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**Sunday 27 February 2022 to Sunday 6 March 2022**

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Sunday 27 February 2022

# Transfiguration – see his glory!

by Faye Schmidt

**When they became fully awake, they saw his glory (Luke 9:32).**

Read Luke 9:28–36[37–43]

How often in Scripture do we read of significant events in the life of Jesus when the disciples are asleep. From being in the boat on the Sea of Galilee when a storm arose to the Garden of Gethsemane on the eve of Jesus’ crucifixion. And here we are again. Jesus goes to pray – and the disciples go to sleep.

Christ is revealed in his glory, with Moses and Elijah beside him ‘in glorious splendour’ – and Peter, James and John are asleep. They slept through it and didn’t see it.

But what about us? Are we asleep also, missing out on seeing God at work in his world through others around us? Are we not seeing God revealed in his glory?

In Matthew 25, Jesus speaks of the separation of the sheep and goats at judgement, and he tells those on his right, they will be blessed by his Father because, ‘I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink’.

The righteous then answered him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’ (verse 37).

We do not see when we are asleep. But our text today doesn’t just say that the disciples woke up; they became ‘fully’ awake. It is not enough to just not be asleep but to be alive to what is around us, seeing with sensitivity, alertness and anticipation as to what we may see. Ready to see whatever God through Christ places before us at any moment so that we may see his glory, see the need of others and serve him.

**Dear Jesus, I am sorry for when I am asleep and am not seeing you. I pray that the Holy Spirit will open my eyes and heart to see you in the needs of others that I may serve you and see your glory so I may worship and praise you. Amen.**

Monday 28 February 2022

# What does it take for God to get your attention?

by Faye Schmidt

**The angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush (Exodus 3:2).**

Read Exodus 3:1–6

Our reading commences with the vision of Moses, tending a flock of sheep in a remote area far from anything or anyone. There are many ways we can be in the same situation – and not necessarily physically. Remoteness and being apart are often products of our inner sense of being. When we are in such a situation, God is always seeking to engage with us so that we may know him.

For Australians at this time of the year, we would be horrified that starting a fire in the bush was the way to attract our attention. This must have also been in the mind of Moses. Being in the wilderness with his flock to protect, he would have been aware of the ravages of a fire getting out of control. And we know this was the first thing he feared as he immediately identified that the bush, whilst on fire, was not actually burning up – and he went over to the bush to have a closer look.

Having now obtained his attention, God called to him by name. God now had Moses’ full attention. Moses was ready to listen.

How much we need to recognise this fact – God knows us by name. Our God is not remote. He came down to Moses to attract his attention and speak with him. God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to walk in our world so that he could die for our sins, each of us individually, personally.

What form will the ‘burning bush’ take in my life? What will it take for me to stop, hear God’s voice speaking directly to me, and listen? Will it be through an event, a friend, reading the word of God …?

Again, we are reminded in this passage of Scripture that it is God’s will that we all know him and the Son he sent to die for our sins so that we may be made right in God’s sight through love.

**Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for always seeking us out to reveal your love for us through Jesus. May the Holy Spirit open my eyes and ears to your call to me. Amen.**

Tuesday 1 March 2022

# What am I looking at?

by Faye Schmidt

**So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).**

Read 2 Corinthians 4:13–5:1

On first reading, these words seem somewhat oxymoronic. My eyes are designed for seeing. How are they meant to see what is unseen?

However, it all comes down to perspective. If we see with our eyes, we see just what is before us – what we recognise, can point to, validate.

The landscape painter JM Turner once stated that he needed to complete a painting of the clouds as he saw them at that moment, as they would never be the same again. Whatever we look at is always changing – the light, movement, shadows, colour.

Maybe one of the reasons we take photos is to capture something in that specific moment, so we can then hold the image well after it has actually disappeared. And, even with time, the photo itself fades, gets lost, or these days is deleted.

