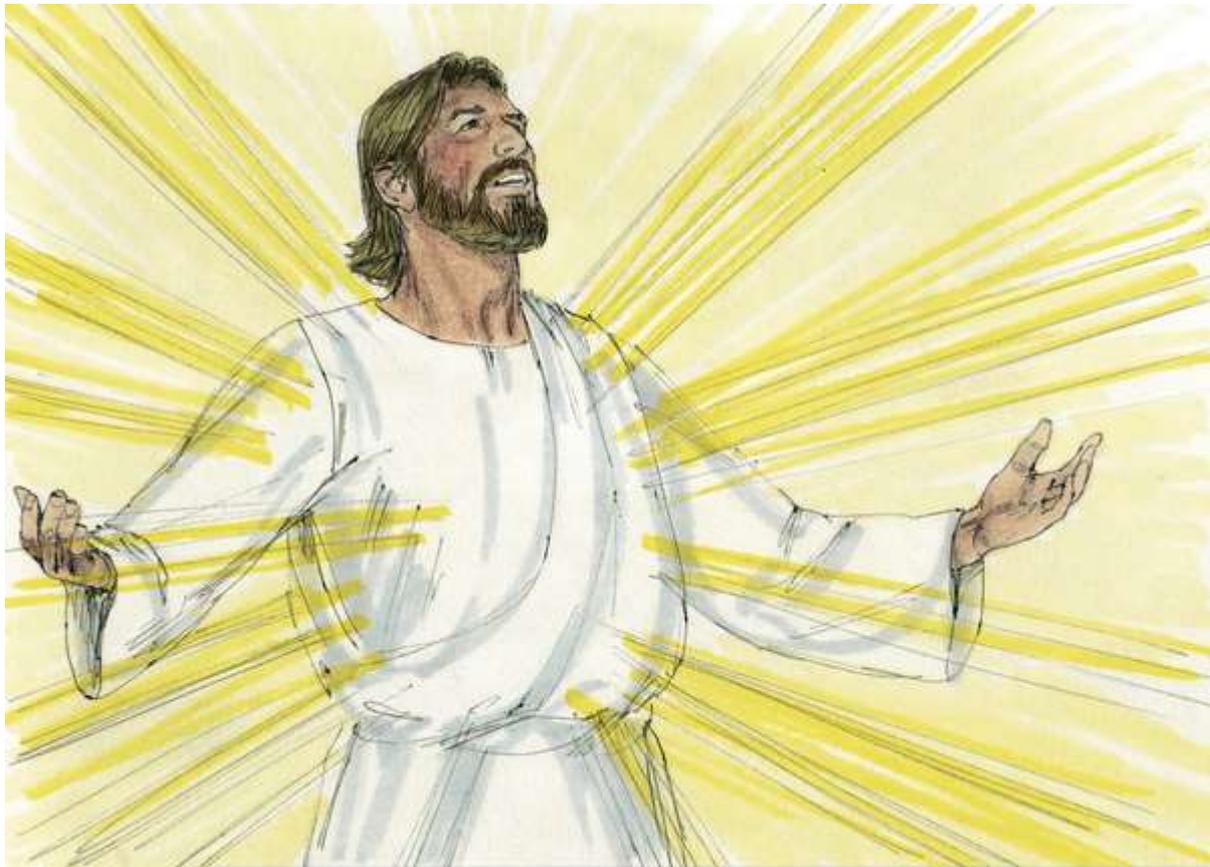


**St John's Church @ Home**  
**Reflections & Prayers for the Sunday Next before Lent**

**14<sup>th</sup> February 2021**



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## Readings for this Sunday

These are the readings for this Sunday, which you may like to look up in your bibles at home and read.

2 Kings 2:1-12

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

**Mark 9:2-9**

### **The Transfiguration**

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 any more, but only Jesus.

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.

## Reflection from Anne Edwards

Today is the Sunday Next Before Lent – in other words the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, that season in the church’s year of six weeks (or

40 days) before Easter – a time to live differently (as with Advent before Christmas) from the rest of the Church’s year.

The reading from 2 Kings, chapter 2, tells of the last days of Elijah, the great prophet of the Old Testament, his unusual departure from this world, and Elisha, who took over from him. For Elisha, the fact that he saw Elijah carried off to heaven in a whirlwind with “the chariots of Israel and its horsemen” was confirmation that God was answering his prayer to have a “double share of [Elijah’s] spirit” as he took on the mantle of prophet for God’s people.

