

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Only Jesus  
Transfiguration of the Lord  
Matthew 17:1-8**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

Great is the Lord—  
**exalted among the nations.**

Mighty is the Lord—  
**King of heaven and earth.**

Holy is the Lord—  
**beyond our understanding.**

Let us worship our God and King  
**Amen.**

**Prayer of Adoration and Invocation**

Jesus, today we celebrate your transfiguration.  
You remind us that you are powerful and holy.  
We cannot completely understand you,  
but you do teach us that you are our God and you love us.  
We praise you, holy Lord!  
We glorify you, almighty King!  
We exalt you, Son of God!  
Thank you for showing us who you are.  
On the mountaintop Peter, James, and John  
looked upon the majesty of your glory,  
and from the mystery of a cloud  
they heard a voice declaring you to be God's Son.  
Though we do not live on mountaintops,  
grant that we too may glimpse your glory.  
In the mundane predictability of our life,  
may there be moments  
when sight gives way to insight

and the paths of earth  
 become the road to heaven.  
 In Jesus name we pray,  
 Amen

**Opening Hymn #485: “Saviour, Like a Sheperd Lead Us”**

Saviour, like a shepherd lead us:  
 much we need your tender care;  
 in your pleasant pastures feed us;  
 for our use your folds prepare:  
 blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
 you have bought us; yours we are.  
 Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
 you have bought us, yours we are.

We are yours; in love befriend us;  
 be the guardian of our way;  
 keep your flock from sin, defend us;  
 seek us when we go astray:  
 blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
 hear your children when we pray.  
 Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
 hear your children when we pray.

Let us always seek your favour;  
 let us always do your will.  
 Jesus Christ our only Saviour,  
 with yourself our spirits fill:  
 blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
 you have loved us; love us still.  
 Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
 you have loved us; love us still.

**Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!  
 Let us make our confession to God.

**Prayer of Confession**

**Most amazing God, the mystery of your radiance surrounds us.  
 Like the disciples of Jesus,  
 we confess our unease with transcendent mystery.  
 Faced with your splendor, we do not take time  
 for attentive silence as Jesus did,  
 but we evade the holy with stammering and busyness—**

anything to avoid your power.

We also confess those times when we are at ease with holiness,  
absorbed in prayer and thought but so in love with your love  
that we neglect those in need.

As Jesus descended into the valley  
to work among the poor of the earth,  
so direct us to our responsibilities.

Such is the mystery of your love, O God,  
which both overwhelms and attracts us.

Have mercy upon us and forgive us.

Free us to love and serve in equal measure. Amen.

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Now the Lord is the Spirit,  
and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.  
And all of us, with unveiled faces,  
seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror,  
are being transformed into the same image  
from one degree of glory to another,  
for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.  
In Jesus Christ we are forgiven and transformed!  
Praise be to God!

### **The Lord's Prayer**

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.  
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen.

### **Music Ministry: "Come Follow Me" by Choir**

### **Responsive Reading**

#### **Question 129. What is the relation of prayer to healing?**

They are intimately related. The Apostle James asks: "Are any among you suffering? They should pray. ...Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up;". Prayer with and on behalf of the sick is a medium of healing.

James 5:13-15, 2 Kings 20:4-5, 2 Cor 12:7-9

**Question 130. How does God respond to our prayers?**

God always hears our prayers. Yet our prayers are answered, not always as we desire, but in accordance with God's loving purpose for our lives and those of others.

1 Jn 5:14-15, Isa 59:1, Eph 6:18

**Children's Hymn #307: "God of the Sparrow, God of the Whale" (v 1,3,6)**

God of the sparrow  
 God of the whale  
 God of the swirling stars  
 How does the creature say Awe  
 How does the creature say Praise

God of the rainbow  
 God of the cross  
 God of the empty grave  
 How does the creature say Grace  
 How does the creature say Thanks

God of the ages  
 God near at hand  
 God of the loving heart  
 How do your children say Joy  
 How do your children say Home

**Children's Lesson****Prayer for illumination**  
**(Congregant Prepared)****Scripture****Matthew 17:1-8**

**17** And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. **2** And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. **3** And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. **4** And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." **5** He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." **6** When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. **7** But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." **8** And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

## Sermon

### Matthew 5:48

<sup>48</sup> **You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

Jesus in the sermon on the mount called for all Christians to be perfect. We all want to be perfect in our lives, in our families, in all of our relationships.