Even what we see with our eyes can be governed by our mood and focus at the time. We may see the flowers in a garden but miss the dog sleeping under a bush.

Our eyes can, therefore, not only be unreliable but even deceptive. How many times have witnesses in a court case given different accounts of the same event? They all swear under oath that what they saw is true and correct.

There is even truth in the statement that we often see only what we want to see.

But against the transitory nature of what we see with our eyes, Paul directs us to the insight that comes from knowledge. This knowledge comes to us through God’s grace that there is more – much more to life than what we see with our eyes that is indestructible, unchanging and eternal: ‘an eternal house in heaven not built by human hands’ (5:1).

Am I short-sighted? Am I missing out on what I am not ‘seeing’ by focusing on my need for proof, validation, assurance that I can touch and feel? Am I trusting my own resources to find faith rather than seeking God’s grace?

**Open my heart, Lord, that I may see you in your glory, worship and praise you as I await entry to the eternal house you have prepared for me. Amen.**

Wednesday 2 March 2022

# How should I pray?

by Faye Schmidt

**But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen (Matthew 6:6).**

Read Matthew 6:1–6,16–21

‘Don’t ask me to give the devotion – I’m not good at it.’

‘I’m no good at praying – I don’t know how.’

Has this been your response when approached to pray before others at any time? Rather than being out there in front of people praying, we are more often than not seeking to avoid praying in public. We make excuses.

But we are missing the point of the text if we avoid being prepared to pray to our Loving Father with others hearing and, hopefully, participating.

There are times when both public and private prayers may be required of us.

The issue with the man in our text is that he wasn’t praying to God. It would seem by Jesus’ rebuke that the man was performing to his audience. He was more concerned about those witnessing his words than actually having a relationship with God.

The key to this text is that Jesus wants us to know the Father personally. He makes it clear that the One we are to pray to is no witness to our prayer. God is ‘unseen’ – our Heavenly Father. He is the recipient of our prayers, not a bystander.

We can get caught up thinking our prayers are inadequate and not very eloquent. But we forget that when we pray to the Father, we have an Intercessor, one who takes our inadequacies and makes them and us right with him. And that is Jesus himself. That is why we usually end our prayers with the words ‘through Jesus Christ, our Lord’.

If you feel you just don’t know how to pray, remember, the disciples didn’t know either!

‘One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples”’ (Luke 11:1,2).

And what did Jesus say? He gave us what we know as the Lord’s Prayer. When uncertain about what or how to pray, we look to Jesus and this gift.

**I praise and thank you, dear Father, that through your Son, you have accepted me as your child, and you love me and seek to have me know and love you. Amen.**

Thursday 3 March 2022

# What is my motive?

by Faye Schmidt

**Was it really for me that you fasted? And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves? (Zechariah 7:5,6).**

Read Zechariah 7:4–10

It is not that long ago that we celebrated Christmas, the coming of God to our world to live among us and fulfil the promise of salvation for all. For many people, it was an opportunity to enjoy food and drink beyond the everyday to mark the celebration.

We are also approaching the season of Lent, a time when many Christians practise fasting in some form, often by denying themselves a usual practice or enjoyment of a particular food or drink.

Our text today asks us to examine the motive behind our actions. Why do it?

When gathered around the table at the Christmas feast, were our thoughts on God and his bounteous gift to us through his Son? Or were we more thankful for being with our family and friends and for the food and drink as ends in themselves? Did all thoughts of God and Christ’s birth vanish from our minds the minute we left church that morning and rushed home to make sure the food was ready and the drinks were cooling on the ice?

Likewise, with any Lenten discipline we may put in place, is it truly a means of devotion that aids in keeping our focus on the journey to the cross, or is it merely something we do to show others our piety?

Any action we take to celebrate Christ’s presence in our life or in devotion and worship is pleasing to God. But if we do it to receive ‘brownie points’ from God to be rewarded somehow, we do it for ourselves and not God. We are charged to ‘pray, praise and give thanks’. Salvation from our sins does not come from our works. That is God’s gift to us by his grace through Christ’s death and resurrection – a wondrous gift indeed.