In Mark’s gospel, chapter 8, Jesus begins to speak to his disciples about his forthcoming sufferings, death and resurrection, and Peter is sharply rebuked by him: “Get behind me, Satan.” And now in chapter 9, a few days later, we have the story of the Transfiguration, of the presence of Moses, the great law-giver, and Elijah, the great prophet, appearing with Jesus and talking with him, covered by the amazing glory surrounding them. The vision Elisha had of Elijah’s death was for Elisha a confirmation of what was coming next for him.

The vision Peter, James and John saw – who was that for?

Was it just for Jesus? I’m sure that meeting with Moses and Elijah was an encouragement and God’s assurance “This is my son, the Beloved” that Jesus was on the right path. Our Lord, a man, a human being like us, who knows the glory of heaven but who is walking to his death for love of you and me.

I don’t think it was just for Jesus. I think this was also for his disciples in their confused, baffled state. Peter has recognised Jesus as the Messiah – then the confusion as Jesus begins to talk about his suffering, death and resurrection. And will continue to talk like this after they’ve come down from the mountain.

Having said: “This is my Son, the Beloved”, God adds: “Listen to Him!”

This vision is also for us – we too have to listen to Him!

Listening is something done with the whole of one’s being. Listening is hard work – it involves our ears, our minds, our eyes – much harder to do during this time of pandemic and lockdown when we are not in the actual presence of one another. Years ago I did a course on Christian listening – a whole week on and of ‘listening’. It was exhausting.

Today if you are listening to the radio, watching television, it becomes obvious how few people are actually listening – the journalists, interviewers – I get very

irritated and frustrated because so often those being interviewed can hardly get a word out because they're interrupted so often. Real listening take time!

So how can we listen to Jesus today? One way is the practice of Lectio Divina – Latin for 'divine reading'. This is a contemplative, prayerful way of reading the Bible. It's not a text book to be studied or rushed through, but reflecting prayerfully as you read, listening to your thoughts and reactions as you go through a passage.

Take time – perhaps light a candle; open your mind to what you are about to do – meet with God through the verses you are about to read. Then, and only then, read the passage. May be some words or phrases will jump out. Read the passage slowly again – what had you noticed in the first reading? You're not studying – reflect on what was being said at the time. If it's a crowd scene – Jesus, the disciples, the pharisees, an individual – where might you be in this particular story? What is being said to today's world? To you in particular?

Then just sit gently, in quiet contemplation – where might the stillness lead you? Initially your mind might start to wander, to dart here and there – that's what minds do naturally, so we have to learn to be still, to give God's words a chance of registering with us.

Lectio Divina helps us to hear specifically from God through Scripture, guided by the Holy Spirit, and can deepen our relationship with Him.

The skills we learn come from practice – not reading a book about Him. The cookery book gives us the recipe – the meal on the table requires the gathering of ingredients, putting them together and creating the 'dish'. And for the beginner, not necessarily easy. It takes time, patience and practice!

I would encourage you this Lent to follow the advice of those words spoken by God of Jesus all those years ago – "This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to Him!"

So perhaps this Lent could become more a time to learn a new skill – that of learning to "listen to Him" rather than giving something up, as lockdown has already meant giving up so much. Each week during Lent there will be a suggested reading and a question. (You will find it after the Prayers). This could be the starting point for you – and don't forget you can phone any of the Ministry Team if you'd like to talk or pray about anything.

## The Collect for the week

Almighty God,  
by whose grace alone are we accepted and called to your service:  
strengthen us by your Holy Spirit and make us worthy of our calling;  
through Jesus Christ, Your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

## Prayers

Heavenly Father, too often we turn faith into a matter of personal devotion and fulfilment, praying for ourselves as individuals, forgetting your command to love our neighbour as ourselves. We pray now for all those who have been laid low by the coronavirus, all those whose lives have been devastated by the death of loved ones, all those who have been laid low by this pandemic, all those caring for them, and those out and about fulfilling the needs of the rest of us. As well as praying for those in need – the lonely and despairing, those struggling to make ends meet, the home-schooling of their children, those who've lost their jobs, so many and varied difficult situations – help us to do our bit, by staying at home, wearing masks, and keeping our distance in order to reduce its spread.

