

HYMNS: 747 37 528 272

INTROIT: Psalm 2:6-12

"Nevertheless, I Myself have consecrated My King on Zion, My holy mountain."

"I shall proclaim the decree of the LORD: He has said to Me: 'You are My Son. Today I have begotten You.

"Ask Me, that I may make the nations Your inheritance and the ends of the earth Your property.

"You will break them with an iron rod. You will smash them to pieces like a vessel of pottery."

Now therefore, you kings, act with insight! Take advice, you judges of the earth!

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling!

Fervently kiss the Son, that He may not become angry, and that you may not perish in your way! For His anger may blaze up in a short time.

Blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

COLLECT: O God, in the glorious transfiguration of Your beloved Son You confirmed the mysteries of the faith by the testimony of Moses and Elijah. In the voice that came from the bright cloud, You wonderfully foreshadowed our adoption by grace. Mercifully make us co-heirs with the King in His glory and bring us to the fullness of our inheritance in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS:

Exodus 24:8-18 The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai.

2 Peter 1:16-21 With our own eyes we saw His majesty.

Matthew 17:1-9 He was transfigured before them.

Welcome to all worshipping with us today!

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

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Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Exodus 24:8-18

8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “Look! **The blood of the Covenant, which the LORD has made with you** in accordance with all these Words.”

9 Then Moses went up, together with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders of Israel, **10** and they saw the God of Israel. Under His feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. **11** However, God did not stretch out His hand against the eminent men of Israel. They saw God and ate and drank.

12 Then the LORD told Moses: “Come up to Me on the mountain! Wait there, that I may give you **the tablets of stone** with the Law and the Commandments that I have written, to instruct them!”

13 Moses and Joshua, his assistant, set out, and Moses went up onto the mountain of God. **14** He told the elders: “Wait here for us until we come back to you! Look! Aaron and Hur are here with you. Anyone who is involved in a dispute should go to them!”

15 When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered the mountain. **16** The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered it and, on the seventh, He called to Moses from inside the cloud. **17** **The glory of the LORD** appeared to the Israelites like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain.

18 Moses entered the cloud as he went up onto the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

2 Peter 1:16-21

16 We were not following any clever myths when we told you about the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and His coming. Rather, with our own eyes we saw His majesty. **17** For He received honour and glory from God the Father when such a voice was spoken to Him by the Sublime Glory, “**This is My Son, whom I love and**

with whom I am well pleased.” **18** We heard this voice, which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. **19** We also have the prophetic Word confirmed, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a gloomy place, until the day dawns and the **Morning Star rises** in your hearts.

20 Understand this first, that no prophetic utterance of Scripture comes because of someone’s own interpretation! **21** For no prophecy was ever spoken because of a human being’s decision, but men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 17:1-9

¹ After six days Jesus took with Him Peter, James and his brother John and led them up onto a high mountain by themselves. ² Jesus was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. ³ Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them and began to talk with Jesus. ⁴ Peter reacted by saying to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If You wish, I shall make three tents here, one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud suddenly overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud said: “This is **My Son**, whom I love. **With Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!**”

⁶ When the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were very afraid.

⁷ However, Jesus came and touched them and said, “Get up and stop being afraid!”

⁸ Then they looked up and saw no one except Jesus.

⁹ While they were coming down from the mountain Jesus commanded them, “Do not tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead!”

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

Sermon for the Transfiguration, 2023

Matthew 17:1-9

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the Gospel from before, Matthew 17:1-9:

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your Truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Matthew records how Jesus took three disciples - Peter, James, and John - up a high mountain. There He “**was transfigured before them.**” His appearance was changed - that’s what “transfiguration” means. How so? It says, “**His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.**”

What is this picture telling us?

“**His face shone like the sun.**” The One who had created the sun, moon, and stars now shines with the brilliance thereof. Christ is revealed in His divine glory as the very Son of God. “*God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.*” This is a glory *that Christ always had from eternity*, from before the foundation of the world.

But it is a glory that was hidden once the Son of God became flesh and made His dwelling among us.¹ Jesus did not always or fully manifest His glory during the days of His earthly ministry. But on this day, on this mountain, He did. He pulled back the curtain, and His disciples were shown that this was indeed the eternal Son of God. They beheld the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, in His divine majesty. The one “*by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven*” - this man Jesus is revealed as true God in the presence of His disciples.

