

Breaking Open the Word

The Last Sunday before Lent
Quinquagesima

2nd March, 2025



Take the Veil from our Faces

A weekly reflection and
sermon, with study and
prayer guides following the
RCL Lectionary

Dennis Webster

I acknowledge that Grammarly has artificially corrected some of my clumsy grammar! (Grammarly 2025).

Revised Common Lectionary

Exodus 34.29-end

Psalms 99

2 Corinthians 3.12 - 4.2

Luke 9.28-36 [37-43a]

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collect

Introduction

Reflection

Discussion Questions

Five Days of Meditation and Prayer

O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings
without charity are nothing worth:
Send thy Holy Ghost,
and pour into our hearts
that most excellent gift of charity,
the very bond of peace and of all virtues,
without which whosoever liveth
is counted dead before thee.
Grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake.

INTRODUCTION

This week is a slight reworking of an earlier sermon (2020) on the Transfiguration. I am delighted that my colleague, Dr Cath Connelly, Director of The Abbey, Raymond Island, is to be our guest preacher today at St Peter's by the Lake.

In this sermon, you are invited to reflect on transformative mountain-top experiences that deepen their faith and connection with the Divine.

Drawing on biblical figures such as Moses, Elijah, and Peter, he highlights the significance of these encounters—Moses receiving the law, Elijah's triumph over false prophets, and Peter's declaration of Jesus as the Son of Man.

Each moment serves as a reminder of God's sovereignty and presence, urging believers to listen to Jesus as the

embodiment of the law. As the church prepares for Lent, we are reminded that this season is a spiritual renewal and reflection journey.

This contrasts the celebration of Transfiguration Sunday with the tragic history of August 6th, reminding worshippers of the light that guides them through the darkness.

All Church members are encouraged to commitment in following the light of Christ, which illuminates the path to redemption.

Ultimately, there is a reminder that Lent calls for a time of preparation focusing on the divine light revealed in Jesus, reinforcing that the path to atonement with God is real and tangible through their shared journey.

Prayer Prompts

Pray for God to help us apply the message of divine presence in our lives this week.

- Ask for guidance in recognising the mountain-top experiences that shape our faith.
- Request courage to embrace the light that leads us through our spiritual journey.
- Share any specific prayer requests and pray for one another.

God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,
your gift of life so that we, made in your image
may become your eyes, ears, hands and voice.

We are invited to reflect upon
the mountain-top experiences
that have shaped our
understanding of faith and
divine presence.

Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of
a vision from the mountain, a
glimpse of a better world that
challenges and inspires all who
hear it. This call to higher ideals
resonates deeply within our
spirits.

Moses ascended the mountain
and spent forty days and nights
communing with God. Upon his
return, his countenance shone
brightly, necessitating a veil to
shield the people from the
divine radiance. He brought

forth the law, completing a
sacred covenant with the
Almighty, an invitation to
commune with the Divine.

Elijah, the mighty prophet,
exemplified obedience to the
law through his mountain
encounters. At Mount Carmel,
he faced the prophets of false
gods, emerging victorious as a
testament to God's sovereignty.
Yet another mountain moment
underscores Elijah's
significance: He encountered
God amidst the quiet after the
tumult of earthquakes, winds,
and fire—each representing the
necessary steps to enter the
holy presence.

In that stillness, Elijah discerned
the voice of God and received a
divine commission to anoint a
new king, Elisha, as his
appointed successor. The
prophecy of Malachi speaks of
Elijah's anticipated return,
heralding the day of the Lord, a
hope that was palpable among
the people.

In a moment of revelation, Peter
identified Jesus as "the Son of
Man." It was upon that sacred
mountain that divine and human
met, culminating in Jesus'
fulfilment of the law. The voice
of God echoed through the
Gospels, affirming this truth—a
call to listen to Jesus as the
embodiment of the law.

As we approach this sacred
season of Lent, we are called to

prepare ourselves. Let us reflect
on the journey we embark on
and its significance for our
relationship with God. We must
embrace the light that pierces
the darkness, guiding us on our
spiritual pilgrimage.

I used to favour our lectionary
focus on August 6th as the
Feast of the Transfiguration.

More recently, and
appropriately, Transfiguration
Sunday has become the
principal day of celebration.

August 6th is also a day when a
great light transformed an entire
city into a desolate, radioactive
land, destroying thousands of
people in the process. It is one
light that we can only continue
to pray will never again be seen
on this earth.

I embrace Transfiguration

Sunday in this position: the penultimate moment before entering into the holy fast and study that is Lent.