I want to be the perfect father, husband, pastor, and friend.

I want to be a father who never gets angry, who never loses control of his emotions, who is always gentle and understanding. I want to be one that is wise and gives wonderful advice to his children as he helps them find their paths in this twisted world, giving them confidence in themselves, and one that guides them in their walk with God.

I want to be a perfect husband. One who is never critical, or distant. One that treasures my wife in the ways that she deserves to be treasured. Never showing her anything but my love for her and the family we have together.

I want to be the perfect friend. Always there to help anyone who ends up on my doorstep, willing to offer and share anything to ensure that my people are being cared for and living well in this world.

I want to be the perfect pastor, one who is always living his life as an example of Christian Characteristics to everyone who looks at me. Loving everyone in the world with the love of Christ, teaching the Bible so that everyone can understand it, preaching sermons that bring people to Christ and caring for people with the love of Christ.

I want to be all of these things, the perfect father, husband, friend, and pastor, however truthfully, I am none of them. I am not perfect, I still get angry, I still fail at loving everyone, I teach and preach as God lets me. I am changing, I have had glimpses and moments of being the man I want to be, but I cannot be him everyday and in every situation.

All Christians feel this pressure to be perfect from the moment that they admit to anyone else in the world that they are a follower of Christ. They feel the desire to be the perfect follower of Christ and to have perfection in all of their worldly relationships. They too get glimpses of this perfection, moments when they behave as Christians are called to behave, however, they do not last and once again we are forced to recognize our imperfections.

Perhaps this is why so many prefer to call themselves spiritual, or followers of Jesus, but not a church, so that they can excuse their imperfections to themselves and to the world around them.

Christians long for change, they long to be transformed from their old selves into the new creations that they are in Jesus Christ. We all want to kick all of our bad habits, give up our non-Christian thoughts and ways, and be the perfect people that God is trying to create in each of us. We all want to be the salt and light of the world.

But we are not always that salt and light. We waver, we give into temptation, we stumble, and we fall. However, we can always look to Christ, he is the one who never wavered, never gave into temptation, never stumbled, and never fell. He is that perfect example of God's love which we are all striving to be in this world.

On the day of the transfiguration, we see Jesus appear before the disciples in a way that they and we have never seen him before. Jesus was transfigured, changed from one state of being to another, transformed or changed into a new creation right before their eyes.

On that day Jesus revealed to Peter, James, and John just how special he was, although he was fully human, he revealed himself to be fully God. He was the light, his face shone like the sun and even his clothes became white as light. Jesus revealed his special nature to his three disciples.

His shining showed them his divine nature, how he was both man and God. Humans do not shine with the Glory of God. Jesus' transfiguration showed that he was Lord. His shining showed that he is our hope, our light in the darkness, He shines in the places we are dull, he is our strength in places in which we are weak.

If we ever want to rise above our own wavering, temptations, our own stumbling and falling in this world, to be a perfect spouse, a perfect parent, a perfect friend, and a perfect Christian, we need the hope that we find in Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to this world to transform it, to change it from the world and a people that had turned their backs upon God, from a people who had embraced the selfishness and the darkness to a people who once again carried the light of God in their hearts and shared it with the world.

Jesus has been that light since before creation, for all of eternity. It is Jesus's life on earth that gives us the example of who God is calling for each of us to be, people who are whole and completely devoted to Him, loving him first in our lives, and sharing that same selfless, pure, devoted love with others in this world. Jesus is the light that we are called to reflect, one that reflects the glory and love of God himself for all of creation, as we shine with his love and his purity and his glory as the Holy Spirit is at work in us and thru us.

On the day of his transfiguration Jesus revealed to the gathered disciples and the world that he was the light of the world, the shining hope for all who want to be changed, to be transformed from who they are to who God wants them to become in this world.

It is when we place Jesus first in our lives that we begin to see the transformation of our character as his light shines into our lives. We begin to be transformed by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives which helps us to live according to the beatitudes. If we want to change, if we want real transformation in our lives we need Jesus.

