

## Transfiguration Sermon – Luke 9.28-43; 2 Corinthians 3.12-4.2

### Transfiguration – A Gateway to change – Love’s invitation to Change

I reckon all of us have something about our outer appearance that we would like to change... nose, height, build, ears?! In our image obsessive world – we put great efforts into how we look – at least I can see that some of us do!! 😊 As you can see – I’ve had a sharp pixie haircut especially for radio!

The Transfiguration of Jesus is a story about change. High up on a mountain, the Gospel of Luke records “the appearance of his face changed and his clothes became dazzling white.” Jesus’ outer appearance reflects his deeper identity as light shines out from him. But it is not just a story about Jesus being changed.

The question for his frightened disciples then – and for us as his followers today is: **“how open are we to being changed** into the likeness of Christ – not in outer appearance, **but in deeper, life-changing ways?”**

Is Christ’s transfiguration a window through which to gaze on him at a safe distance – or **a gateway to walk through?** Singer-songwriter Nick Cave, on his quest for faith admitted “I’ve grown impatient with my own scepticism; I think I would be happier if I stopped window-shopping and just stepped through the door.”

L’histoire de la transfiguration de Jésus relate un changement – mais si l’évangile de Luc nous indique que *l’aspect de son visage changea, et son vêtement devint d’une éclatante blancheur*, le changement ne s’opère pas uniquement chez Jésus : La question qui se posait à ses amis effrayés - et qui se pose à nous qui sommes ses disciples aujourd’hui - est la suivante : « Êtes-vous prêts à être changés ? Changés profondément, transformés pour ressembler plus au Christ, voir vos vies bouleversées ? Acceptez-vous de franchir la porte ouverte par Jésus, ou préférez-vous l’observer au travers de la fenêtre ?

**The Transfiguration invites us to step through the door / or Gateway, and to become participants in a circle of change – becoming more like Christ whom we seek to follow. Our collect for today conveys this beautifully: “Give us grace to perceive his glory... that we may be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory.” Let’s look at ways to do this.**

1. **Firstly – the gateway of PRAYER. The transfiguration happens at a pivotal moment in Jesus’ ministry.** He has just told his disciples that he must undergo great suffering, be killed and on the third day be raised. He also warned them that they will need to take up their cross daily and follow him. They would be personally involved – it was not something that would only happen to Jesus.

With his thoughts in turmoil, and his friends upset by this ominous news, Jesus withdraws to pray, as he so often did. Heading up high would lead him to a thin place, where Jews sensed a closeness to God, which we may well feel too – living in this beautiful mountainous part of the world!

**Luke writes that “while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed.” Likewise, prayer changes us** – when we open ourselves to God’s grace, lowering our masks and **allowing our God-given beauty, God’s image in us, to shine through** and our hearts to align with God’s Spirit.

Prayer changes us, **opening our lives to God’s cleansing, moulding and leading.**

Cette transformation, le franchissement de la porte ouverte par Jésus peut s’opérer par différents moyens :

En premier lieu, la transformation s’opère par **la prière**. En ce Jésus nous montre l’exemple à chaque défi qu’il rencontre.

La prière peut être une passerelle vers le changement - lorsque nous nous ouvrons à Dieu, lorsque nous laissons tomber nos masques et nos faux-semblants.

La prière nous change, ouvrant nos vies à l’action de Dieu, à sa purification, à son modelage et à sa direction.

2. **Secondly, there is a gateway of listening. When the disciples are engulfed in the cloud, they hear a voice saying: “This is my Son,**

**my Chosen, listen to him!” Listening to Christ will be for his disciples and for us a Gateway to change. After all, listening is part of prayer.**

I am currently attending a series of lectures and discussions at the university of Lausanne – where participants engage in rich dialogue with people of different faiths and Christian traditions. I am aware that sometimes it’s tempting to discuss only as long as needed to get my point of view across! **When we listen, are we detached, as if we are on the other side of a window? Or do we listen deeply enough to be challenged and changed by the other, especially by those who may hold a very different worldview?**

When we listen to the voice of Jesus, how open are we to being changed into the likeness of our Lord? In Luke’s Gospel we are looking at the face of God shining out on us in the man Jesus. Anselm Grun writes: “I have encountered the figure of Jesus, and this now shapes my figure.”

**Jesus’ Transfiguration invites us to step through the Gateway, and to be changed into his likeness as we pray and as we seek to listen to him.**

En deuxième lieu, **l’écoute** permet également la transformation. C’est ainsi lorsque nous suivons l’instruction de Dieu : « Celui-ci est mon fils, écoutez-le ».

Quand nous écoutons, que ce soit l’écoute d’autrui ou l’écoute de la voix de Jésus, sommes-nous détachés, comme de l’autre côté d’une fenêtre ? Ou écoutons-nous profondément, acceptons-nous d’entendre ce que l’autre nous dit et ainsi d’accompagner Jésus sur son chemin d’amour, au risque d’être amenés à franchir la porte du changement, de la transformation ?

**The Transfiguration shows us a Gateway to change when we pray, when we listen and when we dare to follow Jesus back down the mountain, away from dazzling glory and spiritual highs to another sort of glory.**

Naturally, Peter wanted to set up camp for this glorious retreat.

