

# What Can You See? Part II

Sunday 14 February 2021

## Call to Worship

### Be exalted, O God

I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, among the people.  
I will sing praises to Thee among the nations.  
For Thy steadfast love is great, is great to the heavens;  
And Thy faithfulness,  
Thy faithfulness to the clouds.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;  
Let Thy glory be over all the earth.  
Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;  
Let Thy glory be over all the earth.

### *Psalm 50*

The mighty one, God the LORD,  
speaks and summons the earth  
from the rising of the sun to its setting.

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

#### **Sing: Be Exalted**

Our God comes and does not keep silence,  
before him is a devouring fire,  
and a mighty tempest all around him.

#### **Sing: Be Exalted**

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

“Gather to me my faithful ones,  
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!”

#### **Sing: Be Exalted**

The heavens declare his righteousness,  
for God himself is judge.

#### **Sing: Be Exalted**

## Holy, holy, holy

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.  
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,  
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,  
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,  
though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,  
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee  
perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.  
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

## Reading 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

<sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

*Rev. Rachel G. Hackenberg, <https://revgalblogpals.org/2021/02/07/sunday-prayer-i-cannot-fly/>*

I cannot fly,  
O God of the soaring eagle;  
I cannot even leap with a dancer's grace.  
But today I can wake and I can rise, and perhaps  
the strong wind will remind me not to be so rooted in fear.

I cannot measure up,  
O God of the starry heavens;  
I cannot even pretend to humble-brag.  
But today I can admire the trees, the sky, the river,  
and perhaps the stars will teach me to love myself too.

I cannot heal,  
O God of the brokenhearted;  
I cannot even imagine my wounds closing.  
But today I can sigh and I can sing, so perhaps  
love will not be powerless in the face of brokenness.

I cannot hide,  
O God beyond measure;  
I cannot even escape the sun.  
But today I can meet my own gaze, so perhaps  
tomorrow I will not mind so much if I am finally found.

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

### Reflection – What can you see?

A chair in a field. What do you think of when you see it? How does it feel?

A chair in a field. What stories from your life can you apply to this chair?

A chair in a field. What stories from the Bible or from your church experience  
could you apply to this chair?

A chair in a field. What do you think God is saying to you through this chair?

### Notices and Celebrations

#### The Peace

#### He is exalted

He is exalted

The King is exalted on high

I will praise Him

He is exalted, forever exalted

And I will praise His name

He is the Lord  
Forever His truth shall reign  
Heaven and earth  
Rejoice in His holy name  
He is exalted  
The King is exalted on high

Reading Mark 9:2-9

### *The Transfiguration*

<sup>2</sup> Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” <sup>6</sup> He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” <sup>8</sup> Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

### *The Coming of Elijah*

<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Message What Can You See? Part II

Feelings. Love ‘em or hate ‘em, we all have ‘em. Even the most stoic among us still have feelings – they just hide them better than the rest of us. Here are some words for feelings: joyful, sad, anxious, bitter, calm, distressed, angry, excited, frightened, humiliated, insulted, sympathetic, optimistic, pitying, proud, relieved, sorry, wary, wondering. And that’s just a few. For some unfathomable reason God created us with feelings. Some people are better at feelings than others. Some give themselves over to feeling and logic never gets a look-in. Others do their best to push feelings to one side because they’re too hard to handle. We’re sometimes told that women do better with feelings than men. Personally I don’t think that’s true – have you ever seen a grown man look at a fast car or a big machine or a large boat. They have feelings alright! They may not be quite so good at expressing those feelings, but they sure as anything have them.

Have you ever noticed how particular images can evoke particular feelings?

Have a look at these images and think about what feelings they produce. We're not looking for ideas or thoughts, but the feelings – those words I showed on the screen earlier might do it, or you might have others that are much better.

Baby

Cat

Tattoos

Flat Tire

Bully

Now I have to acknowledge that different people have different feelings about different images. Take the cat for example. Some people love kittens, awwww. Other people don't really care for them and others don't like them at all. So three people in the same room will likely have three different feelings about the same thing. The important thing isn't the differences, it is that we have these feelings.

I also want to emphasise that having a feeling is not making a judgement. Feeling happy or sad or angry or pitying is not of itself a judgement. It can lead to us making a judgement, but the feeling is not the judgement. Let me explain. Let's go back to this tattoo image. Some people will look at this and find it makes them anxious or intimidated. Then they look further, and they see that there is a person behind the tattoos. The anxiety doesn't go away, but now the tattoos are not the only thing in view. We see the eyes. They look angry. Perhaps they look lost. We might read a history of fear, of anger, of loss, of humiliation. None of this is judging. Judging is the act of deciding how we will treat a person or thing. That will often be based on how we feel about what we see. But it is not the feeling.