It is only through Jesus that we can experience true character reshaping. It is only through Jesus that we become more and more God centered in our lives and by doing so less and less self-centered. It is only through Jesus that we have our heart transformed, changed from a dead heart to a living heart and gain eternal life. It is only through Jesus that we learn to love like Jesus and reflect his love into all of our relationships in this world.

In this story of his transfiguration, we see this transformation happening in three of Jesus's closest disciples. A transformation is happening in the hearts of Peter, James, and John.

Up to this point in their lives the disciples still do not fully understand that Jesus is the son of God. They are all struggling to know and accept that he is the Son of God, because they see him as someone just like them. They see a man who needs to eat, sleep and drink water, they see a man who was born in humble circumstances, not of nobility, they see a man who is in many respects a man just like any of them.

They also see the way that he differs, he can make the blind see, he can still troubled waters in a storm, he teaches on God with knowledge and authority like no other teacher. He is a man who is both popular and hated at the same time.

And it is this man, The one who is both like them and so different from them who invites them up the mountain with him. From the top of that mountain, they look over the Holy Land, a land promised to His people by God, they spend time in prayer and communion with one another, and then suddenly right before their eyes they see Jesus transform into bright light.

That would be more than enough to convince the gathered disciples of Jesus being the Son of God, however, on top of his transfiguration we also have the appearance of two of the most important men of the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah.

Peter is overwhelmed by this, if you remember back to last year when we looked at the transfiguration in the book of Luke, we saw his offer to put up tents for Jesus and try to make conversation with Moses and Elijah. Peter is lost in his excitement, overwhelmed by what he is seeing happening, babbling like anyone who meets their idols. You cannot blame him, if any of us was given the chance to meet two of the greatest men from the Old Testament we would probably lose control of our sense as well. Peter is focused on Moses, and Elijah and Jesus, but in truth he only needs to be focused on the man who has become light in his presence.

It is only Jesus who shines with the radiance of God, and both Moses and Elijah have experienced God's radiance in their lives the same way that Peter, James, and John are on the mountaintop.

When Moses came down from the mountain after receiving the Ten Commandments, he radiated from the presence of the Lord he had encountered on the mountain. His face shone with the Light of the Lord and the people were afraid to come near him. God is Light and when Moses had met with him God's glory shone on him, and he began to reflect God's glory. Moses reflected God's glory on his face, Jesus was radiating it from his whole person, because he himself is God.

Peter was in the presence of God, and he was distracted by Moses and Elijah. We are all guilty of this, we can all become enamored or distracted by preachers and teachers who speak of God, people with whom we can relate. However, our focus should always remain on Jesus Christ, he is the light while people of this world are just reflections of that light.

Peter did not regain his focus until a bright cloud enveloped them. The presence of the cloud and its importance would not be lost on the disciples, and it should not be lost on any of us. The presence of the cloud is God's presence. God is here, God the father is here to explain what is happening.

In the presence of God, in the clouds that had been a sign of God on earth at both Mount Sinai and Solomon's Temple, God himself tells Peter, James and John, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.'. This is the first time that they have really heard God's voice, and he has authority behind his words like they have never heard before.

Just a few days earlier Jesus had asked the disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?'

**Matthew 16:13-14**

**<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup> And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."**

There were probably as many different answers to that question as there are today. There are many churches today who have created their own form of Jesus, not the Jesus of the Bible but their own form of Jesus.

Kevin DeYoung described some of the Jesus's we find in the world today;



- There's Open-minded Jesus—who loves everyone all the time no matter what (except for people who are not as open-minded as you).
- There's the Conservative Jesus—who is against tax increases and activist judges, and is for owning firearms.
- There's Starbucks Jesus—who drinks fair trade coffee, loves spiritual conversations, drives a hybrid, and goes to film festivals.
- There's Boyfriend Jesus—who wraps his arms around us as we sing about his intoxicating love in our secret place.
- There's Touchdown Jesus—who helps athletes run faster and jump higher than non-Christians and determines the outcomes of Super Bowls.

Many people create their own version of Jesus, but the truth is that there is only one Jesus, the Jesus of the Bible, the one and only Son of God the Father and when we create our own version of Jesus it is an incomplete version. We are making Jesus into who we want him to be, for our own selfish reasons. We do not see him for who he really is, the Lord who made each of us, the Lord who we are called to follow.

