

**HOW Mission Community & KSAT Worship Service for
14th February 2021. Theme: Mountain Top Experiences**

CALL TO WORSHIP.

Captain of Israel's host, and Guide of all who seek the land above
Beneath thy shadow we abide, The cloud of thy protecting love;
Our strength, thy grace; our rule, thy word; our end the glory of the Lord.
By thine unerring Spirit led, We shall not in the desert stray;
We shall not full direction need, Nor miss our providential way;
As far from danger as from fear, While love, almighty love, is near

HYMN CMP 449 omit v 2 Love divine <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFckP0F93JM>

1. Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down;
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, all Thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, Thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation, Enter every trembling heart.
2. Come almighty to deliver, let us all Thy grace receive;
Suddenly return and never, never more Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray and praise Thee without ceasing, glory in Thy perfect love.
3. Finish then Thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation, perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love and praise.

PRAYER.

Love divine all loves excelling; loving God as we worship you this morning we come to celebrate your love, your love for each one of us, your love for everyone in your world. A love often shown to us, by the love and care of other people but supremely through the gift of your son Jesus. Thank you for all that Jesus' coming meant to our world. Thank you for all that he taught us about you. Thank you for the privilege of sharing with Him in the work of your kingdom. Thank you for so many things in the world around us, the people who are part of our lives, in the worship, prayer and Bible reading we can share in so many different ways; we thank you for so many things which contribute to the life in all its fullness which Jesus promised. Thank you for the mountain top experiences in our lives – thank you for your comfort, strength and peace when we are down in the valleys of life.

We offer you our thanks and praise; we also ask for your forgiveness.

Forgiveness for things which we have said or thought or done this past week, which we shouldn't have done; and for the things we should have done and did not do.

Forgive us and renew us by your spirit.

We offer all our prayers in the name of Jesus our Saviour and our Lord. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER.

HYMN CMP 251 How sweet the name <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmlMau0WtSE>

1. How sweet the name of Jesus sounds, in a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, and drives away his fear
2. It makes the wounded spirit whole and calms the troubled breast;
'tis manna to the hungry soul and to the weary rest.
3. Dear name, the rock on which I build, my shield and hiding place,
My never-failing treasury, filled with boundless stores of grace.
4. Jesus! my shepherd, brother, friend, my Prophet, Priest and King;
My Lord, my life, my way, my end, accept the praise I bring.
5. Weak is the effort of my heart, and cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art, I'll praise Thee as I ought.
6. Till then I would Thy love proclaim with every fleeting breath;
And may the music of Thy name refresh my soul in death!

THE TRANSFIGURATION – AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Based on *Mark 9 vv 2-9*. It's sometimes good to hear a familiar Bible story in a different way.

Let me tell you about the day we went up the mountain, my brother James, Peter and me, John. The climb was hard but I was feeling great about being included, about being close to Jesus. I always knew that being close to him would change me, but since that day I was transformed, made new. It happened suddenly. Two men appeared and we knew they were Moses and Elijah; it was like I recognised friends I had always known. When I turned to look at Jesus, he was shining. I'd seen his face alight with love and joy before but this was different; dazzling. He was so fully alive.

Peter blurted out something about building 'sukkot' a shelter. History will tell a tale about Peter speaking from his heart before using his head; but I think he only meant to express his gratitude. Our people have long made 'sukkot' to give thanks. When we sleep in tents, we give thanks for our deliverance from Egypt, for our freedom, for the harvest. Peter wanted to give thanks that these heroes of our faith were there. Moses the law-giver, Elijah the prophet and Jesus who was so steeped in their tradition. Jesus who loved the law and told us it meant 'Love God with everything you have and love your neighbour as yourself. Jesus who stands with the prophets, calling God's people to ways of justice and peace. His kingdom will be a place where the prophet's words are fulfilled.

It was marvellous to be there and I wanted to stay. Then came the voice. 'This is my Son, the Beloved: with him I am well pleased; listen to him'. I was so afraid. No one sees God and lives. I was curled up with my eyes shut. But Jesus' touch calmed my terror and his voice called me out of that paralysing fear.' Do not be afraid' he said. 'This is my commission and fear cannot hold me.' Those words Do not be afraid- they have stayed with me – taken me to the foot of the cross and into resurrection. They are words for you too, in your situation today; for we are all heirs to his kingdom. Fear cannot hold us.

The world is transformed, and we help to build his kingdom every day when we love God and love our neighbour. Marie Pattison.

REFLECTION.

When I first read the eyewitness account (above) of Jesus transfiguration in a Church Action on Poverty magazine I was struck by the way in which John's account highlighted two things which were different to what I had seen in the passage before. First about Peter's re-action, highlighted in the second paragraph; and secondly John's re-action, highlighted in the third paragraph.

They got me thinking first about one of my own mountain top experiences- ordination to the Methodist ministry which took place 37 years ago this year. When I was ordained at the Wolverhampton conference in 1984 the services took place on a Tuesday evening, rather than on a Sunday as they do now. So we had had part of the conference proceedings – Saturday, Monday and Tuesday morning –the usual variety of discussions..... experiences..... opinions and so on; then on Tuesday afternoon, after the people being ordained had filed into the hall where the conference was being held, 700 people stood up and sang unaccompanied the opening hymn.

'What shall we offer our good Lord? Poor nothings for his boundless grace'

That was a mountain top experience, as was my actual ordination service, later that day, in St John's Methodist Church, Shrewsbury – surrounded by family and friends from college; and I was overwhelmed by such a sense of God's power and love.

Mountain top experiences!