There is another point here that I think is important. Often times our feelings are connected to things we have experienced in the past, sometimes the very distant past. Something might have happened to us as a child and it creates a trigger that can set off feelings without us even being aware of what is happening. I want to share a personal example that I experienced as a kid. It was with my parents and I have talked it through with them and, I think, dealt with it. I vividly remember coming home with my siblings and presenting our school reports to Mum and Dad. They looked at my brother's reports first and they were mostly Cs with a sprinkling of Bs. Mum and Dad congratulated them and said how wonderful their reports were. Then they looked at mine. All A's

but for a solitary B. 'That's disappointing, Andrew. Where's the other A?' I was devastated. And for many years later the feeling of being inadequate, of not measuring up, haunted me. Situations would come up, or things would be said, and I would find myself, completely unexpectedly, reliving those feelings. The people I was with would know nothing of what was going on for me. Often I didn't recognise it for myself. But over the years I began to adapt my behaviour and expectations to fit with the feelings. I judged that I was not worthy and wasn't good enough. Even now, knowing all of that, someone might say to me, that was a great sermon, and underneath I will be waiting for the, 'where's the other A?' That is not, by the way a plea for people to say nice things about my sermon. I have learnt that the best way to improve is to hear both the good and the bad. It is simply an example of how experiences from the past can affect who and how we feel in the present.

So quick summary so far: We have feelings. God created us to have those feelings. Our feelings are different. Feelings are not judging. Past experiences inform our present feelings.

Last week I talked about seeing past the surface. The image was of the soil that told its story in so many ways. Of being alive and life-giving. And that it is important to see beyond the surface that people present to us and see the life and life-giving nature that God has placed in all of us, both within the church and beyond. Last week was about looking deeper.

This week I want us to focus on looking beyond. That can be quite difficult because, like Peter, we can be blinded by the lights up ahead. Let's dip into his story for a moment. Jesus has just taken the three disciples, Peter, James and John up to the top of a mountain. Now, it's no Mt Everest or Aoraki. The tallest mountain in Israel is only just over 3200m, and most are less than 1200m, really just bumps. But it is still going to be a good climb to get to the top of one of those. I'm imagining them getting to the top and wishing they had filled their water bottles before they left. Sitting down on a rock and looking out over the hills and plains into the distance.

Then all of a sudden Jesus' clothes become blinding white, and although we're told he was transfigured we can only guess what he really looked like. And Moses and Elijah suddenly appear and talk with him. Now when you have the headlights coming at you, that's all you see. You don't take time to wonder what's behind them, you get out of the way. And that's pretty much what Peter did. The disciples were terrified, and quite frankly, I don't blame them.

Imagine something like this happening to you and tell me you wouldn't react very similarly. Of course different people react to fear in different ways. Some just shut down. Others run away. Some fight back. And others talk. Peter's response to the fear he was feeling was to talk. Let's do this, let's do that, anything to try to normalise the situation and try to make it feel less terrifying. Because he couldn't understand what he was seeing, because he couldn't see beyond the immediate, he talked as a way to feel better. In a very real sense he was blinded by the lights in front of him and talking was his way of getting out of danger.

When we see something, no matter what it is, it evokes feelings in us. Sometimes those feelings can be described as good – love, joy, excitement, optimism. And sometimes they can be described as less than good – bitterness, anger, pity, fear.

During the reflection I asked you to think about a chair in a field. On first glance it seems a little odd. What is a solitary chair doing in the middle of a field? Then, perhaps, as we look at it a little longer ideas begin to come and feelings might arise. Does it make you think of loneliness? Or perhaps wonder where everyone else is. Do you want to add chairs? Or to take that chair away? Should there be people there? Or is it a symbol of something else? Now if we just leave it at that, not taking our thoughts any further it loses any significance. Yet if we allow ourselves to think about what that chair might symbolise, how it might inform us about our time and place we begin to grow a little. What we see becomes far more than simply what is before our eyes. We begin to see beyond. I think that is what Paul is talking about when he describes people as having a veil over their eyes. They have lost the ability to see beyond. To see behind the bright lights and the immediate feelings, whatever they are, and to see Jesus.

Today is often known as Transfiguration Sunday – for the obvious reason that it is the Sunday we remember Jesus' transfiguration. And perhaps for the less obvious reason that we are invited to see beyond the dazzling white and the sudden appearance of Moses and Elijah to find the Son. A real person who calls us into real relationship. And it is on the note of that real relationship I would like to come to an end. You see, a real relationship demands that we engage our feelings. Love, hate, anger, sadness, hope, joy, fear – all of them. Without them we have only a nodding relationship – like we might have with our hairdresser or the dentist. Jesus longs to have that real relationship with us –

full of feelings of every kind. Honest feelings, that flow out of an honest relationship. Strong feelings that acknowledge a strong relationship. And so I ask you this morning. When you look at Jesus – figuratively – what can you see? And consequent to that, what will you do next?

### We Pray

As we come into your presence, Lord, we confess that we are often dazzled and confused by our feelings, about everything really, but especially about you. We struggle to understand what it means to have a real, honest, strong relationship with you. Help us to get a grip on how to own our feelings and to see you through them, grateful, hopeful and full of love. Teach us to see the real person of Jesus and how we can share what we see with those around us. Through the wonderful reality of Jesus' love in our lives we pray. Amen.