When we are following our own version of Jesus, we are like Peter was on that mountaintop, dividing our attention, diluting the importance of Christ in our lives, denying him his rightful place of honor as the focus of our lives.

Peter and the others learned on that mountaintop that Jesus is the Son of God, you cannot follow anyone but him if you walk on the path of salvation. They learned that you need to fully submit to him in all aspects of life.

Peter, James, and John had been drawn to Jesus and his teachings, even if they were confusing at times. They enjoyed being near him and the status it gave them in society, however, they had still not placed him at the center of their lives. They could still pick and choose what to listen to, where to go, what to say. Yet here on the mountain top they were forced by God to recognize that they could no longer make choices, that they had to commit themselves fully to Jesus and that realization drove them to their knees in praise and worship.

If we too want to be transformed, we need to see Jesus for who he is, The shining radiance of God's glory, the Son of God and our salvation. Jesus will give us the ability to be transformed, to shine like he does, but only after we come to see Jesus as who he really is, and we learn to place him first in our hearts and in our lives.

The three disciples with Christ had all made mistakes in following Christ. James and John had argued over who would be seated at the right and left hand of Christ, vying for

prestige and power. Peter was a man filled with pride who sometimes served Christ in humility and at other times let his pride make him speak out against Jesus.

Earlier after Jesus had asked the crowds who the Son of man was, he had turned to Peter and asked him.

**Matthew 16:15-16**

**<sup>15</sup> He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

For this answer Peter was called the rock.

Then just a little bit later, Peter got it all wrong. Jesus explained to the disciples his need to die on the cross and Peter’s response was,

**Matthew 16:22**

**<sup>22</sup> And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.”**

Peter rebukes God. I think I need to say that again slowly for us all. Peter Rebuked GOD. Peter told God he was wrong, and for that he is called Satan and a hinderance, a stumbling block.

Why? Why did Peter rebuke God? Why did Peter tell God he was wrong? Because Peter did not accept that his Lord, the Son of God, had to go to the cross to pay the debt of His people for their sins.

Peter went from being the rock to a stumbling block simply because he refused to accept the words of Jesus, the Word of God.

Peter had plenty of reasons to fall to his knees in front of God on that mountaintop. It does not feel good to come face to face with God, to see him for who he really is, and in that moment to realize your own pride, arrogance, deceit, lack of integrity, and sin. It does not feel good to recognize that you had thought yourself superior to others, and superior to God.

In the presence of the transfigured Jesus, The Cloud of the Father and Moses and Elijah, The light shone right through all the darkness that was in the lives of the three disciples on the mountaintop. It shone into the darkness and showed them all of the things that they needed to dispel from their lives.

People in today’s world think that a wayward glance, a little lustful thought won’t hurt them or their relationships until they are reminded by Jesus that Lust is the very root of

adultery. If you have been lustful, you have been adulteress. Jesus tells us to have nothing to do with Lust.

Other think that all they need to do is be good people, not hurt others, that is all it takes to be a good Christian, until they hear Jesus say; anger and condemnation, even in your thoughts or heart is a steppingstone to murder, have nothing to do with it.

People can get so wrapped up in worry and concern for what is going on in this world and all of the different causes that appear in the forms of social justice that they forget we are called to walk in God's justice and God's righteousness.

God's Word has the power to change us, to transform us when we listen to it. Yet, listening to God's Word can be painful at times, it will say things that we may not be ready to hear or may not even want to hear, but that is temporary, God's Word heals our brokenness when we walk within it.

Imagine how different this world could be if more people walked in the Light of the Lord, taking his teachings to heart, and letting His light transform them so they reflected his light in this world.

It is when we submit to the Lord, when we put his in his proper place as the central authority and focus of our lives that we begin to be healed, changed, transformed and renewed. It is when we make Jesus the center of our lives that we begin to reflect that transforming light that he shines on each of his followers.

**2 Corinthians 3:18**

**<sup>18</sup> And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**

Jesus does not keep his Glory to himself, he wants to shine it on each of us, using it to transform us into the people we are meant to be in Christ. He wants it to heal us, change us and renew us in our daily lives.

It will not always be an easy path, we will stumble and fall, but he will always be there shining on us helping us to get better each day.

