

**Almighty God, I ask you to show me something more of who you are.
and how awesome your presence is.
Overcome my fear of the unknown and lead me into a new experience of you.
May my worship today be as on a mountain-top,
a transforming encounter that empowers my discipleship. Amen.**

Sing or Read:

- 1 To God be the glory, great things he has done !
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life in atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in :
*Praise the Lord ! Praise the Lord !
Let the earth hear his voice !
Praise the Lord ! Praise the Lord !
Let the people rejoice !
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son ;
and give him the glory — great things he has done !*
- 2 O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God !
And every offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives :
- 3 Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son ;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see :

Frances Jane van Alstyne, (Fanny Crosby) (1820–1915) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 94.

A prayer based on today's reading.

God of divine power, what a spine-tingling, hair-raising event the disciples experienced!
One minute they were looking upon Jesus, the man.
Next, they were tuned into your glory shining in and through him as he transformed before their eyes:
your confirmation of his holiness. **God of life-changing moments, we glorify you.**

Your same radiant light, available to us through relationship with Jesus your Son,
transforms our hearts. **God of life-changing moments, we glorify you.**

Your divine Holy Spirit tunes our faith in unexpected ways through the transforming radiance of
your love. **God of life-changing moments, we glorify you. Amen.**

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Let us confess our sins to God.

**Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought and word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.**

Silence

In your mercy, **forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be; that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all
unrighteousness. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

Mark 9:2-9

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, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 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." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

Reflection on the Word: Every time we gather for worship, these days, at home engaging in the worship sheets or at a distance from each other in person or on a screen, we are the disciples on the mountain seeing the carpenter from Nazareth who became our teacher, immersed in light. At first, it seems, Jesus and Peter, James, and John are out for a ramble up a mountain: Then everything changes.

The vision the disciples behold removes the veil of Jesus' humanness to reveal his divinity: wondrous, frightening, powerful, unexpected, and rich, connecting all of history (the prophets Elijah and Moses with Jesus), giving insight. Jesus' outward appearance is changed.

Jesus' transfiguration is not to be approached with the assumption that we can understand it. It means to draw us in toward what is abnormal, unnatural—like the burning fire that does not consume the bush (Moses' first encounter with YHWH in Exodus 3:1-6) and like the fire Elijah hoped for and received from God on the altar drenched in water to win the wager against the prophets of Baal (Elijah's story in 1 Kings 18). The Transfiguration places Jesus in the line and descent of the two prophets.

The disciples are terrified in a way that means they fear they will be harmed (see Ezekiel 34:28). Yet, they seek for a way to remain in the presence of what terrifies them.

And then the cloud appears as another indication of the divine with the voice that reminds us of the voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism in Mark 1:11. Here, however, the voice does not speak in second person to Jesus ("You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased") but in the third person to the disciples ("This is my Son ... listen to him"). The Transfiguration gives the disciples the experience of witnessing a most amazing and unspeakable vision that draws them to want to stay there, dwell in that place of wonder, and then to be told by the heavenly voice that their job is not to stand in that wonder but to go back down the mountain. The voice in the cloud is directed at the disciples, to the church, to us, to me and to you.

We might use the words "transfigure" and "transform" interchangeably, but there is a helpful distinction to keep in mind. To be transfigured is to be changed in outward form or appearance. Jesus' transfiguration does not alter who he is but gives to those who see the changed a new understanding of him because they see him outwardly in a different light. When we speak of transformation, we tend to mean a complete or essential change in composition or structure. Jesus on the mountain with Moses and Elijah is not transformed (changed inwardly) but transfigured before his disciples on the outside. He is not made to have a new essential self but an appearance that conveys his standing in the company of Israel's greatest prophets.

In worship, week after week, through the Word of God, our vision is restored. We are enabled by God to see Jesus as saviour (something more than a teacher of morality and ethics) because the dazzling clothes constitute an epiphany. His transfiguration transforms the disciples in the story and transforms us by removing the veil over our vision. The Transfiguration thus prepares us to come to terms with our humility, our soil nature, our utter dependence on God.

Jesus has embraced his identity as one who will die and be raised. He signals the journey ahead

that will be coming when he and his disciples have left the mountain. It is one thing to have had a “high” experience, “a mountaintop” experience with Jesus up in the clouds where everything is brilliant, but it is not the be-all-and-end-all. The reason for the identification of Jesus with Moses and Elijah is for the church, the disciples, to realize their crucial work in the world: to accompany Jesus to the cross and for all of us to take up our crosses.