As Easter people, we know the reality of this path and what it will take to enter the fullness of the Paschal mystery.

We know that our atonement with God is manifest and real because of this journey.

We understand that this is the illumined path through the hours of darkness that leads us to the new dawn, a dawn of redemption.

Let us remain steadfast in our commitment to follow the pure light that has descended from heaven. At the end of this season of Epiphany, we celebrate the light revealed on the mountain, reaffirmed by the voice of God and confirmed by Peter in his

epistle.

We are to follow the pure light that came down from heaven. At the end of the season of manifestation, Epiphany, the greatest of all light, is revealed upon the mountain.

The voice of God has affirmed this as being so.

The apostle Peter attested to this in his testimony in his second epistle. We are asked to listen to Jesus as the fulfilment of the law.

May this coming time of preparation and self-denial be a time of refocusing on the light.

Today, we celebrate the greatness of this light, but it will not be lit again until that glorious morn in which we gather in the first light and proclaim the Light of Christ.

Christ is Risen!
He is risen indeed.

I commend you to a holy and life-affirming period of fasting and renewal.

Discussion

How do mountain-top experiences, as described in the sermon, serve to deepen our understanding of faith?

The sermon highlights the experiences of Moses and Elijah on mountains where they encountered God, which shaped their missions and messages.

Can you think of a time when you connected significantly to your faith? How did that experience influence you moving forward?

What does 'transfiguration' mean, and why is it essential for Jesus to fulfil the law?

The sermon discusses Transfiguration Sunday and reflects the moment of divine revelation when Peter recognised Jesus as the Son of Man.

How can understanding Jesus as the fulfilment of the law change how you view your actions and decisions in life?

In what ways does the voice of God affirm the light revealed during the season of Epiphany, and what does that mean for us?

The sermon emphasises that the voice of God reaffirmed Jesus' identity on the mountain and called us to listen to Him.

How can you be more attentive to hearing and understanding God's voice daily?

Why is it significant that Elijah encountered God in the stillness rather than in the chaos, as mentioned in the sermon?

The sermon illustrates that Elijah found God in the quiet after experiencing powerful natural events, teaching us the importance of seeking God in tranquillity.

How can you create more moments of stillness to hear God's voice more clearly?

What does the journey toward Lent signify for Christians, and how does it relate to the concept of light and darkness?

The sermon encourages preparation for Lent as a time to focus on the light that leads us through the darkness toward renewal and redemption.

What specific practices can you adopt during Lent to help you reconnect with the light of Christ in your life?

Walking Gently on Sacred Ground

This five-day devotional will be taking a deeper dive into the sermon from this weekend. It reflects significant biblical moments that reveal the presence of God in our lives and encourages a journey of faith through reflection and prayer.



Day 1 Exodus 34:29-35

As we begin this devotional series, we are invited to reflect on the transformative mountain-top experiences that shape our understanding of faith. Moses' time on the mountain, where he communed with God and returned with a radiant countenance, powerfully reminds us of how divine encounters can leave a lasting impact on our lives. This moment not only highlights the importance of being in God's presence but also represents our own call to engage intimately with the Almighty.

Just as Moses wore a veil to shield the people from his divine radiance, we are encouraged to let the light of Christ shine through us in our daily lives. The challenge is to be willing to step aside from distractions and truly listen to God. As you reflect on your own spiritual journey, consider the mountain-top experiences that have shaped your faith and how they compel you to be a beacon of light in the world.

What are the mountain-top experiences in your life that have

transformed your faith?

How do you cultivate a deeper relationship with God in your everyday life?

In what ways can you reflect God's light to others around you?

Spend silent prayer, asking God to reveal areas in your life that need His light.

Pray for opportunities to share your own experiences of God with those who need encouragement

Day 2 1 Kings 19:11-13

In the stillness of God's presence, the prophet Elijah experienced a profound revelation that altered the course of his journey.— earthquake, wind, and fire—God's voice came softly in the silence. This encounter reminds us that God often speaks quietly, encouraging us to slow down and listen attentively. In the chaos of life, we can find solace in the truth that God's presence is often discovered not in the loud and flashy but in the subtle and serene. Amidst dramatic signs in nature

As we prepare for Lent, we are invited to create space for stillness. It is during our quiet time of reflection and prayer that we may hear God's commission for our lives. Consider how you can incorporate moments of silence into your routine, allowing God to speak to your heart as you walk in obedience to His calling, just as Elijah did.