So whatever God's word is to you today, tomorrow or any day, heed it in your heart! Some days it may be 'Come to me all you who are weary...' Other days it could be 'pick up your cross and follow me...' whatever his word to you is, heed it, and you will begin to see the healing, the change, the transformation, and the renewal in your life. Heed it and begin to reflect the light of Christ that you are receiving in your life into the lives of the people around you. Be that lighthouse with no horn.

And on those days that you find you have wandered, that you have let your pride, arrogance, deceit, lack of integrity, and sin interfere in your relationship with Christ. Remember what Jesus did on the mountaintop when the disciples gathered there had fallen fearfully in the presence of God after recognizing their own nature.

**Matthew 17:7-8**

**<sup>7</sup> But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." <sup>8</sup> And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.**

Jesus will reach out to you, he will heal you, he will always shine on you. So, make it a point in your life to make Jesus the center of your life, see only Jesus the same way that the disciples in that moment saw only Jesus in all of his Glory. When you do that regardless of all the stumbling you may do in your life his light will always guide your way. You will be renewed, reborn, transformed and become the reflection of his Word when you see him for who he really is, The Son of God, One of the Trinity of the One True Living God, now and forever, and our Lord and Saviour.

Let us Pray,

**Lead Us All to True Repentance**

Almighty God,  
 hear our prayers for all who sin against you,  
 or neglect to serve you,  
 all who forget you,  
 all who leave you out of their lives.  
 O Lord, have mercy on them.  
 Lead us all to true repentance  
 and an earnest longing for you.  
 Strengthen and confirm all your faithful people,  
 and lift up the light of your face on them,  
 always renewing in them heavenly desires;  
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
 Amen.

***Souce: An Ancient Collect.***

**Hymn: "Rising Sun"**

Praise Him all you sinners  
 Sing oh sing you weary  
 Oh praise Him all you children of God

We lift high His glory  
 Shown throughout our stories  
 We praise Him as the children of God

Chorus

Our great Redeemer glorious Savior  
 Your Name is higher than the rising sun  
 Light of the morning You shine forever  
 Your Name is higher than the rising sun  
 Your Name is higher than the rising sun

Praise His Name forever  
 Speak it loud and clear now  
 Oh praise Him all you children of God (Chorus)

### **Invitation to Offering**

#### **Offering**

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

**E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. [standrewspert offering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspert offering@gmail.com) If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.**

#### **Offertory Prayer** **(Congregant Prepared)**

#### **Closing Hymn #444: "Sweet is the Solemn Voice" (v 1,3,4)**

Sweet is the solemn voice that calls  
 the Christian to the house of prayer;  
 I love to stand within its walls,  
 for you, O Lord, are present there.

How good to raise our common song!  
 Joining in holy praise and love,  
 we imitate the blessed throng,  
 uniting hearts and songs above.

Within these walls may peace abound;  
 may all our hearts in one agree,  
 and where we meet, where Christ is found,  
 may peace and concord ever be.

**Pastoral Prayer**

The Word of God calls us  
to see that all the places and occasions of the world,  
even places of sorrow and death,  
are transfigured by the presence of the glory of God in Christ Jesus.  
Let us now call to mind all who are in any need  
and commend them to God's transforming care, saying,  
"O merciful God, hear our prayer."

For those who are alone,  
for widows and widowers and orphans,  
and for the divorced,  
O merciful God, hear our prayer.

For the imprisoned,  
for those whose only home is the streets,  
and for those caught in addiction,  
O merciful God, hear our prayer.

For the hungry,  
for those who cannot feed their children,  
and for the unemployed,  
O merciful God, hear our prayer.

For refugees,  
for victims of warfare,  
and for those held in poverty by racial discrimination,  
O merciful God, hear our prayer.

For the people of our nation, our city, and our community,  
O merciful God, hear our prayer.

For artists and writers  
and for all who think on the edge of society,  
O merciful God, hear our prayer.

For preachers and teachers of the light-bearing Word of Christ,  
O merciful God, hear our prayer.

For the church and its leaders,  
formed by the life-giving Word of Christ,  
O merciful God, hear our prayer.

For this assembly, feeding on the Word of Christ,

O merciful God, hear our prayer.

With Moses and Elijah and all the people of God,  
with the church throughout the ages bearing witness  
to the great light of God shining in dark places,  
we commend to you all for whom we pray,  
O merciful God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

**Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face shine upon you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.  
Alleluia! Amen.