

# Worship At Home

## 14<sup>th</sup> February 2021

The Psalmist writes in Psalm 103

"O my soul, bless God. From head to toe, I'll bless his holy name! O my soul, bless God, don't forget a single blessing!

He forgives your sins—every one.

He heals your diseases—every one.

He redeems you from hell—saves your life!

He crowns you with love and mercy—a paradise crown.

He wraps you in goodness—beauty eternal.

He renews your youth—you're always young in his presence."

As we come into the presence of God today, let us sit for a moment and listen.



Lord,

We found you standing in the river Jordan and heard your call to be baptised.

We found you wandering along the beach and heard your call to follow.

We found you healing in the local synagogue and heard you call the man a friend.

We found you at night alone and praying and heard you call on God for help.

We found you touching the unclean leper and heard you call him back.

May we find you again Jesus among us now and hear you call our names.

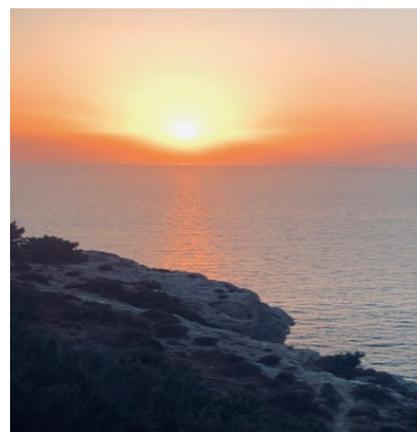
Today as we search for you in our changed world, open our eyes, open our ears and help us to see and hear you. With listening ears.

Amen.

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - MP1259 Bless the Lord,

*Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul  
Worship his holy name, Sing like never before  
O my soul, I'll worship your holy name*

1 The sun comes up  
It's a new day dawning  
It's time to sing your song again  
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me  
Let me be singing when the evening comes  
*Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul...*



2 You're rich in love and you're slow to anger  
Your name is great and your heart is kind  
For all your goodness I will keep on singing  
10,000 reasons for my heart to find  
*Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul...*

3 And on that day when my strength is failing  
The end draws near and my time has come  
Still my soul will sing your praise unending  
10,000 years and then forever more  
*Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul...*

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Reading: Mark 9:2-9

**Let us pray** Almighty God,  
we ask you to show us something more of who you are and how awesome your presence is.  
Overcome our fear of the unknown, and lead us into a new experience of you. May our worship  
today be as on a mountain-top, a transforming encounter that empowers our discipleship.

God of divine power, what a spine-tingling, hair-raising event the disciples experienced! One  
minute they were looking upon Jesus, the man. Next, they were tuned into your glory shining  
in and through him as he transformed before their eyes: your confirmation of his deity.

Your same radiant light, available to us through relationship with Jesus your Son, transforms  
our hearts. Your divine Holy Spirit tunes our faith in unexpected ways through the  
transforming radiance of your love. Lord, whereas it's part of our faith walk to seek and be  
open to life-changing moments, forgive us when we just plod through life and get despondent  
with the mundane. We are sorry, Lord.

On the other hand, we can at times get fixated on the spiritual mountain-tops and so miss out  
on what's happening below in the everyday. When things are going well for us, we can get  
wrapped up in the moment and be forgetful of others. We're sorry, Lord.

There are many voices tuned into today's world telling us how to live and what's best. But  
you, Lord, are our authority in life. Forgive us when we fail to test things against your word.  
We're sorry, Lord. **Amen.**

### **Reflection: Wow!**

Wow! When I woke up on Tuesday morning, the world outside my  
window had been transfigured! The garden, and the fields and the hills  
beyond had been re clothed in dazzling white.

The snow is a visual reminder of Jesus' transfiguration in Mark's gospel  
- where Jesus' appearance is changed to a dazzling whiteness - and also  
causes us to consider the beauty of God's natural world. To me, it is  
unsurprising that the transfiguration of Jesus took place in the great outdoors, where  
unexpected beauty may lurk around every corner.

Do they offer you a glimpse of the creator? When have you seen the beauty of God in  
creation? Cold weather and heavy snow may be beautiful, but it also causes problems for  
many people; walking and driving are more difficult and it is easy for people to become  
isolated, especially now, as COVID means fewer of us are leaving our homes.

The so-called 'Beast from the East' therefore also gives us extra chances to experience God  
through unexpected acts of kindness, as neighbours are asked to look out for the vulnerable  
people around them. As people need help getting their cars out or where service vehicles,  
like the bin lorry gets stuck in the snow and needs our help to dig them out. When have  
unexpected human actions transfigured the world and allowed you to see God more clearly?  
When do you think that your actions might have shown God to others?

The disciples have been with Jesus for some time now, and have witnessed many amazing  
things and they come with Jesus to a moment of overwhelming certainty on the mountain, a  
moment that showed them that He was profoundly different from everyone they had met  
before and, at the same time realise that He was compelling and totally trustworthy.

Think for a moment about Peter's terror of Jesus in glory (v.6), and what sacrifice followed  
in the Gospel. Contrast the events in our own time when in the USA at the Capitol building  
the mob were sent, not led, by the man who egged them on. And terror was rather inflicted  
than suffered.

This mountain-top experience provides a glimpse of the glory of God, but it is a passing  
experience. Have you had an unexpected or intense awareness of the glory of God? Was it  
difficult to leave the experience behind, wanting to hold onto it even as everyday life  
continued? How can we tune into God's 'wow' moments in our lives?



