

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, February 11th, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Mountain Tops
Transfiguration of the Lord
Mark 9:2-9

Welcome

Announcements

Order for the Dedication of an Organ

Everybody stand

Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary : praise Him in the firmament of His power.

Praise Him for His mighty acts : praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet : praise Him with the psaltery and harp.

Praise Him with the timbrel and dance : praise Him with stringed instruments and organs.

Praise Him upon the loud cymbals : praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, whom the hosts of heaven continually adore graciously receive this Organ for Your glory and worship in this Your House; and grant that we who sing Your praises in this present world may be found worthy to praise You with Your saints in that world which is to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Then the Minister, facing towards the Organ, says.

In the faith of Jesus Christ, we bless, dedicate, and set apart this Instrument of Music to the service of Almighty God, to the glory and honour of Him whose mercy endures forever: in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

O Lord, open our lips.
And our mouths shall show forth Your praise.

Then is sung by all the people, with organ accompaniment, this being the first use of the Instrument in the Service—

**Praise GOD from whom all blessings flow.
 Praise Him all creatures here below,
 Praise Him above ye heavenly host,
 Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.
 Then are said these prayers following—**

We give You thanks, O Lord God, that it has pleased You, by Your good Spirit, to put into the hearts of Your servants the desire to set up this Organ and thus enrich the worship and advance the goodly order of Your temple. Bless, O Lord, them, and their families, and graciously accept this gift at their hands, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O God, who art Yourself eternal love and goodness, and from whom alone cometh whatsoever we give and dedicate to You ; grant that all they who within this holy place shall offer up the sacrifice of praise to You may glorify You not only with their lips but in their lives, so that, enjoying Your favour here on earth, they may hereafter attain to everlasting joy ; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with You, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end. **Amen.**

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.

Children's Hymn: "Jesus Loves Me"

Jesus loves me, this I know,
 for the Bible tells me so.
 Little ones to him belong;
 they are weak, but he is strong.

Refrain:

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
 Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me he who died
 heaven's gate to open wide.
 He will wash away my sin,
 let his little child come in. [Refrain]

Jesus loves me, this I know,
 as he loved so long ago,
 taking children on his knee,
 saying, "Let them come to me." [Refrain]

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

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: "O Jesus I Have Promised" Choir

Responsive Reading

Psalm 50:1-6

¹ The Mighty One, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.

**² Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.**

³ Our God comes; he does not keep silence;
before him is a devouring fire,
around him a mighty tempest.

**⁴ He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:**

⁵ "Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"

**⁶ The heavens declare his righteousness,
for God himself is judge! *Selah***

Opening Hymn #414: "God, Reveal Your Presence"

God, reveal your presence:
gladly we adore you,
and with awe appear before you.
Holy is your temple:
all within keep silence,
humbly bow with deepest reverence.
You alone now we own,
as our God and Saviour:
praise your name forever!

In God's holy presence:
hear the harps resounding;
see the crowds the throne surrounding;
"Holy, holy, holy!"
hear the hymn ascending,
angels, saints, their voices blending.
Turn your ear to us here;
hear, O Christ, the praises
that your church now raises.

Fountain of all blessing,
purify my spirit;
all my trust is in your merit.
Like the holy angels
on your glory gazing,
we adore, hosannas raising.
Let your will ever still

rule your church terrestrial,
as the hosts celestial.

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Mark 9:2-9

² And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵ And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷ And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." ⁸ And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Sermon

In the Gospel of Mark, we have a beautiful description of the transfiguration of the Lord. It is short, simple, and full of meaning. Today we are going to look at one aspect of this event and how it should influence all of our lives in our walk with the Lord.

In the Scripture, Jesus and his disciples retreat up onto a mountain top and while there, Jesus is transformed and meets with Moses and Elijah. It is that mountain top experience that we are going to talk about. Mountain top experiences are important in the Bible.

The first mountain top experience that we learn of in the Scripture comes in the book of Genesis. Abraham is told by God to bring Issac his beloved son up to the top of the mountain and sacrifice him to the Lord. And Abraham did this, he faithfully obeyed God, and God intervened and provided a lamb as a replacement sacrifice.

The next mountain top experience comes in Exodus. Moses and the Israelites have escaped the Egyptian army by crossing the Red Sea and have found themselves camped at the base of Mount Sinai. The mountain is covered in thick clouds for six days, there is thunder and lightning. Moses is called up the mountain and God speaks to him. God gives him the Ten Commandments to bring to the people of God.

Moses even told the people that someone else would be coming to speak to God's people from the mountain top.

Deuteronomy 18:15

¹⁵“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—

Then years later the third mountain top scene occurs in the book of 1 Kings 19:11. It is here that we see the great prophet Elijah told to go to the mountain top and stand before the Lord.

Elijah goes to the mountain top to look for God. He looks in the strong wind, then in the earthquakes, then in the fire, and then finally he finds God a low whisper. Elijah finally hears God in a whisper, and in that small and gentle voice, God gave Elijah instructions to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.

