

Sunday 15th February

– Next Before Lent

Morning Worship

Led by Sue Nelms, LLM

<https://zoom.us/j/82311473640>

LORDSBRIDGE TEAM
OF CHURCHES



Gathering and Greeting

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, we have come to worship you.

**Help us to pray to you in faith,
to sing your praise with gratitude,
and to listen to your word with eagerness;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Hymn – Bright the vision that delighted

- 1 Bright the vision that delighted
 once the sight of Judah's seer;
 sweet the countless tongues united
 to entrance the prophet's ear.
- 2 Round the Lord in glory seated
 cherubim and seraphim
 filled his temple, and repeated
 each to each the alternate hymn:
- 3 'Lord, thy glory fills the heaven;
 earth is with its fulness stored;
 unto thee be glory given,
 holy, holy, holy, Lord.'
- 4 Heaven is still with glory ringing,
 earth takes up the angels' cry,
 'Holy, holy, holy,' singing,

'Lord of hosts, the Lord most high.'

5 With his seraph train before him,
with his holy Church below,
thus unite we to adore him,
bid we thus our anthem flow:

6 'Lord, thy glory fills the heaven;
earth is with its fulness stored;
unto thee be glory given,
holy, holy, holy, Lord.'

Richard Mant (1776-1848)

Saying Sorry to God

St Paul says

'Be imitators of God;
love as Christ loved;
do not grieve the Holy Spirit;
put away all anger and bitterness,
all slander and malice.'

So let us confess our sins to God,
who forgives us in Christ.

cf Ephesians 4.30 – 5.1

**God of mercy,
we acknowledge that we are all sinners.
We turn from the wrong that we have thought
and said and done,
and are mindful of all that we have failed to do.
For the sake of Jesus, who died for us,
forgive us for all that is past,
and help us to live each day
in the light of Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

May God our Father forgive us our sins,
and bring us to the fellowship of his table
with his saints for ever. **Amen.**

Readings by Dorothy Morison

2 Peter 1:16-end

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹ So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, ²¹ because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

For the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Matthew 17:1-9

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

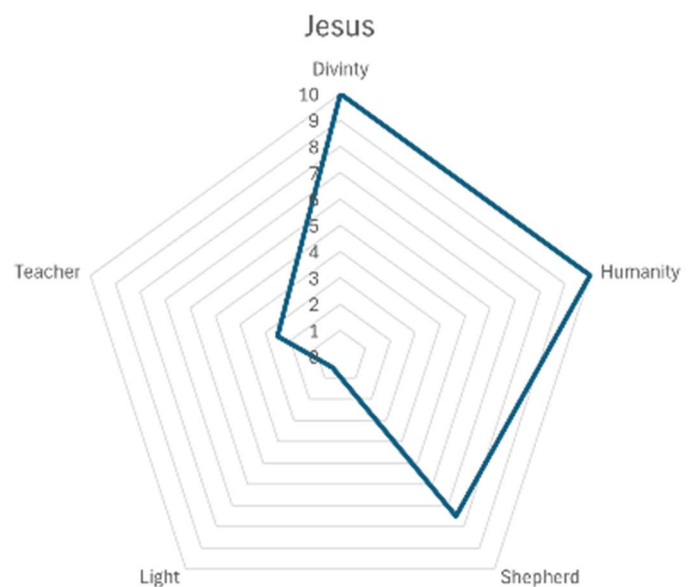
17 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³ Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' ⁵ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' ⁸ And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. ⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, 'Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection by Rev Barnabas Leeke

Who is Jesus to you? This is a really important question because the Christian faith is entirely based on the personhood of Jesus, i.e. Christ. There has been much debate over the intervening centuries about where Jesus sits on the Human-Divine axis, some of it quite fiercely, and sadly sometimes violently, contested. The conclusion that theologians much wiser than me have come to is that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine, if you can try and wrap your mind around that! Some might consider it something of a cop out, but it is probably the best that our human perspective can come up with and I am not going to try and elaborate on it here.

I think that the Jesus whom most of us have experienced in one way or another, or who are trying to follow as best we can, or who we believe in without a completely rational way of explaining it, is even more complex than that false dichotomy of the human-divine axis. Perhaps we should be considering the problem more as a radar chart, sometimes called a spider chart, which can plot values on multiple axes to compare multivariate data sets (I've included one here as an example). The question then might become, "What shape is Jesus to you?"!



As we come to the end of the Epiphany season and prepare for the start of Lent on Wednesday, it is precisely this question that we are dealing with in our readings for today. Epiphany has been a time of exploration of Jesus' life and ministry; we've seen kings and rulers challenged by his

birth, contemporary prophets identifying him as the messiah, simple fishermen called into a life of faith and witness, and been commanded ourselves to seek after the same kingdom that Jesus was bringing to fruition. Today we get the answer to the question, and not once but twice. We have the eyewitness testimony of Peter, recorded in all the synoptic gospels (Mt 17, Mk 9, Lk 9) but today taken from Matthew's gospel, of Jesus being transfigured before Peter, James and John. Jesus, for once and once only, displaying his true nature in the shining blaze of God's glory.

