer them. Lord, as you shine your love and light, may we also reflect you.

Such love filling my restlessness. For those who have protested this week, citizens of Myanmar, farmers in India. We pray that your love will shine and bring resolution.

Such love filling my emptiness. For those struggling to see the way ahead....
May your loving light show a path to take. May we be mini lights by the side of the road.
look the other way .

*Such love, springs from eternity
Such love, streaming through history
Such love, fountain of life to me
O Jesus, such love*

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 them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Before we sing our final hymn we offer ourselves and our gifts to God.

Lord, all that we have is yours - how privileged we are to borrow it. May we share it wisely and use only what we need to. Amen

As you go, find moments to stop, look and listen.

The LORD bless you and keep you;
²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. May we march forwards in his light, his love and his power. Amen

Our final hymn - STF 483

We are marching in the light of God,
We are marching in the light of God. (Repeat)
We are marching, marching,
We are marching, marching,
We are marching in the light of God.

We are living in the love of God,
We are living in the love of God, (Repeat)
We are living, living,
We are living, living,
We are living in the love of God,

We are moving in the power of God,
We are moving in the power of God, (Repeat)
We are moving, moving,
We are moving, moving,
We are moving in the power of God.