*However, even as the disciples had watched and listened, they had heard Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus about his “exodus” (departure), in other words, his death.*

*This offers a radically different view of Glory – as much for the Roman Empire then as for us today. We tend to associate glory – with power, domination, wealth, status, high achievement, knowledge, the winners...One eco theologian (Revd Dr Chad Rimmer, 1.3.25) commented: “this weekend the veil has been pulled back to see the ever-present link between extraction of minerals as a means to more power over the earth.” We are also looking forward to the Oscars Ceremony tonight and to celebrating with the winners for their fantastic achievement in screen and acting. **Yet God’s glory is revealed in Jesus’ path of descent and death on a cross.***

In fact, one mosaic in the 6<sup>th</sup> century basilica of St Apollinaire in Ravenna, portrays Jesus in the Transfiguration, not as a shining figure, but literally, as a cross! The artist was showing that Jesus’ transcendent glory needed to be held together with the hidden glory of the human Jesus on the cross.

Indeed, the Transfiguration shows us that God is to be found just as much back down the mountain, with the disciples helplessly facing the young boy gripped by seizures. The disciples needed to lift the veil (that St Paul talks about) to see the reality of God, in Christ, in the thick of human brokenness, failures and limitations.

Enfin, lorsque nous nous approchons de cette porte à la transformation, nous voyons que la transfiguration de Jésus révèle à la fois sa divinité et son humanité. Au cœur de l’éclatante blancheur dont fait état l’évangile de Luc, Moïse et Elie parlaient du départ de Jésus – de sa mort. Ainsi la transfiguration préfigure certes la gloire, mais une gloire révélée dans une mort humiliante et douloureuse.

Il est donc clair que la gloire de Dieu et son amour transformateur ne brillent pas uniquement dans les expériences mystiques et aux sommets des montagnes, mais aussi en bas de la montagne, aux côtés des disciples impuissants devant les crises d’épilepsie du jeune garçon.

The Transfiguration invites us to hold together our spiritual highs and with struggle and suffering – our own and that of others. God – in Christ – is fully present, in both.

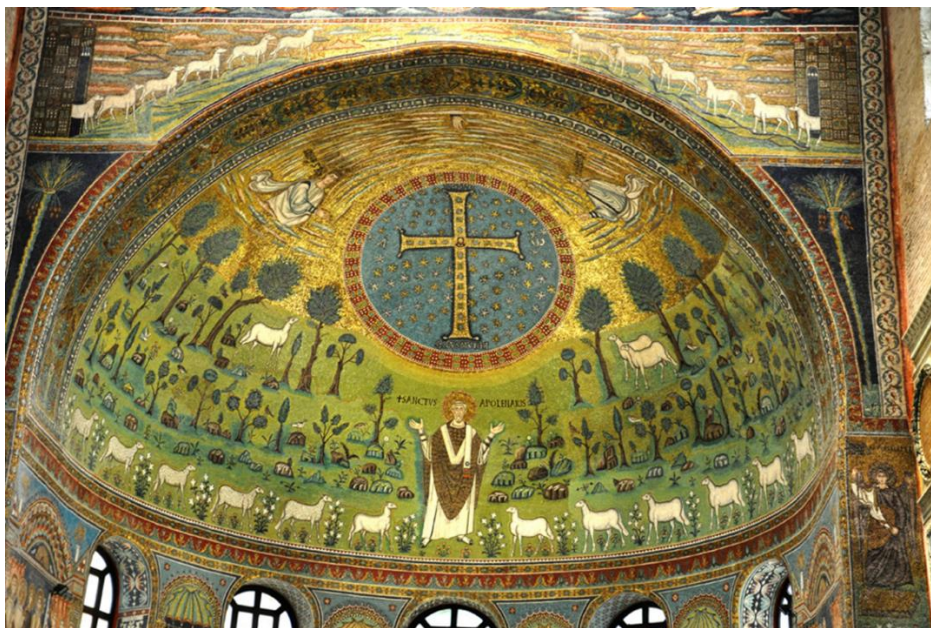
Our Lenten journey – is an opportunity to walk with Christ back down the mountain as he sets his face towards Jerusalem. It is an opportunity to walk through the Gateway of change as we go with him.

**I'd like to end by thinking about how you can walk through these Transfiguration gateways to change into Christ's likeness.. some sort of discipline during Lent**

**In Prayer and in listening to Christ:** - Quiet Day, joining a small group / online Morning Prayer / following an app or book of prayers – or reading ancient prayers such as the psalms each day or contemplation / joining in the Nicene Creed study course / following a lent study book / taking time for stillness, listening to God in creation.

**Equally, during this Lenten journey, we are called to follow Christ down into the valleys of bewildering struggles and suffering. Here we lean in, in prayer and maybe action, asking for renewed awareness of God's glory as much with us and for us in our weakness as in our joys.**

**Just as the disciples stayed close to Jesus, I encourage us to go on this Lenten journey together, supporting one another in our precious communities of faith. Amen**



Cette prochaine période de carême nous offre l'occasion de rencontrer le Christ alors qu'il descend de la montagne et se tourne vers Jérusalem. C'est l'occasion pour nous de passer avec lui par la Porte de la Transfiguration.

Revenons donc à la question initiale : Sommes-nous prêts à ne plus être de simples observateurs et à franchir la porte ? Je vous invite à réfléchir à comment vous pourriez le faire :

- par la prière, par exemple avec un groupe paroissial ou un livre de prières à lire tous les jours

- par l'écoute, là encore par exemple dans un groupe d'étude ou en suivant l'une des nombreuses applications désormais disponibles sur nos téléphones.

Pendant cette période de Carême, je vous invite à apporter au Seigneur vos espoirs, vos déceptions et vos perplexités - en demandant une appréciation renouvelée de la présence et de la grâce de Dieu, toujours présentes, et qui seront toujours suffisantes dans vos luttes et dans vos joies.

Tout comme les disciples qui sont restés ensemble et proches de Jésus, entreprenons ce voyage ensemble, soutenant les uns les autres, au sein de nos précieuses communautés de foi.

Amen