There is just so much to unpack here that it is worth spending a little time looking at the symbolism of the moment. He takes his absolute inner circle of disciples, Peter whom he has already renamed as the rock on which the church of Christ will be built, and James and John who were some of the first disciples to join him (and may have been related to him through Mary). They go up a mountain, bringing to mind Moses receiving the commandments from God at Sinai and Elijah seeing God pass by in the silence at Horeb (incidentally two names for the same mountain). If that wasn't clear enough, these two also rock up to testify to Jesus as fulfilling both the Law (given to Moses) and the prophets (epitomised in Elijah as the great prophet). A cloud descends, as so often in the Old Testament where God's presence is indicated by a cloud, such as leading the people through the desert and residing in the tabernacle. And Jesus' divinity is made evident by his face and clothes becoming blindingly white as God's glory is revealed, a glory we have heard all through the OT cannot be viewed directly due to its extreme potency. Finally the crashing, thunderous, all pervading voice of God spells it out directly, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased, listen to him!"

This event is so important that the church celebrates it twice a year. The Feast of the Transfiguration is on the 6th August each year, and almost precisely six months in between we are reminded of it again before the start of Lent. Why is that? I can't think of any other aspect of Jesus' life which we celebrate twice (let me know if you can!). It is because it tells us something really important about who Jesus is, or rather a few really

important things about who Jesus is. He is completely divine, able to inhabit and display the undiluted glory of the Godhead. He is the beloved Son of God, to be listened to and obeyed, the heir of the kingdom as we heard last week. He is the fulfilment of all the law and the prophets, the turning point of human history from prophecy to completion. This is awesome, awe-inspiring stuff! This is why we worship and follow Jesus, but as I said earlier this is also not the whole story.

On your radar chart you should have Jesus' divinity at 100%, that is the message of these passages, Peter is at pains to say it is not a myth and that he saw it with his own eyes. We also have the eyewitness testimony that Jesus was a real person, who lived on earth and ate and drank like any other human being, so you should also have his humanity at 100%. But I hope that, like me, you also have other axes on this radar chart, axes which speak of your own personal experience of Jesus. These are more difficult to define and may include aspects of the Son which are mediated by the other persons of the Trinity – Father and Spirit. Perhaps you have felt the presence of Jesus as a friend in times of loneliness or difficulty. Perhaps you have known Jesus as a teacher and an example as you have tried to live the moral life in a challenging world. Perhaps you have known Jesus as the shepherd or pastor, providing for your needs whether they be physical, emotional or spiritual. Perhaps you have known Jesus as a guiding light in your life when the path has been unclear and you didn't know which way to turn. No doubt there are other aspects of Jesus that have been important to you in understanding God's will for your life and the life of the whole world. This is the Jesus that we worship and adore, a living, active person transforming lives and speaking truth and light into dark places.

As we approach Lent, a time of prayer and reflection in preparation for the celebration of Jesus' supreme act of redemption and transformation at Easter, I encourage you to take some time out to complete your radar chart (literally or metaphorically) and discover the shape of Jesus in your life. This isn't just an academic exercise to sort out some knotty theology. The most powerful and effective means of sharing our faith is through sharing our personal encounters with Jesus. It is by describing to

others what the shape of Jesus is for us, that we are able to help them find the shape of Jesus that fits the hole in their lives. For Peter, James and John the encounter on the mountain top was really important to help them understand who Jesus is, and it is a part of our witness too, but each of us has experiences which are just as important in sharing who Jesus is today. It's not always simple or straightforward, but we can begin by telling our story, our shape, and prayerfully leave the rest to God. Because even now, as when Peter wrote in his letter, "men and women moved by the Holy Spirit [speak] from God."

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thank you for the witness of faithful people who have led us to believe. Thank you for the way that you have been present and active in our lives, in just the shape that we have needed. Help us to share our experience of you so that we all may come to the vision of your unclouded glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God,
but made himself nothing.
Taking the form of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.
He humbled himself
and was obedient to death,
even the death of the cross.
Therefore God has raised him on high,
and given him the name above every name:
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

cf Philippians 2.6-11

Prayers of intercession prepared by Rick Nelms

Heavenly Father, thank you for your great love for us and for your infinite patience. Thank you for the incarnate life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, Your only Son, your Beloved, with whom you are well pleased. Thank you for Jesus' fulfilment of prophecy and for his willingness to be crucified and to rise from the dead for us, so that we can be sure that death is defeated and that, undeserved, we are forgiven. Thank you for your Holy Spirit, source of all true prophecy and bringer of gifts to us all, so we all can all hear Jesus as he says, "Get up and do not be afraid." Thank you that your Holy Spirit abides within each one of us now; so that when things are difficult we know that you are close to us, your light shining in the dark for us.