Matthew writes that Jesus’ “**clothes became as white as the light.**” This shows the holiness and purity of the Son of God, who has come in the flesh. Jesus is without sin, unstained by transgression or misdeed, perfect in righteousness, and has perfectly kept all the commandments. As a man, He has fulfilled God’s Law. Jesus has loved the Lord His God with all His heart, soul, mind, and strength. He has loved His neighbour as Himself. Righteous, holy, spotless, unblemished - that’s who Jesus is, and His white-as-light clothes here reflect that fact.

But what if we look at our garments in that light? What do we see? We see that our clothing is soiled and stained with sin, and we cannot get that stain out, no matter how hard we try. The prophet Isaiah writes, “*All of us have become like something that is unclean, and all our righteous actions are like a filthy garment*” (64:6). The word unclean means “polluted and defiled.” If even our best deeds, done in the flesh, are considered filthy garments in God’s sight, where does that leave us? Sin is a permanent stain that even our most noble efforts cannot remove.

But the good news is that Jesus has kept the Law in our place. He has done what you and I cannot do. He has kept God’s Law of love perfectly. Love for God, love for neighbour. We don’t do it as we should, but Jesus did. And the marvellous thing is that He has done it for us. ***His righteousness gets transferred to our account.***

So the first picture we see in the transfiguration is that of Jesus, His face shining like the sun and His clothes as white as light. Jesus Christ, the holy Son of God in the flesh, is revealed in His divine glory.

Now, what else do we see?

“**Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them and began to talk with Jesus.**” Moses and Elijah appear. What are they doing here? They haven’t been around for centuries! But now, God brings them into the picture for this unique occasion. Moses, the great deliverer, had led Israel out of bondage in Egypt, and up to the Promised Land. Moses is the great Law-giver who at Mount Sinai gave Israel the

¹ John 1:14

Ten Commandments straight from God. Moses, the greatest of the prophets, who had told Israel, “*The LORD, your God, will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your fellow-Israelites. You shall listen to Him!*” (Deut. 18:15). Now, here is that Prophet, the One who would be even greater than Moses². That’s why God has Moses standing there next to Jesus. It’s as though God is saying: “*Here He is, the One Moses was talking about. The One you now must listen to. He will fulfil the Law for you. He will bring you out of bondage, the bondage of sin and death. This Jesus will lead you to - and into - the Promised Land of heaven. Yes, here is One greater than Moses.*”

He is also greater than Elijah, another great prophet from Israel’s past. Actually, all of God’s dealings with Israel, all of salvation history, find its goal and fulfilment in the person of Jesus Christ. He is what it all was pointing ahead to, driving at, moving toward. That’s what the presence of Moses and Elijah here is signalling. All of Israel’s history leads to this man, Jesus. When the disciples look up, they see “**no one except Jesus.**”

“**No one except Jesus.**” If you want to know where to look for your salvation, then look to no one but Jesus only. If you want to know the focus, purpose, and point of the Bible, look to Jesus. Look to Jesus - not as a Law-giver - we already have Moses for that. Look to Jesus, not as an example, at least not primarily. Look to Jesus for who He is and what He has come to do. Who is He? He is our Saviour, the Saviour of the world. What has He come to do? To do what you and I will never be able to do: to save us from our sins and give us His life, His righteousness, forgiveness for our sins, and life with Him forever. Who can do this? “**No one except Jesus.**”

Then there is one more thing we see in the picture at the transfiguration. A cloud.

“**A bright cloud suddenly overshadowed them.**” Notice that it is a “bright” cloud - not a dark and threatening cloud, like the storm clouds on Mount Sinai when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. No, this is life-giving Gospel, not condemning Law. A bright cloud. The presence of God, not in a threatening way, but in a saving way. It is the presence of God surrounding us with His love, protection, and presence to guard and guide us - like the pillar of cloud that had led Israel through the wilderness. In Christ, we have the presence of God with us to lead us all the way through the wilderness of this world, all the way home to heaven.

So there is the picture. Jesus shining like the sun, His clothes white as light. Moses and Elijah present, telling us that Christ is the goal and focus of God’s plan of

² Hebrews 3:3

salvation. The bright cloud of God's presence, His saving presence surrounding us. That's the picture; that's what we see.

Now, what do we hear? Are there any words?

