

Transfiguration Sunday

In the light of the cross, the sign of our faith may these words praise God for his wisdom, truth and love.

Amen

Love, Transfiguration and Justice. You might wonder what connects these things. I wondered this myself when I challenged myself to look into finding a deeper connection between the Transfiguration and Love.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday and also the closest Sunday to St Valentine's Day which happens to fall this year on Ash Wednesday, marking the start of Lent; a time when we can all be reminded of the enduring truth that however problematic our lives may seem, we can always rely on one thing- Love. ❤️

So this covers Love and Transfiguration but I hear you saying- what about Justice?



Today is also Racial Justice Sunday. Having this day so close to St Valentine's Day serves to remind us that love and justice belong together. If we love our neighbour we cannot ignore prejudice, hatred and injury. If we want to live in the Kingdom of God then things have to change in our society.


Love has often been preached about as an answer to the world's divisive problems. Maybe if we listened and preached this love the world would be a kinder place. Martin Luther King once said:

"I'M CONCERNED ABOUT A BETTER WORLD. I'M CONCERNED ABOUT JUSTICE; I'M CONCERNED ABOUT BROTHERHOOD; I'M CONCERNED ABOUT TRUTH...AND I SAY TO YOU, I HAVE DECIDED TO STICK WITH LOVE, FOR I

KNOW THAT LOVE IS ULTIMATELY THE ONLY ANSWER TO MANKIND'S PROBLEMS"

Some of the children are going to collect the hearts that you were invited to write your name on as you came into church. This will form a piece of artwork for the church notice board to show our love for God, the church family and wider community.

Others will collect the hearts which you have written loved ones on whom you may wish to remember; this will form artwork for our new prayer and reflection area.

The other children are going to "STICK WITH LOVE" using decorated heart shaped post it notes. 

All of these hearts and tokens of love will remind us that on the hardest of days, we can always be mindful of the fact that you are more loved than you think than you are.

One of the theme's of today's Gospel story of the Transfiguration is one of love and on this Sunday before Valentine's Day- it is a message of God's love for us and the call to love others.

In the story of the Transfiguration, which every few years lands on or around Valentine's Day, we hear God's message of love to Jesus. In this story Jesus is with his followers on the mountaintop right alongside Moses and Elijah and then, as Jesus is transfigured we hear the voice of God saying

"THIS IS MY SON, MY BELOVED, LISTEN TO HIM".

The two times we hear God's voice described as being audible in the New Testament, the words are a message of love- the love God has for his son.

The word "beloved" here comes from the Greek word "agape" which refers to absolute, unconditional love. It is spoken first at Jesus' baptism and secondly at the Transfiguration. It is that same message of love proclaimed upon the newly baptised when we are heralded as children of God- loved by God.


Our world needs love right now more than ever- this message of love is imperative. The scripture tells us that we are able to love others because God first loved us. Still, we often doubt God's love for us.

I'm certain that God loves other people but I have often struggled to find that certainty for myself.


And yet, God's message of love that day on the mountaintop is, I believe, for every one of us- for all God's children.

And God's message of love continues to come to us, not only through God's word and in these important Gospel stories but through the many messages around us- and we can hear them if we pay attention.

I am sure you have all been to a wedding where the chosen reading has been that of Paul's letter to Corinthian's (13:4) that states:

“LOVE IS PATIENT, LOVE IS KIND. IT DOES NOT ENVY, IT DOES NOT BOAST, IT IS NOT PROUD. IT IS NOT RUDE, IT IS NOT SELF- SEEKING, IT IS NOT EASILY ANGERED, IT KEEPS NOT RECORD OF WRONGS. LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL BUT REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH. IT ALWAYS PROTECTS, ALWAYS TRUSTS, ALWAYS HOPES, ALWAYS PERSEVERES. LOVE NEVER FAILS.” 

Then why do we struggle to remember that there is love in this world, and that we are loved and can love each other. I sometimes think that if everyone read this at the start of their days the world would be a happier, kinder and more loving place.

Love can be found everywhere- just look around you in this church...the sounds, sights, tears, laughter and food sharing- all signs of love; love we have for one another and God's love for us here at St Mark's. 

You are more loved than you think you are- you are God's children- the beloved. And we, who know, are loved by God and have the honour of sharing that message of love with others.

How will you share it? And can we live and share Christ's story if we don't address prejudice in our own hearts and in the voices around us?

There can be no true love without justice. 🙏

Time and again in the Gospels, Jesus stands with those his disciples would rather avoid- tax collectors, lepers, lunatics. When these people draw near to Jesus through love there is a place for them in the community. (*Matthew 9:9-12; Luke 5:12-16, 7:36-50. 8:26-39*)

Do we want to live this story?

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and we will begin our Lenten Journey's. Self Examination; Repentance; Meditation; Enjoying God's loving presence; Fasting; Self- Denial and Prayer are basics of our spiritual practice- and all spiritual practice ultimately leads us to the joyful knowledge of God's love for us because the closer we draw to God in these postures of grace and holiness, the more deeply we learn and sense the love of God in our lives and are then more empowered to share that love with others. ❤️

Our nation and community- the Church itself- need the message of God's love more than ever. We continue to wrestle with pain of division and hatred that has come to express itself more openly than we have ever seen in our lifetimes. The message of God's love can only be communicated when we guard our hearts and words from speaking hatefully or disdainfully of others.

The message of love can only be communicated when we choose words and actions that convey grace and love. 🙏

Lent offers us a moment to walk with Jesus and ask that piercing question- "How is God asking us to grow?". Could this be by spreading the word, increasing our numbers or simply increasing our internal and external love for one another?

How will you soak in the love of God this Lent?

How will you share the message of God's love to other's?

When the disciples saw Jesus in his full glory- a vivid reality of how God's love and justice, beyond our imagination, was seen. In Paul's letters to Corinthians he says that the outwards brightness can be an inner experience for those who know Jesus Christ, due in part, to the light shining in our hearts (*2 Corinthians 4:3-6*). ☩

Let us stick with love, let the light shine in our hearts, and share in his glory.

Love, Justice, Transfiguration

They are all celebrated this Sunday and serve to remind us of the God whose love won't leave us. A God who calls us to "LIVE CHRIST'S STORY" and work together for that kingdom where you are more loved than you think you are.

AMEN 🙏