Lord of Love, **thank you for all the blessings you give to us.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for the universal Church of Christ, for all Christians everywhere and for unity and love throughout the Church. We give thanks and pray for the ministry of Sarah Mullally as Archbishop of Canterbury, of Sarah Clark as Bishop of Ely, of Dagmar Winter, acting Bishop of Ely as she resumes her role as Suffragan Bishop of Huntingdon, and Clare Coates as Team Rector for the Lordsbridge Team. We pray for all those who continue to minister within the Lordsbridge team as we wait for the person chosen and called by You to be Team Vicar for Comberton and Toft. We pray for everyone everywhere who is persecuted for their faith, that they will know that you are with them. We pray for all people who are Christians but who cannot find a Church within which they feel comfortable, and thus worship alone.

Lord of Love, **in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for our troubled world, and for its leaders, that they make decisions in the best interests of all of their people. In a word with enough for all, we pray to an end to inequality, poverty, discrimination and prejudice. We pray for the wars in the news, and the conflicts about which we rarely or never hear. We pray for countries wracked by gang turf wars, criminality and corruption. We pray for the billions of people affected by ongoing drought, flooding, extreme cold or heat, wildfires, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides and other

natural disasters. May people receive what they need to allow them to rebuild their lives themselves. We pray for all who are migrating in search of a better life, that they are not victims of organised crime or disorganised governments, and are welcomed with love and open arms. Lord of Love, **in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for your beautiful creation and our small, fragile planet. The Earth seems so large and indestructible, but the extinction rate is at unprecedented levels, pollution and climate change are real and new types of rocks are forming from human rubbish. We pray for protection and conservation of pristine ecosystems and habitats. Where human activities predominate, such as around here, we pray for maintenance and enhancement of wildlife corridors through the mosaic of human-formed and natural landscapes. We pray for sensible and sustainable ways of human living, food production, transport and employment so that all may live abundantly. Lord of Love, **in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for all those people who enable our communities to function, those who are employed, those who are formal volunteers as well as family members and friends acting as informal volunteers, often out of sight even to their neighbours, and those who live alone and care for themselves. We pray for the educators, those in health and social care, in food production and distribution, construction and maintenance, in providing clean water and waste disposal. We pray for our families, our friends, our neighbours, both even those we have rarely seen, or know but find hard to like. Lord of Love, **in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for people who are suffering. We pray for those who are trapped in poverty, feel excluded, lonely, cold, hungry or homeless. We pray for people who cannot find work or a purpose after retirement, those who are stuck in loveless relationships, who are bullied or unjustly treated as well as those who are held captive deservedly or who are falsely imprisoned. ... We pray for people struggling spiritually, from worshipping the wrong god or no god at all. We pray for those

whose distress is mental, from changes in brain chemistry or past or present trauma. And we pray for those whose pain and fatigue are the result of physical disorder, disease or infection, injury or convalescence. We pray for those we know and love as well as those whose struggles are known only to themselves and to You.

Lord of Love, **in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, We pray for those who are dying, whether they know it or not, and we pray for all of those who are bereaved, knowing that we all grieve in our own way, whether grief be fresh and sharp or ancient but still with the power to surprise. We thank you Heavenly Father, that by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with all Christians in heaven and on Earth, we pray that in our earthly pilgrimage, this day and for the rest of our lives, we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power, glory, mercy and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Collect

Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
give us grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,**

**your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Hymn – Light of the minds that know him

- 1 Light of the minds that know him,
 may Christ be light to mine!
 My sun in risen splendour,
 my light of truth divine;
 my guide in doubt and darkness,
 my true and living way,
 my clear light ever shining,
 my dawn of heaven's day.

- 2 Life of the souls that love him,
 may Christ be ours indeed!
 The living bread from heaven
 on whom our spirits feed;
 who died for love of sinners
 to bear our guilty load,
 and make of life's brief journey
 a new Emmaus road.

- 3 Strength of the wills that serve him,
 may Christ be strength to me,
 who stilled the storm and tempest,
 who calmed the tossing sea;
 his Spirit's power to move me,
 his will to master mine,

his cross to carry daily
and conquer in his sign.

- 4 May it be ours to know him
that we may truly love,
and loving, fully serve him
as serve the saints above;
till in that home of glory
with fadeless splendour bright,
we serve in perfect freedom
our strength, our life, our light.

Timothy Dudley-Smith (1926 - 2024) from a prayer of Saint Augustine

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Notices

Conclusion

Heavenly Father,
we share together the blessing of your presence.
Give us in this life knowledge of your truth,
and in the world to come life everlasting;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.
Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.