A voice comes from the bright cloud, saying, "**This is My Son, whom I love. With Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!**" Of course, this is the voice of the heavenly Father. The Father's voice, testifying to His Son, approving of this Jesus. "**This is My Son, whom I love.**" The Father loves the Son with a perfect love. He always has and always will. Now especially, the Father testifies of His love for the Son as Jesus goes forward with His saving mission, which is to go to the cross to save sinful mankind. As Christ now sets His face to go to Jerusalem³, to suffer and die on our behalf, the Father is saying He is well pleased with His Son. God's good pleasure is shown in sending His only Son Jesus to do this great work.

God is telling us here to what measure He would go to rescue us. He's saying He would give His only-begotten Son, His beloved Son, to die for us. "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:16). "*However, God shows His own love for us by this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8).

So the Father says of Christ, "**This is My Son, whom I love. With Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!**" Yes, listen to Him! Listen, disciples, as Jesus now tells you, He must go to Jerusalem, where He will suffer and die. For this journey to Jerusalem, this way to the cross is how the Father's plan of love will be carried out. Yes, sinners, one and all, listen to the Father's beloved Son Jesus Christ, when He says to you today, "*Come to Me, all you who are working hard and carrying a heavy burden, and I shall give you rest!*" (Matt. 11:28). Listen to Jesus, and keep on listening! He alone has the words of eternal life.

Today we have been with the disciples on the holy mountain for the transfiguration of Our Lord. What have we seen? Here we have beheld our bright and shining Lord, our beautiful Saviour, Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God who has come in the flesh. He is the goal and focus of all salvation history. We are surrounded by the bright cloud of God's gracious presence in Him. We lift our eyes and see no one but Jesus only. And what do we hear? We hear the Father's voice, testifying to His beloved Son. And so we hear how much God loves us, that He would send His Son to suffer and die for us. And God tells us to listen to Jesus and to keep on listening, for our Lord has more words to hear our whole life.

³ Luke 9:51

Today on the Mount of Transfiguration, we see a marvellous picture. Pictured for us in the transfiguration of our Lord is our glorious Saviour, Jesus Christ, showing us exactly who it is who will go to the cross for us. And if it is the Father's own Son who suffers and dies and rises again for us, if it's Jesus who speaks words of life for us to listen to - well, that's the best thing we can see revealed to us on the Mount of Transfiguration. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR TRANSFIGURATION

Almighty God, Your ears are always open to the prayers of Your people. Hear now the cries of Your children, as we bring before You our needs of body and soul.

Above all else, we praise You for the precious gift of Your Son. Today in particular we bless You for the message of His transfiguration. Through this mighty sign give to us and all people a clearer vision and a higher knowledge of Christ's person and mission. Give us eyes of faith that see the glory of His deity, and the glory that came through His cross, and lead us to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Grant that, as we continue to see the glory of His person in Your Word and Sacrament, we may know and believe in Him as the Light of the world, the Sun of righteousness, and the visible likeness of Your very being. May we continually hear the voice of Jesus Your prophet still today, that our faith may constantly be renewed. Grant that, as Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus in glory, each of us may die in faith, share in the power of Christ's resurrection, and be eventually transformed into ever greater glory.

Let Your Spirit, who inspired the prophets and apostles, live in our poor bodies. Transform our weak, sinful lives so that they shine with goodness, purity, and righteousness. Transform our minds, eyes, judgment, and our whole persons, so that they may reflect the mind of Christ. Take away our sickness, pains, wounds, and hurts. Take away our disappointments, defeats, and despair. Take away our sorrows and grieving. Take away our pride, anger, hatred and fear. Take away our selfishness and envy, our laziness and unconcern for others. Take away all our weaknesses, and turn them by the touch of Jesus into impulses, motives, thoughts, words, and deeds that shine with godliness and new life.

Grant Your blessing to Your church. Especially bless all who belong to the fellowship of this congregation. Be present with all our members and graciously supply what they need. Grant that we, and all who bear the name of Christ, may daily offer to You acceptable spiritual sacrifices of repentance, thanksgiving, and obedience.

Look mercifully on our state and our nation. Deliver us from those who love evil and whose aim is unrighteousness. Grant that the whole world may know Your will, and all nations may know Your salvation.

Have mercy on those among us who are sick, lonely, or depressed. Teach them to look to You for healing, comfort, and stronger hope for the glory to come.

Loving Father, as we trust that You are near to us when we call to You, hear our prayer, and grant all our petitions for Christ's sake. Amen.

Article: God Declares His Pronouns: He/Him

No doubt you have heard it reported that the Anglican Church is considering how to refer to God without assigning a gender. This is in response to some clergy asking to use more inclusive languages in services. One feminist theologian has written, "If God is male, the male is god." In other words, talking about the Christian God in exclusively masculine terms privileges men in society and underpins male dominance.