Through the three mountaintop experiences in the Old Testament, we see, 6 days, cloud's, God's voice, a beloved son, and a command to listen to him. And all of these things are present in the Scripture we read today.

And as if to further tie this connection together Moses who is the great lawgiver and Elijah the great prophet both appear on the mountain top. The Law and the prophets united communing with Jesus as he is transfigured.

And Peter, James and John all get to experience this incredible event firsthand. They are getting both a literal and spiritual mountain top experience and when the man who brought the law of God to the people of God appears alongside the greatest of the prophets they are understandably shocked and awed in the presence of God's works.

Yet even here in the presence of these great heroes of the Bible, Peter is not one to sit silent. He suggests they set up some tents so that they could meet together in comfort.

Then the clouds come

Mark 2:7

⁷And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.”

God speaks directly to these three disciples and gives them a very simple command, ‘Listen to Jesus!’ Jesus is the fulfillment of the covenant with Abraham, he is the one to whom God's people need to be listening to in this world. He is the one who speaks with the authority of the Kingdom of Heaven.

This is not a suggestion for mankind, this is a direct command from God to his people.

God gave us commands that we are to carry out in this world and when we go to the end of the book of Matthew, we see Jesus's last mountain top experience with his disciples and his last spoken command to his faithful followers.

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

God commanded us to listen to His son, and his son commanded us to go out into the world and make disciples of all nations. Jesus also told us that we need to love our neighbor as ourselves.

We are his disciples, and we should be listening to him, this means that he should define us and define our agenda in this world, he is the Lord above all in our lives.

God has handed every Christian a great responsibility. He commanded us to listen to his son and then his Son told us to care for and evangelize the whole world. So, what does this mean practically in this world? How are we meant to carry out this task in our lives?

We live in a world which is falling apart. Our country is facing a financial crisis, the cost of living is skyrocketing, people are having to make choices between buying food, paying bills, and paying their rent or mortgage. When these things are happening in the world around us, we should not be reacting like other people, we should be reacting like disciples of Christ.

This means that when our neighbors are in pain, our neighbors are suffering we need to act. We need to look realistically at the problems that our communities are facing and do whatever we can, calling on the strength of God in our lives as we extend his compassion and care into the lives of others, even if the only thing we are capable of doing is a simple prayer.

Every Christian is capable of praying for those in need, even if they cannot help in any other way.

Being a disciple of Christ also means that we need to place our trust in the Lord. Being a disciple means that when our life is filled with trials and challenges, when we face bad things and bad news, we do not need to panic, instead we need to turn to God and trust in him. We should know that God is always present in our lives and in this world, and that all things happen according to His will.

Remember God is always with us, in the good times and in the bad times. Jesus told us in the book of Matthew that.

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

This does not mean we walk through the world blissfully unaware of the world around us and trying to convince ourselves that everything will be fine. Life is life, it is filled with unexpected times and events, it is filled with times of joy and times of sorrow, it is filled with successes and failures, and disciples are meant to trust in God through all of this, the good, the bad, the happy and the sad, God will see us through it all.

Which also means that we do not measure our relationship with God by our level of financial prosperity or health in this world. God is not concerned with our prosperity, health, and happiness in this world, he is concerned with our holiness. He is leading us along a life path that will prepare us to enter his kingdom when we pass from this world.

The measure of our relationship with God is how we are being changed by the Holy Spirit in our lives. We may not always feel like it, we may not always recognize it, but if we are a true disciple of Christ, we are living our life in him and he is living in us, making us a little more like him every day. We might not see it in our lives, but those around us Christian and non-Christian will see God in us and the way we live and that is the greatest form of evangelism.

Disciples are not one hour a week Christians. They are called disciples for a reason; disciples are students of God’s Word. They seek to understand the teachings of the Scripture and deepen their understanding of how to apply it in their lives. Disciples are serious about following God and learning to walk like Christ in this world. Disciples also know that they will never understand the Scripture perfectly, they are always learning.

Disciples know that Christ is always at work in their lives. We know that God is at work in us and slowly changing us from who we were into who he is calling us to be. This is our hope that Christ is constantly at work in our lives, our homes, our places of work and in our hearts, even when we are completely unaware of his presence there.

We may not always recognize his presence in our lives. Especially when we are in the trials and tribulations of our lives. However, we need to recognize that if God is not challenging us, we are not growing.

We also need to recognize that there will be times when it seems to be more than we can handle, but God is there with us and to do his work in our lives, to make us change he sometimes needs to close doors and end relationships we have with others. Change is uncomfortable and at times it can even hurt.

Disciples can find comfort in their trials and tribulation in the words of Paul to the Romans.

Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

This is a powerful message to all Christians. The Holy Spirit is at work in all of us, even when we do not feel it, even when we do not recognize it, we need to be reminded of it. God is in charge, not us.

When Jesus went up on the mountain top with Peter, James, and John a simple and direct command was given.