However this was also so true on the last day of the conference, when singing, as is the custom at the end of the conference, the words of Charles Wesley's hymn used as a call to worship. Singing the words with everyone else at the conference, but then, being so carried along by the words, that I sang them all the way back up the M6 and A74 to Barrhead in Scotland –where I was minister at the time! Another mountain top experience.

As I thought about again about that journey, thought about the words of that hymn, I realised that as we prepare to enter another Lenten season, as we continue to be Christians in our communities, our country, our world – all desperately crying out for hope, love, peace, and justice, I realised that those words remind us, in the first verse, to follow Peter's example of wonder and thanksgiving; and in the second verse to follow John's example of freedom from fear. Charles Wesley wrote the hymn in the 1760s, about 20 years after his conversion. The words look back to the experience of the Israelites in the desert and to Jesus experience as he was led by the Spirit into the desert. However the words also reflect the experience of John & Charles Wesley in 18th Century Britain; and those same words can also reflect our experience 300 years later.

Peter acted with wonder and thanksgiving. The first verse of the hymn reminds us of so much, so much for which we too can respond in wonder and thanksgiving. God's protecting love – God's strength – God's word – God's purpose. We have a God who loves us, with a love that cannot be measured, with a love that never fails, with a love that is for all. We have a God who calls us to follow him; who calls us

often out of our comfort zone; often to take a step of faith into the future without knowing where we might end up.

But when God calls, He equips. Isaiah, as we were reminded last week, promised that *'those who waited on the Lord would renew their strength'*. Paul could say with great confidence to the Christians in Philippi. *'I can do all things through Him who gives me strength'*. And we can say the same!

Our strength..... God's grace..... Our rule..... His Word – to keep us on the right path and help us to make the right decisions.

The Bible available to us in our own language, now not only written in books but we can carry it with us on our mobile phones, so easily available to us.

The not so easy challenge, of course, is to make the time to read it, reflect on it and act upon it! Our rule, His word; and our end, the glory of the Lord. God's purpose for our world and God's purpose for each of our lives is His glory. His glory but so many benefits for us too!

A message of life and hope, that is the Christian message; that is what Peter and John experienced and that is what Charles Wesley wrote about in his hymns. That is what we celebrate each time we 'meet' for worship; that is the message we need to live out in our daily lives; the message that, each and every day, we can know security in God's love; that each and every day, we can know His strength, His grace, His purpose in our lives. We need to follow Peter's example of a response of wonder and thanksgiving.

However, we also need to follow John's example of freedom from fear. Fear is an awful thing, it knocks our confidence, breaks our trust, stops us doing the right thing; it causes division, makes people angry. God understands our fears, the things that make us afraid, but He says to us, as he said to John..... Don't be afraid.

Shortly after Jesus's transfiguration experience, He would be sharing with His disciples, the promise of the coming of God's spirit. Although Jesus' time on earth was limited, His continued presence, His continued power is made possible through His Spirit. However, although Jesus promised the power of His Spirit, He never promised that following Him would be the easy choice. For all of us as Christians, there are many times when we will be afraid. Afraid of what other people will say or do if we acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Saviour or if we make a stand on Christian values; afraid of what it will cost us in time, money, energy, if we take on a commitment in the church or in the community; afraid of the free time we will lose or what God might ask, if we spend more time in prayer, more time in Bible study. Many times, we will be afraid but in all these situations, and others, you will be able to think of God's response, 'Don't be afraid'. Have the confidence to believe, to experience, the truth of Wesley's words in the second verse of his hymn:

By thine unerring Spirit led, We shall not in the desert stray;
We shall not full direction need, Nor miss our providential way;
As far from danger as from fear, While love, almighty love, is near

On Wednesday, we begin once more the season of Lent, when we are reminded not only of Jesus temptations in the wilderness, but also the events of Holy week.. His betrayal... arrest and crucifixion. BUT as we face our own times of fear..... anxiety..... failure, as we seek to follow Jesus example, we also can be full of wonder and thanksgiving because Good Friday was not the end of the story and we serve a risen Saviour who is with us in the world today. Amen.

HYMN CMP 463 May the mind

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=045Cm8MhW7U>

1. May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling all I do or say.
2. May the word of God dwell richly in my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph only through His power.
3. May the peace of God my Father rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort sick and sorrowing.
4. May the love of Jesus fill me as the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self-abasing, this is victory.
5. May I run the race before me, strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only until Jesus as I onward go.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS.

Response after each part of prayer: Transforming God **Hear our prayer**

Let us pray.

We continue to pray for the effects of Covid all over our world, and for wisdom and strength for all who are working in challenging situations, or have difficult decisions to make.

We pray for countries torn apart by war, for refugees looking for safety, for those imprisoned for their faith, and for those who will go hungry today.

We pray for our government at this challenging time faced with so many different and difficult issues .

We pray for those who offer support, especially during 'Covid', for doctors nurse and carers ,for those working in social services, in prisons and in schools.

We remember in a time of quietness those known to us who are in particular need just now.....

We pray for ourselves, our own journey of faith, for courage, steadfast faith and wisdom, in all we do or say. **Amen**

HYMN CMP 400 Lead us heavenly Father

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGsvbqErM2A>

1. Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us, for we have no help but Thee,
Yet possessing every blessing if our God our Father be.
2. Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us: all our weakness Thou dost know:
Thou didst tread this earth before us, Thou didst feel its keenest woe;
Love and dreary, faint and weary, through the desert Thou didst go.
3. Spirit of our God, descending fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
Love with every passion blending, pleasure that can never cloy:
Thus provided, pardoned, guided, nothing can our peace destroy.

BLESSING

May the love of the Lord Jesus draw us to Himself, the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen us in His service and the joy of the Lord Jesus fill our hearts; and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon us this day and remain with us always. **Amen**

THE GRACE.