This type of thinking is nothing new. The confession that God is Father and has eternally begotten His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, has been criticised by feminist theologians as patriarchal and oppressive toward women because it uses masculine pronouns. Those who criticise the use of masculine pronouns for God or object to the Bible's own "gendered" language referring to God (Father, Son, Lord, King) suggest that these titles or names are merely the products of a patriarchal society. If one were charitably to grant such theologians that God, insofar as He is above creation, is neither male nor female, these theologians would nevertheless still deny God's own self-revelation in Holy Scripture as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They claim that traditional Christianity, influenced and shaped by patriarchal societies, is fundamentally flawed because it favours maleness and perpetuates sexism and the oppression of women.

How may Christians today respond to the charge that referring to God with masculine pronouns is sexist or even idolatrous?

Christians must be aware of some of the theological origins of feminist theology. It is not necessary to walk through all the historical developments of feminist theology in order to recognise what some feminist theologians presuppose about the Christian faith and about the Bible. They believe the Scriptures are a product of primitive societies, creations of patriarchal men and not of divine revelation. The text of Scripture, they argue, is not authoritative by itself, but needs to be interpreted according to the developments of a progressing society. Truth is relative according to different times and places, they argue. What was true in biblical times about men

and women and God is not necessarily true for our time. Their denial of God as male arises not from some inherent lovelessness in Scripture about women, but from a denial of the true God and the Bible as God's unchanging revelation. Simply put, feminist theology promotes false religion.

The most direct source of this false confession of God is, as far as I can tell, the 19th-century German philosopher and atheist, Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872). Feuerbach's powerful influence on modern spirituality is often overlooked today. He taught that there is no study of theology from divine revelation since there is no God. Rather, theology can only study what human beings think about a "god" they have created. Feuerbach believed that God is nothing more than the psychological projection of an individual's deepest desires. Hence, when someone studies religion, he is not studying God's revelation in sacred texts but, rather, human beings and their developing beliefs. Theology, then, primarily tells us about people, not about God. For example, if someone thinks God is all-powerful, it is because that person lacks power and wishes to have that power in God. If someone feels unholy, he may find comfort in having a God who makes people holy.

If we understand with Feuerbach that religion is self-determined and not based on the reality within God Himself, then we can easily reimagine God according to our own ideology. Thus, for Feuerbach and for modern feminist theologians, our notion of God evolves with our desires, unrestricted by the words of Scripture. With this thoroughly relativistic view of truth, feminist theologians evaluate Scripture according to their own self-determined definition of God. They put gender equality, by which they mean life without gender distinction or restriction, at the centre of Christianity's message. To put it bluntly, however, they have an imaginary god. Those who insist on contradicting God's self-revelation in Scripture may very well believe that God exists, but they don't know Him since they deny who He is and what He says of Himself. It is like Israel making a golden calf and Aaron saying that this is God who brought them up out of Egypt. It's simply not who He is.

In response to these feminist readings of Scripture, Christians should be aware that the use of male pronouns is not merely a matter of personal preference or a haphazard accommodation of human language, but a necessary confession of the only true God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, both as He exists in Himself from eternity and as He has revealed Himself to us. We can only know who God is from His own self-revelation in Holy Scripture. He tells us who He is. To deny the use of male pronouns to refer to God is to deny God as He is and to sever oneself from the Christian church, which confesses and worships not only God as Father, but also confesses the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ, who is "begotten from the Father before all worlds" (Nicene Creed). God is not merely Father as He relates to us as

His children. He is eternally Father to the Son, and they are in perfect communion with the Holy Spirit, one God forever.

If we deny the maleness of God, we deny the personal union of the eternal Son with humanity. God was “made man” and is, by virtue of this union between God and man, male forever. To be a Christian is to worship God in the flesh. As St. John says, *“This is how you recognise the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. However, any spirit who does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard is coming and which is already now in the world”* (1 John 4:2–3). Because of the incarnation of our Lord, there can no longer be a discussion of God in the abstract; the Word became flesh (John 1:14). Feminist theology speaks of God apart from Scripture as God’s revelation of Himself and in abstraction from Jesus Christ, who has come in the flesh as a man to redeem all humanity by His death and resurrection.