How can you create more quiet moments in your daily routine?

When was a time you felt God's presence in the silence?

What steps can you take to be more obedient to God's whispers?

Ask God to help you cultivate a heart that listens for His voice amidst the noise.

Pray for clarity regarding your calling and the following steps to take in your faith journey.

Day 3 Matthew 17:1-8

The Transfiguration of Jesus is a monumental event in which the divine and human intersect magnificently on a sacred mountain. At this moment, Peter's recognition of Jesus as the "Son of Man" and the voice of God affirm Jesus as the fulfilment of the law. This encounter compels us to acknowledge Jesus not only as a historical figure but also as the living embodiment of our faith and the link to God's covenant.

As we reflect on this event, we are reminded of the importance of listening to Jesus. His life, teachings, and sacrifice reveal the fullness of God's love and grace. In our own walk of faith, we are

called to embrace this divine truth and allow it to transform how we interact with the world. Ultimately, this transformational light is meant to guide our paths as followers of Christ.

What does it mean to you to listen to Jesus as the fulfilment of the law?

How does the Transfiguration influence your relationship with God?

In what ways can your actions reflect the light of Christ?

Pray for a heart willing to fully listen to and apply Jesus's teachings in your life.

Spend time reflecting on how Jesus has transformed your understanding of faith.

Day 4 2 Peter 1:16-21

Peter reaffirms the significance of witnessing Christ's glory on the mountain in his second epistle. He emphasises that the Gospel's truth is not fabricated but grounded in real experiences and divine confirmations. This authenticity strengthens our faith as we navigate the ups and downs of our spiritual journey. When we embrace and proclaim these truths, we are transformed into vessels through which God's grace and love can shine.

As we enter this Lenten season, we are called to be diligent in our commitment to the truth of God's Word. Recognising Scripture's authority and inspiration enables us to remain rooted in faith while sharing the light of Christ with others. Consider how you can strengthen your knowledge of the Scriptures and stand firm in your faith as you embark on this holy journey.

How can the Scriptures inform your faith and understanding of Jesus?

How are you proclaiming the truth of God's Word in your life?

What practices can help you deepen your knowledge of the Bible?

Pray for guidance in understanding and applying God's Word to your life.

Seek God's wisdom on how to share your faith authentically with others.

Day 5 John 8:12

As we conclude this five-day devotional, we are reminded of Jesus' declaration, "I am the Light of the world." This profound truth challenges us to reflect on how we carry and represent that light in our lives. The Light of Christ guides us not only as we navigate our spiritual paths but also as we influence others around us. In a world filled with shadows, His light offers hope, redemption, and the promise of new beginnings.

May this time of preparation and self-denial lead to a renewed commitment to following Christ's light. As Easter people, we are called to celebrate the joy of the resurrection, which illuminates our faith and reminds us of the transformative power of God's love. As you conclude this devotional, consider how you can continue to be a light source in a dark world.

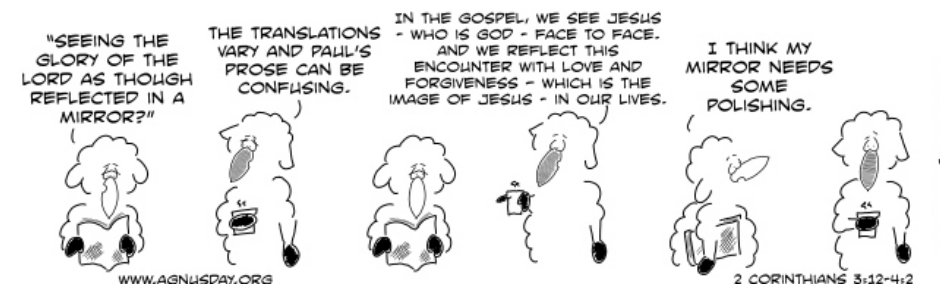
How does Jesus being the Light of the world influence your journey of faith?

In what ways can you actively bring Christ's light into your community?

What changes are you willing to commit to reflect His light more fully?

Pray for opportunities to share the Light of Christ with others.

I'd like you to reflect on how you can live as a witness to His light in everyday situations.



End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke (St Paul's Press)
 The Gospel of Matthew
 The Gospel of John

Tannehill, Robert C, **Narrative Unity Luke Acts Vol: A Literary Interpretation: Volume One: The Gospel According to Luke:**, Augsburg Fortress Publishers 199

N.T. Wright

Andrew's Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg>

Bible Hub etc



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respects are paid to the First
Nations people everywhere.

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