### Jesus, we enthrone you

Jesus, we enthrone You  
We proclaim You are king  
Standing here, in the midst of us  
We raise You up with our praise

And as we worship build Your throne  
And as we worship build Your throne  
And as we worship build Your throne  
Come Lord Jesus and take Your place

### Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Turn your eyes upon Jesus  
Look full in his wonderful face  
And the things of earth  
Will grow strangely dim  
In the light of his glory and grace

### Offering

God of Transformation, we come together as those who have met you on the mountaintop. We have each had our holy encounters with you; and in those moments, we have wanted to stay on the mountain and retreat from the world. We know that is our longing, not yours. So, as we offer our gifts this morning in response to your blessings in our life, remind us that our mission begins as we leave this place, and help us hold our memories of those



mountaintop encounters with you in our hearts. We pray boldly in Jesus' name. Amen.

### Prayer for Ourselves and Others – Bethne Dodd

God – You not only bring love, You are LOVE.

You not only bring light, You are LIGHT.

You not only bring life, You are LIFE.

Through Jesus You reflect Your Good News love, light and life.

Through the Holy Spirit You shed it abroad in our hearts by faith.

And, in partnership with the Trinity, we too become capable of shining it out through who, and how, we are.

On this day, when love can so easily become over-commercialised - reduced to mere Hallmark Valentine sentiment - remind us again that Your genuine, unending and unconditional love breathes life into us, and any relationship which is asphyxiating should be suspect to us.

We think of those for whom past relationships have proved damaging. Those wounded by abuse and neglect, whose self-esteem has been eroded and trust undermined. Whose experiences continue to sabotage present day interactions. For those, through whom cycles of harm continue and for those who find life's circumstances overwhelming to the point of despair... we pray understanding and support. Grant them freedom and forgiveness.

We think of those far from loved ones – parted by distance, disease or death. Remembering those who wake to face the day with uncertainty, alone, without the presence of a reassuring touch.

The unsupported and unheard. The anxious or fearful.

For others, awaiting surgery to ease chronic pain and increase quality of life... we pray comfort and companionship. Grant them relief and restoration.

We think of the young among us – within our families, neighbourhoods and country. Attending our pre, primary and high-schools. At university, and in all places of learning.

We acknowledge the reality of change and the challenges new environments bring, adapting to a new year, among new people.

For the unspoken expectations, along with social pressures they face, often at the expense of overall wellbeing.

For those whose education has become a struggle or whose learning needs are as yet unrecognised and therefore unsupported...

we pray courage and encouragement. Grant them patience and perspective.

We pause to uphold those specially known to us...

Amidst life's often harsh realities help us to keep our gaze fixed upon You and Your great love. The kind of love that deals with the inward while driving us ever outward.

The kind of love that leads to expansion, growth and transformation. Bringing hope, peace and joy. Fostering creativity, generosity and blessing.

May we each become part of that blessing by reflecting Your Good News to one another in prayer, word and deed... by extending love, shining light and breathing life into all around us - this day and in the days to come. Amen.

### Communion

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

***And also with you***

This is the table of the Lord.

He invites all who love him to come and share in this joyful feast.

We are here because Jesus has invited us.

When Jesus was on earth he often enjoyed meals with his friends.

On the night before he died, when darkness was beginning to fall, he sat at table with the disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem.

At this Last Supper, he broke bread and took wine, and told his disciples to remember him by following his example.

Today, we are his disciples and we are glad to do what he has told us.

As the Lord Jesus took bread and wine, I take this bread and juice to be set apart for this holy use. And as he gave thanks, let us give our thanks and praise.

Loving God, you made this world marvellous for us to enjoy.

You gave Jesus to be our friend and to bring us to you.

You send your Spirit, to make us one family in Christ.

For these gifts of your love we thank you, and join with angels and saints in this joyful hymn of praise.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord**

**God of power and might**

**Heaven and earth are full of your glory**

**Hosanna in the Highest**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord**

For your kindness to us and your goodness to all

***We give you thanks***

For showing us your love by sending your Son, who gave his life for us, and rose again from death, and lives to pray for us forever

***We give you thanks***

For Jesus taking away all that separates us from you, and making us friends with you and with one another

***We give you thanks***

For Jesus bringing us together at this table to strengthen us by his love

***We give you thanks***

Send your Holy Spirit on us and these your gifts of bread and juice, that we may know Christ's presence, real and true, and be his faithful followers, showing your love for the world.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, almighty Father, forever. Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, holy 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.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Amen

On the night of his arrest the Lord Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, 'This is my body, broken for you. Do this to remember me.'

In the same way he took the cup saying, 'This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Drink from it, all of you.'

Taste and see that the Lord is good. Happy are they who find refuge in him.

### Shine, Jesus, shine

Lord, the light of Your love is shining

In the midst of the darkness, shining

Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us

Set us free by the truth You now bring us

Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire  
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy  
Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light

Lord, I come to Your awesome presence  
From the shadows into Your radiance  
By the blood, I may enter Your brightness  
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness  
Shine on me, shine on me

### Benediction and Grace

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Love of God,  
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.