Lord Jesus Christ meet with me afresh each day, especially during Lent, and open my eyes to see you, my ears to hear you, my mind to know you, and my heart to love you. So may I glimpse a little more of your glory as Peter, James and John did, and my life sing your praise in joyful worship each day.

Heavenly Father, we pray for our PCC meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, when we shall approve the Parish Profile which will present St John's through the advertisement as we look for a new priest to join us here in Southdown. We pray that you will call to serve you here a priest whose love for you will join with ours in living God's love in this parish, thus drawing others into discovering that love for themselves.

Generous God, you give us gifts and make them grow. Though our faith is small as a mustard seed, make it grow to your glory and the flourishing of your kingdom.

We ask all this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

## **Parish Prayers for the week ahead**

### **In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:**

Sunday	The Anglican Church of Canada
Monday	The Diocese of South Ankole – The Church of the Province of Uganda
Tuesday	The Diocese of West Ankole – The Church of the Province of Uganda
Wednesday	The Diocese of Antananarivo – The Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean
Thursday	The Diocese of Antsiranana – The Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean
Friday	The Diocese of Araucania – The Anglican Church of Chile
Saturday	The Diocese of the Arctic – The Anglican Church of Canada

### **In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:**

Sunday	Parish of Little Heath, Christ Church (Deanery of Barnet)
Monday	Parish of Lyonsdown, Holy Trinity (Deanery of Barnet)
Tuesday	Parish of New Barnet, St James (Deanery of Barnet)
Wednesday	Parish of Potters Bar (Deanery of Barnet)
Thursday	Parish of Potters Bar, King Charles the Martyr (Deanery of Barnet)
Friday	Parish of Ridge (Deanery of Barnet)
Saturday	Parish of South Mymms (Deanery of Barnet)

**For the homes and families in:**

Sunday	Pipers Avenue, Poynings Close
Monday	Prospect Lane, Queens Road
Tuesday	Ranleigh Walk, Ravenscroft
Wednesday	Redbourn Lane, Rowan Way
Thursday	St John's Road, St Michael's Close
Friday	St Paul's Close, Sandhurst Court
Saturday	Sherwoods Rise, Sibley Avenue

**The Sick:**

Amy, Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Enid, Chris, Sophie and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

**For the recently deceased:**

Susan Eastwood, Sheila Burley, Jo Young, Francis Stephen

**On their year's mind:**

Gordon Martin, Thomas Griffin, Phyllis New, Michael Cox, Peggy Newcombe, Joyce Owen, Jean Gardner,

**Lent Reflection for this week:**

Lord Jesus,  
I want to journey with You.  
I want to become more like You.  
May the star that guided the Wise Men to Bethlehem  
guide my steps through Lent  
so that Good Friday may find me standing at the foot of the Cross.  
Amen.

*As you read the Bible passage, try to picture yourself there, with Jesus, on his journey. Perhaps use the question to help your meditation on what you have read, and allow your thoughts to lead into prayer:*

Lord, open my heart and mind to receive Your word.

**Mark 1.1-11:** Jesus is baptised.

**The Proclamation of John the Baptist**

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;  
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight,’”

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

### **The Baptism of Jesus**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

*Looking back on this moment, do you think it was the beginning of Jesus’ journey?*

## WORLD DAY OF PRAYER - FRIDAY 5TH MARCH at 10.30am

This year the World Day of Prayer will be rather different as we are gathering on Zoom to celebrate the service from home. It has been prepared by the Christian women of Vanuatu (scattered islands over 1100 miles to the east of Australia) on the theme "Build on a Strong Foundation" (Matt 7:24-27) , particularly appropriate at the present time!

If you would like to join us, please contact Pat Hudis via the Parish Office so you can receive the Zoom details and an order of service. Even If you cannot access Zoom, an order of service can be delivered to you if you let us know.

Last year, in the UK alone, WDP raised over £100,000 which was distributed to more than 30 projects at home and abroad - and urgently needs our support this year.

If you'd like to make a donation, please visit [wwdp.org.uk](http://wwdp.org.uk). Thank you very much.

### A reminder... of this phone service:

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.

### Church at home:

We are delighted to produce each week these printed papers. If you would prefer not to receive these papers each week, please let Julie in the parish office know. If you are aware of others in the parish who would also value the opportunity to worship at home in this way, do please contact a member of the Ministry team or Julie (Parish Office Tel: 01582 712776).