

Fearless

IMAGINE YOUR LIFE

WITHOUT FEAR



God Getting Out of My Box

God cannot be contained (1 Kings 8:27) and does not dwell in temples made with hands (Isa. 66:1; Acts 17:24), so how did the temple contain God? (2 Chron. 7:12-16).



Opening Hymn: Holy, Holy Holy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwuDSw-9cUQ>

Opening Prayer

Good and gracious God, there are so many understandings of you and yet there is only one you. So many faiths, so many denominations. So many differences, even in the Gospels we read about you... even between theological experts, even between well-read followers, even between us and the others on the journey of faith.

You are so ineffably difficult to pin down, to understand, to describe, to know fully. Yet we sometime become full of ourselves, acting as if we know, hold, have, the "Truth" about you; believing that we have done what thousands of years of history have not been able to do, we sometimes think we have the final truth and understanding about you.

God of all times and all peoples, humble our hearts. Silence our sometimes haughty souls and lend us perspective. Guide us closer to you. Teach us how limited our knowledge is. Give us spirits which seek more of your truth. Instil in us a willingness to admit what we don't know. Inspire us to not only share what we have learned with others, but to open ourselves to what we can learn from them. Plant within us spirits which revel in the reality that there is more to learn about you, spirits which celebrate what we don't know because it means we can still grow closer to you, spirits which are willing to toss away what we once knew for new understandings which grow us closer to you and all of your Creation.

We joyfully give thanks for all of the possibilities which lie in front of us to know you more fully and to share your love more abundantly. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Bible Reading: Matthew 17:1-5

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

Reflection – 'God getting out of my box'

Boxes, boxes, boxes - Boxes bring wonderful order to our world. They keep cereal from spilling and books from tumbling. When it comes to containing stuff, boxes are masterful. But when it comes to explaining people, they fall short. And when it comes to defining Christ, no box works.

His Palestine contemporaries tried to put him in a box. They designed an assortment of boxes. But he never fit one. They called him a revolutionary; then he paid his taxes. They labelled him as a country carpenter, but he confounded scholars. They came to see his miracles, but he refused to feed them. He defied easy definitions. He was a Jew who attracted Gentiles. A rabbi who gave up on synagogues. A holy man who hung out with corrupt tax collectors. In a male-dominated society, he recruited females. In an anti-Roman culture he opted not to denounce Rome. He talked like a king yet lived like a pauper.

People tried to designate him. They couldn't. We still try. Box sized gods. You'll find them in the tight grip of people who prefer a god they can manage, control, and predict. In a world out of control, we need a god we can control, a comforting presence akin to a lap dog or the kitchen cat. We call and he comes. We pet and he purrs. If we can just keep God in his place... in this box.

Peter, James, and John must have tried. How else can you explain this box-blowing expedition on which Jesus took them? "He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." (Matt 17:2) They were gripped deep in their gut that God was, at once, everywhere and here. The very sight of the glowing Galilean sucked all air and arrogance out of them, leaving them appropriately prostrate.

"They fell on their faces and were greatly afraid" (v. 6).

This is the fear of the Lord. The fear that pulls us down from wherever we are, from or away from whatever we are afraid of – and brings us down on our knees, before the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. When Christ is great our fears are not. As the awe of Jesus expands, fears of life diminish. A big God translates into big courage. A small view of God generates no courage. A fireless Jesus has no power over disease, corruption, graft, or global calamity. A packageable, portable Jesus might fit well in a purse or on a shelf, but he does nothing for your fears.

This must be why Jesus took the disciples up the mountain. He saw the box in which they had confined him. He saw the future that awaited them: the fireside denial of Peter, prisons of Jerusalem and Rome, the demands of the church, and the persecutions of Nero. A box-sized version of God simply would not work. So, Jesus blew the sides out of their preconceptions.

May he blow the sides out of ours? Don't we need to know the transfigured Christ? One who convenes and commands historical figures? One who takes friends to Mount Hermon's peak so they can peek into heaven?

We need to know this Jesus more, and as we do;

- may all our fears, save the fear of Christ himself, melt like ice cubes on a summer sidewalk.
- May God give us the courage to 'look fear in the eye' and ask, "**The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?**" (Ps. 27:1).

In the book *Prince Caspian* by C. S. Lewis, Lucy sees Aslan, the lion, for the first time in many years. He has changed since their last encounter. His size surprises her, and she tells him as much. "Aslan," says Lucy, "you're bigger." "That is because you are older, little one," answered he. "Not because you are?" "I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger."

And so it is with Christ. The longer we live in him, the greater he becomes in us. It's not that Christ changes but that we do; we see more of him. We see dimensions, aspects, and characteristics we never saw before, increasing and astonishing increments of his purity, power, and uniqueness. We discard boxes and old images of Christ like used tissues. We don't dare place Jesus on a political donkey or elephant. Arrogant certainty becomes meek curiosity. Define Jesus with a doctrine or confine him to an opinion? By no means. We'd sooner capture the Caribbean in a butterfly net than we'll capture Christ in a box.

In the end we respond like the apostles. We, too, fall on our faces and worship. And when we do, the hand of the carpenter extends through the tongue of towering fire and touches us. "Arise, and do not be afraid" (Matt. 17:7).

Mount Hermon's still ablaze and has space for guests like us to encounter Christ and get rid of our own boxes we made to try and define and contain him.

Prayer for ourselves and others

God you are light. Your light reflects within us and shines forth as we connect with one another in your Love moving through us, shining forth. All around the world we hear children in all languages sing of this light...

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine all over...

- Over the hungry in Egypt as the cost of daily bread soars due to the war in Ukraine.
- Over the grieving, in Somalia after a deadly suicide bombing and the Nigerian father who lost four of his children in a boating accident.
- Over those grieving and recovering in the aftermath of tornadoes in the United States.
- Over the people of Jamaica as they remember their history during a visit from British Royalty who apologized and expressed "profound sorrow" for the UK's role in slavery on the island.
- Over those grieving and affected by mudslides in Brazil that killed 90, with many missing.
- Over girls who just want to learn in Afghanistan where the Taliban closed their schools after just one month of being open.
- Over those in Australia who are cleaning up and recovering from historic and deadly flooding.
- Over all life as heat waves hit the Arctic and Antarctica this week with temperatures 50 degrees higher than average.
- Over the people for Ukraine, one month into the horrors of war. For those still in the country and those now as refugees. May they feel the Light of your comfort.
- Over those across Ukraine, Russia, Europe and the world who are saying NO to hate and violence through incredible creative acts of courage and love.

With you, transforming God, your light within us is not so little but a powerful force of healing. May the candle flame of light within each living thing be nurtured, uncovered, liberated to burn as brightly as you create for us, as our hurting and beautiful world needs. This powerful Light, may it shine, may it shine, may it shine, In Jesus' name. Amen.

Closing Hymn: On Christ the Solid Rock I stand

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhVwVHC6_n0&list=RDGMEMMib4QpREwENw3_jAc0YgNw&index=19

Benediction

We descend the sacred Mount Hermon with a mountain-like faith. We walk on God's paths as bright, shining lights. We live in God's ways with faith, hope, and love. We go into the world transformed and renewed. **And may the grace....**