Jesus' three closest disciples experience a transfiguring revelation that changes the way they see the world. Maybe, the 'wow moments' are losing their frequency and intensity or just maybe they have become simpler. Perhaps we think we have seen it all before. Perhaps few of us would claim quite such a vivid moment of insight as the first disciples, but many have special memories of a time when God has been very close to us. How might our worship bring us closer to God and give us or enable us the opportunity to express our own 'wow moments'? For sure, when we meet again in person, we ought not to be lost for words as simple as our lives are right now there is plenty we can do, learn about and we have the time we always wanted to draw closer to God. Peter's response to the presence of Moses and Elijah shows how much he longs to hold onto this special moment. On this mountain-top, he wants to find the resources to build dwellings, so that they can stay together as God stayed with the people in the tabernacle in the desert. How can we balance our glimpses of God's glory with our desire for stability?

Peter's response to the presence of Moses and Elijah shows how much he longs to hold onto this special moment. On this mountain-top, he wants to find the resources to build dwellings, so that they can stay together as God stayed with the people in the tabernacle in the desert. It was never going to happen that way; this was a moment of fleeting brilliance. But human beings yearn to embody their faith in bricks and mortar, and many of our churches bear witness to this passion to give concrete expression to our moments of wonder. How can we balance our glimpses of God's glory with our desire for stability?

The disciples receive mixed messages. Their trust in Jesus received a shock as he explained the future that lies ahead of him. Yet now they have seen him in transcendent majesty. Who is this? Down the mountain, Jesus is back into the hurly-burly of ministry, with a young boy whom the disciples cannot heal. They see Jesus cast out the spirit and heal the boy, and they must have a clearer sense of the way that his glory embodies God's power at work in him. As the story of the Church progresses, the disciples learn to trust the link between God's glory and God's power. They find that they too can change the world for good if they hold fast to their trust in God. What links do we recognise between our work to make change happen in Jesus' name, and our awareness of his glory?

We sometimes hear people talk about a 'mountaintop' experience. A moment when we experience something transcendent, other-worldly - something that transforms the way that they see and understand the day-to-day world around them. Perhaps you have had such an experience? If you have, did you tell anyone about it afterwards? All week I've been telling people of the snowman that caught my eye this week... a real conversation starter! A wow moment! Peter, James and John were told not to tell anyone about what they had seen on the mountain. Nevertheless, the Gospel account itself shows us that, after Jesus' ascension, the story of what happened on the mountain was shared as the disciples sought to understand who Jesus was and what had happened.



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Many long for an experience of God that is spectacular and beyond any doubting, but it is worth noting that only three of the 12 disciples were invited to witness this transfiguration. And the call on their lives was not to dwell on it, or to stay on the mountaintop in the tents Peter offered to set up, but to live with the rest of the disciples in the mundane and ordinary and messy world. And to live with the knowledge that there was something so much more that they were a part of, something that they could not forget. And to do that, to live in the mundane and ordinary and messy ever changing world with the knowledge that there is something greater that we are all part of, is truly life transforming. Wouldn't you agree?

If you do, has your life been transformed by the testimony of those who have seen, heard of and been dazzled by Jesus of Nazareth?

**Let us pray:** We close our eyes and imagine. We open our eyes and see. We close our eyes and see visions. We open our eyes and find others. We close our eyes and dream dreams. God of glory, open our eyes and open our hearts. God of glory, change us and renew us by your Spirit. God of glory, we see you in the beauty of the universe, we meet you in the love of our friends and families, we find you in our joys and in our pain - faithful and true. We see you revealed to us in Scripture, we hear you speaking to us in the silence, we know you in our hearts, and we find you in the person of Jesus.

As we look at the events in our world, help us to see where you are at work. In our homes and in our daily lives, help us to notice the glimpses of your glory shining through the ordinary fabric of our lives. You are the God who comes close to us: though we are far apart from each other surround us with the light of your presence.

God of glory, we live with so many uncertainties. Today we pray for people whose lives are always uncertain: for people in war torn parts of the world; for all who wonder where their next meal will come from; for people who are jobless or homeless; for all who are fleeing from domestic violence. Help us to make our churches sanctuaries of peace and safety. May we be ready to respond to the need of others and to do what we can to tell the story of the love that will never let us go, the love that can change us and the world. Help us to love one another as you have loved us. You are the God who comes close to us: though we are far apart from each other. God of glory, we pray for situations in the world that need hope and healing. And in particular for Yemen, for Russia, and for Myanmar. We ask for words and actions that are full of hope and not hate, of forgiveness and unity and not division. May we all be mindful of the power of our words, and use our speaking to build others up, not to tear them down. May we seek to respond to the needs of others with messages, words and actions of hope and comfort. You are the God who comes close to us: though we are far apart from each other Surround us with the light of your presence. **Amen.**

**Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - MP295 He lives**

1 I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today  
I know that He is living, whatever people may say  
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer  
And just the time I need Him He's always near  
*He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today ....*

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*He lives, He lives,  
Christ Jesus lives today  
He walks with me and  
talks with me. Along life's  
narrow way*

2 In all the world around me I see His loving care  
And though my heart grows weary I never will despair  
I know that He is leading, through all the stormy blast  
The day of His appearing will come at last  
*He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today ....*

*He lives, He lives,  
Salvation to impart  
You ask me how I know He  
lives?  
He lives within my heart.*

3 Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian Lift up your voice and sing  
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ, the King  
The Hope of all who seek Him, the Help of all who find  
None other is so loving, so good and kind  
*He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today ....*

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all evermore. **Amen.**

*Thank you to those who have taken the time to contact me. Take care out there this week. May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and each day. Rev. Susan Thorburn, [sthorburn@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:sthorburn@churchofscotland.org.uk)*

*If you choose to email me, please can you tell me who you are and where you live. Thank you. 4*