

Newsletter Sunday 9th August 2020: The Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord.

Sunday's Readings: Psalm 97; 2 Pet. 1.16-19; Luke 9.28-36

Wednesday's Readings: Ezekiel 39:21-end; Psalm 50; Mark 1.29-end.

This week's reflection by Claire

The story of the transfiguration conjures up all sorts of images for us ... a transformation, a metamorphosis, a moment of connection with some 'other' world, a glimpse of heaven, an opening of heaven, an insight, a new perspective. At this time of ongoing uncertainty caused by the pandemic we could all do with a moment of transfiguration, a glimpse something *other*, to reassure us of God's presence and love for and with us.

An old story has come back to light this week at St Mary's. Last year someone bought at an auction site what they believed to be the old stained-glass windows from St Mary's. The windows had been taken out during WW2 to protect them from bomb damage and subsequently lost ... only to re-emerge some 80 years later. The old stained-glass tells something of the story of St Mary's something of our social history. It is a window into the past and at a time when the future is so uncertain there is some reassurance to be found in treasures from the past, however dirty and broken they may be. But the treasures from the past are simply that, something of the past, of time gone by and we cannot live wedded to our rear-view mirror.

The striking image in both St Mary's and St Augustine's Church's are our East window's which are both beautifully crafted stained-glass images. They transfigure the sunlight and transform it into colours and stories and pictures for us. At St Mary's the old windows have been replaced with clear glass which connects light and life from inside to outside and outside to inside. The new East window reflecting both our present and our future hope.

As we move towards reopening our places of worship after a near 6 months of lockdown, I am minded that our buildings need to be living temples. They are not stone mausoleums or museums of historic artefacts, although we are custodians of our buildings. Our church buildings are sacred spaces, they are living and breathing spaces. They are sacred spaces because the living God inhabits the people of God not the bricks or stones or glass of our buildings. God inhabits the people of God with transfiguring love and light so that we the people of God may then be active in the world, becoming beacons of hope alongside others keeping faith together in these dark times.

*Estranged from the light and the glory,
We miss the many-splendoured presence.
We see through veils and mists,
We glimpse through glass darkly.
Like the people of old we dare not look on the face
Of those who have dared the presence of God ...*

*Our disfigured faces know affliction now,
Yet we are being prepared for a weight of glory,
As we look not to the things that are seen,
But to those that are as yet unseen,
Not to that which shall change and decay,
Disintegrating into dust in the wind,
But to that which is eternal,
Solid joys and lasting pleasure.*

Jim Cotter

As the effects of the pandemic stretch on, we find ourselves in the strangest of places, a kind of no man's land. We are aching after aspects of life and living that have been lost and we are all at sea with a mass on uncertainty. The future is difficult to imagine and plans are difficult to make with any degree of certainty. So, if you are feeling mentally and physically exhausted at this time you are not alone, and it is a very normal and human reaction to the very uncertain and worrying times in which we are living.

Transfiguration can be translated as 'a complete change of physical form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state'. Stained-glass is made up of a number of small individual fragments of coloured glass. On their own they speak of little but when brought together they narrate a different picture,

something of the whole. The external image of stained-glass reflects something of our own internal journey and story: How we are all pilgrims journeying through the sea of life, which at times can be very choppy and difficult to navigate. By being attentive to God's spirit at work within us we can gain reassurance that the spirit is not 'some cleverly devised myth' (2 Pet 1. 16) but a spirit of truth and integrity. At times we can experience a loss within ourselves, we can't find ourselves, we have fractured from who we are. God is always at work within us trying to mend and heal these fractures so as to bring us a sense of true identity as God's children. The identity that Jesus knew as 'God's beloved child'.

There is a parallel between the story of the broken lost windows and our own broken selves as we navigate through this season of our lives. If we are always looking backwards to where the brake is, we miss the transfiguration of the present and our future hope. The completeness we long for can not be found in a stained-glass widow but the crazed glass can offer us a glimpse of something *other*. It takes courage to hope in a future particularly when everything seems fractured and broken but if we can just grasp a fragment of a glimpse of heaven not as an escape from what is real and present but as a sure hope and an anchor that can then keep us steady in these choppy seas.

BCP Collect

O God, who before the passion of thine only begotten Son didst reveal his glory upon the holy mount: Grant unto us thy servants, that in faith beholding the light of is countenance, we may be strengthened to bear the cross, and be changed into likeness from glory to glory; through the same Jesus Christ.

The Window by George Herbert

***Lord, how can man preach thy eternal word?
He is a brittle crazy glass:
Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
This glorious and transcendent place,
To be a window, through thy grace.***

Notices

St Augustine's Church will be holding a simple Communion service on:

Sunday 9th August and Sunday 23rd August at 10.30am.

September services Sunday 13th and Sunday 27th at 10.30am

St Mary's Church will be **meeting outside** in August:

Sunday 16th August at 10.30am a short communion service followed by a picnic.

Sunday 30th August at 10.30am short communion service followed by a picnic.

September Services inside: Sunday 13th Sunday 27th Sept at 10.30am

Revd. Claire Dawson cdawson@blueyonder.co.uk 0114 272 4987: Day off Friday

Revd. Karen Cribb revkaren@stmaryschurch.co.uk Mobile: 07580 378507: Day off Tuesday

Revd Canon Mike West mike.west23@tiscali.co.uk 0114 266 2188

Revd. Dr. Ela Hall 0114 268 7002 elanutuhall@gmail.com

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