Christians, male or female, do not conceive of God’s becoming man as an injustice against women. Scripture simply teaches that God the Son became man, born of the Virgin Mary to redeem all mankind, male and female alike (see Luke 2:1–7, 21). God the Father has revealed Himself through His Son and saved us through His Son so that in His Son we might receive the inheritance of sons. The inheritance of sons is given us through Holy Baptism, in which God the Holy Spirit makes us all sons of God by faith. That is why St. Paul writes: *“Moreover, because you are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries, “Abba! Father!” Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son. Moreover, since you are a son, you are also an heir, through God”* (Gal. 4:6-7).

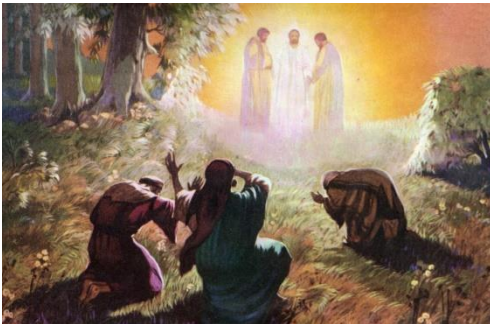
Feminist theologians who refuse to use the masculine pronouns are missing out on truly knowing God and His salvation. They create a religion based on Feuerbach’s model of religion as self-projection and miss what the true, living and incarnate God has done to redeem all humanity. Christians, who know the God of the Scriptures, are called to bear witness to the truth with their lives, their marriages, their confession of the Holy Trinity and the person and work of Christ, and their trust and confidence in God’s Holy Word.

In love, we should bear witness to those who promote feminist theology, knowing that those who do so don’t know the God of Scripture. We are called to introduce Him to them, as for the first time. Surely there is much more that can be said about the masculinity of God as it pertains to the redemption of His Bride, the church, and the role of men and women made in His image. Concerning the masculinity of God, however, it is of the first order to hear our Lord say, “It is written” and take Him at His word.

Children's Message:

In one of our Bible readings today, something happens to Jesus in which His appearance changed and became super bright. What's this event called? The transfiguration.

Can you think of anything that's really bright? What about a bright coloured vest we see workers wear. It is bright so that others can see the worker, especially if he is working on something close to moving traffic. Another bright object is a torch. We typically use torches when it's dark. Maybe at night if we're outside or if the power goes off at night we may need a flashlight. Last one: what about the sun? we know the sun shines brightly. Now, which one is brightest - the shirt, the flashlight, or the sun? of course, it's the sun. The sun shines up in the sky and people all over the world can see its light.



In our Bible reading today about the transfiguration, we hear about Jesus becoming really bright. His clothes were so bright you could barely even look at them. Three of Jesus' friends saw this, and in case they didn't know what it meant, they also heard a voice coming out of the sky to explain. Do you know who the voice was? It was

God the Father. He spoke from the heavens, saying, "*This is My Son, whom I love. With Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!*" Jesus shines so brightly because He's God's Son!

But after this, Jesus did the most important thing ever... and when He did, He didn't look bright and shiny at all. He died on the cross on a very dark day.

That's the real reason He came to earth. But because He's God's Son, He'll look bright and shiny again. He rose from the dead, and one day He's going to come back shining just as brightly as in today's Bible reading. Jesus will shine so brightly that He will be brighter than a worker's vest. He will be brighter than a torch. He will be brighter even than the sun. And when He comes, He'll take us to heaven where we'll shine brightly too.

Dear Jesus, thank You for coming to earth to shine and die and shine again. Amen.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

ASH WEDNESDAY	26 February 1 Lent	1 March Mid-week LENTEN SERVICE
Wed. Feb 22. 7.30pm Vespers at Aubigny.	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR	7.30pm TMBA Vespers
Thurs. Feb 23. 7.00pm HC at Lowood.	9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC	
ASH WEDNESDAY		
READINGS: Lowood: Joel 2:12-19; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21		
HYMNS: AUB: 49 361 395 48 v.3 LOWOOD: 49 361 395 71 84 48 v.3		
Sunday, 26 February		
READINGS: Genesis 3:1-21; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11		
HYMNS: 78 195 756 (789 847) 384		
Wednesday, 1 March		
HYMNS: 73 (tune 330) 298 603 48 v.3		

Saturday, 25 February, 10.00am. The Bookclub will be meeting at the manse. Please read pages 73-167 of *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*. Also, bring along something for a shared morning tea.

AGM Dates:

Oakey – This afternoon, 1.30pm.

Marburg – Sunday, 26 Feb, after service.

Lowood – Sunday, 19 March, after service.

Parish - Sunday, 30 April, after the AELC Service to be held at Oakey.