Mark 9:7

⁷ And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."

So, like Abraham, we need to be willing to go up the mountain in faith. Not knowing what will happen but doing so in obedience to the Lord. Knowing that it is all happening according to God's will, and he will provide all we need to carry out his will if we walk faithfully.

So, like Moses, we need to go up the mountain into the presence of the Lord and accept his law into our lives, even when they do not agree with the world and the way in which we want to live our lives.

And Like Elijah we need to go up the mountain and not pay attention to the strong wind, the earthquakes, or the fire, and instead listen for the voice of God.

This means that we need to stand firm in our faith in a world which is constantly trying to tell us not to. It means that when the world seeks to draw our attention to the fires, winds, and earthquakes, we need to instead focus on the voice of God in our lives.

When we see chaos and tribulation in the world around us, we need to be disciples, bringing the Word of God into the lives of all those around us.

We need to be up on that spiritual mountain top, sitting under that fig tree, in commune with God if we want to live as the Salt and Light of this world.

Let us pray,

All knowing Father,
We thank you for our Lord Jesus Christ,
We thank you that he is your beloved Son.

We thank you that he walked the earth among us,
That he knows the trials and tribulations we face in this world.

We thank you that Jesus is in control,
That he sits above every situation, every problem,
That he sits above every name that could ever be named.

In this world that is filled with darkness,
We know that Jesus is the Light,
And we know that when the world challenges us,
we need to turn to him and him alone.

Father give us the strength to persevere
and to stand firm in our faith
To be the Salt and Light of your word in this world.

In the name of your only Son, and our Lord and Saviour we pray,
Amen.

Hymn: "Christ is Mine Forever More"

Mine are days that God has numbered
I was made to walk with Him
Yet I look for worldly treasure
And forsake the King of kings

But mine is hope in my Redeemer
Though I fall, His love is sure

For Christ has paid for every failing
I am His forevermore

Mine are tears in times of sorrow
Darkness not yet understood
Through the valley I must travel
Where I see no earthly good

But mine is peace that flows from Heaven
And the strength in times of need
I know my pain will not be wasted
Christ completes his work in me

Mine are days here as a stranger
Pilgrim on a narrow way
One with Christ I will encounter
Harm and hatred for His name

But mine is armour for this battle
Strong enough to last the war
And He has said He will deliver
Safely to the golden shore

And mine are keys to Zion city
Where beside the King I walk
For there my heart has found its treasure
Christ is mine forevermore

Come rejoice now, O my soul
For His love is my reward
Fear is gone and hope is sure
Christ is mine forevermore

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 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 #410: “Joyful, Joyful We Adore You” (V 1,2,3)

Joyful, joyful, we adore You,
 God of glory, Lord of love;
 Hearts unfold like flow'rs before You,
 Op'ning to the sun above.
 Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
 Drive the dark of doubt away;
 Giver of immortal gladness,
 Fill us with the light of day!

All Your works with joy surround You,
 Earth and heav'n reflect Your rays,
 Stars and angels sing around You,
 Center of unbroken praise;
 Field and forest, vale and mountain,
 Flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,
 Chanting bird and flowing fountain
 Praising You eternally!

Always giving and forgiving,
 Ever blessing, ever blest,
 Well-spring of the joy of living,
 Ocean-depth of happy rest!
 Loving Father, Christ our Brother,
 Let Your light upon us shine;
 Teach us how to love each other,
 Lift us to the joy divine.

Pastoral Prayer

Revealing God,
You bless us with your presence and wisdom,
and we marvel at the wonders of your love.
You created a beautiful world that reveals your majesty.
You sent your Son to show us how to live with compassion.
Your Holy Spirit guides us on our way.
Thank you for opening our eyes to your presence each day.
Help us to recognize you not only in mountaintop experiences,
but also in everyday tasks and in times of great challenge.

Loving God,
Much in this world needs the transformation only you can provide.
Where there is violence, bring calm;
where there is poverty, send sustenance;
where there is confusion, bring wisdom;
where there is chaos, create order;
where minds and hearts are troubled, bring comfort;
where pain is crippling, grant release.
Move the hearts of the rich to share with those in need;
and call the powerful to act with justice for those at risk.
Give us all the will to work for the wellbeing of the earth
and to live with respect for the fragile balances within your creation.
Hear us now in this time of silence
as we raise to you the names and situations on our hearts this day:

Eternal God, we pray for your church around the world
and for our congregation.
Give your people the energy to shine
wherever there is persecution, despair or discouragement.
Bless each congregation with wisdom and vision,
as we face the changes in the world caused by the pandemic.
Renew our imagination and commitment
to develop new forms of ministry and mission for the days ahead.
Gather us as a people again after months of distancing,
and inspire us with greater delight in your mystery,
and greater joy in seeking your presence.

We ask all these things through Christ Jesus, Our Lord,
who revealed your will to us through your revolutionary love. **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.**