Let us pray: God of glory, open our eyes and open our hearts. God of glory change us and renew us by your Spirit. God of glory, we see you in the beauty of the universe, we meet you in the love of our friends and families, we find you in our joys and in our pain, faithful and true. We see you revealed to us in Scripture, we hear you speaking to us in the silence, we know you in our hearts, and we find you in the person of Jesus.

As we look at the events in our world, help us to see where you are at work. In our homes and in our daily lives, help us to notice the glimpses of your glory shining through the ordinary fabric of our lives. You are the God who comes close to us: though we are far apart from each other. Surround us with the light of your presence.

God of glory, we live with so many uncertainties. Today we pray for people whose lives are always uncertain: for people in war torn parts of the world; for all who wonder where their next meal will come from; for people who are jobless or homeless; for all who are fleeing from domestic violence. Help us to make our churches sanctuaries of peace and safety. May we be ready to respond to the need of others and to do what we can to tell the story of the love that will never let us go, the love that can change us and the world. Help us to love one another as you have loved us. You are the God who comes close to us: though we are far apart from each other. Surround us with the light of your presence.

God of glory, we pray for situations in the world that need hope and healing. And in particular for Yemen, for Russia, and for Myanmar. We ask for words and actions that are full of hope and not hate, of forgiveness and unity and not division. May we all be mindful of the power of our words, and use our speaking to build others up, not to tear them down. When conflict comes may our words be controlled and kind, and may we always shine a light of truth in the darkness of discord and lies. As a second impeachment trial begins in the United States, we ask that the truth would be told and honoured. We pray for all who work in communications and the media, that they would report with honesty and integrity, and that they would use their roles to speak truth to power. This week, may we seek to respond to the needs of others with messages, words and actions of hope and comfort. You are the God who comes close to us: though we are far apart from each other. Surround us with the light of your presence.

God of glory, we thank you for the tireless effort of nurses, doctors, and consultants, caring for patients, especially those who are suffering from Covid-19.

We ask that you would give all medical staff peace as they care for the sick,
 and peace as many of them wait at the bedside of those who are at the end of life.
 We thank you that the ordinary tasks of routine, order and gentleness
 can bless the boundary between life and death.
 As discussions begin about a future return to school,
 we pray that the needs of children and young people would be central to the thinking.
 We pray for all who have been kept apart from those they love;
 for those who have not been able to mourn for friends and family who have died, and we pray
 especially for relatives of people in care homes, surround them all with your healing presence.
 We remember people in our own communities who are suffering
 asking that you would lighten the pain and distress of daily life.
 You are the God who comes close to us: though we are far apart from each other.
 Surround us with the light of your presence.

Sing or read:

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| <p>1 Amazing grace — how sweet the sound —
 that saved a wretch like me!
 I once was lost, but now am found,
 was blind, but now I see.</p> | <p>4 The Lord has promised good to me,
 his word my hope secures;
 he will my shield and portion be
 as long as life endures.</p> |
| <p>2 God's grace has taught my heart to fear,
 his grace my fears relieved;
 how precious did that grace appear
 the hour I first believed!</p> | <p>5 And, when this heart and flesh shall fail
 and mortal life shall cease,
 I shall possess within the veil
 a life of joy and peace.</p> |
| <p>3 Through many dangers, toils and snares
 I have already come;
 God's grace has brought me safe thus far,
 and grace will lead me home.</p> | <p>6 When we've been there ten thousand years
 bright shining as the sun,
 we've no less days to sing God's praise
 than when we first begun.</p> |

John Newton (1725–1807) (*alt.*) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words number 440.

The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and with those you ought to love this day and forever more. Amen



In a comfortable chair, you may wish to re-read Mark 9:2-9 or maybe also read the other accounts in Matthew 17:1-9 or Luke 9:28-36. If so, note the differences. Then close your eyes and imagine the story. Where are you in the story? Are you one of the disciples or an unseen onlooker, watching the events unfold? None of the Gospels tell us any details about the journey up the mountain. Therefore, you might like to imagine the conversations with Jesus and the disciples as you walk together. What are they talking about, are you joining in on the discussions? Do you have something particular that you want to say? Envisage the scene and ponder about how you are feeling, are you excited, thrilled, distracted, nervous, indifferent, or terrified like the disciples, if the latter is the case ask for God's peace and understanding. Feel wrapped in God's light and love.