**O Lord, please send your Holy Spirit to dwell in me so that I may praise and worship you in thankfulness for your gift of grace in love through all my actions. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

Friday 4 March 2022

# Great expectations?

by Faye Schmidt

**I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief! (Mark 9:24)**

Read Mark 9:14–29

During the 1970s and 80s, a popular publication for those in the industry was In Search of Excellence by Thomas J Peters and Robert H Waterman Jr. I always liked this title because it didn’t demand that I actually attain excellence but continue to strive towards it. What a relief! Not only was I relieved of expecting excellence within myself, but I was relieved that others would not be expecting excellence from me. It is about the journey, the striving, the search.

There are many times in our lives that we have failed to meet the expectations of others. We are also at fault when we have expectations of others that they may not be able to meet. I recall on one occasion someone saying to me, ‘I didn’t fail you – I failed your expectations’. Was I wrong to place my expectations on another?

Our humanity and imperfections result in us regularly failing to meet the expectations of others and ourselves.

In our text today, Jesus sets out his expectations regarding our faith. He doesn’t expect perfection in us. The text tells us that upon hearing the father’s statement of faith (and doubt), Jesus immediately healed the boy. Jesus didn’t rebuke the father for his doubt. Instead, he rebuked the demons in the boy so that they left him.

Faith grows in us as we live under that grace, be open to the Holy Spirit serving us through the word and sacraments, and demonstrate God’s love for us through others. Faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and our trust is in his providing sufficient for our needs, not to meet our expectations.

We are made perfect in God’s eyes only through Jesus’ own life, death and resurrection. Through Jesus’ perfection, we can be assured when he makes a promise, we can trust it and know such expectations will be met.

***Dear Heavenly Father, I pray that you send your Holy Spirit to lead me closer to you and trust in your promise of salvation through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.***

Saturday 5 March 2022

# Where do you find refuge?

by Faye Schmidt

**I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust’ (Psalm 91:2).**

Read Psalm 91:1,2,9–16

Non-Christians seeing this text would deem it one of those ‘crutches’ that people of faith have. They often consider people of faith as weak and needing a being that they have formed to be a ‘god’, so they can be excused from responsibility for their own actions or blame someone when anything goes wrong.

It is no accident that when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments that the first is, ‘I am the Lord your God; you will have no other gods before me’.

Inherent in this statement is that we all have a ‘god’ of sorts. It may not be God or any form of spiritual being, but if we are honest with ourselves, we will recognise that there are ‘places’ we go to for refuge from what may be happening in our lives. This may take the form of food, drink, shopping, a spouse or other members of the family, a close friend, nature, or escape into another world through reading.

We all need a place of refuge.

In our text, we read what being within God’s refuge looks like: ‘No harm will overtake you’, and ‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you’.

And why? “‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him’” (verse 14).

The use of the word ‘refuge’ is a timely one. There are many refugees seeking refuge from war, famine, violence. Yes, they are seeking a place of refuge. Are we not also refugees from what disturbs, frightens and stresses us? It may not be a physical refuge we seek, but the need is the same. The benefit of God being our refuge is that even amid whatever is happening, we don’t have to go anywhere. God is ever-present. Jesus is the fulfilment of God’s promise of refuge as through his death and resurrection, we were gifted being made right with God.

Where do you find ‘refuge’?

**Dear God, you promise that if we call on you, you will answer. I pray, therefore, that you would be my refuge and strength. I praise and thank you for all your abundant blessings. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

Sunday 6 March 2022

# Are you trying to tempt me?

by Pastor Greg Fowler

**For forty days he was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:2).**

Read Luke 4:1–13

When I was a teenager, the whole country was obsessed with Australia winning the America’s Cup yacht race. The anthem of the Australia II team was ‘Down Under’ by Men at Work. It was a great song that captured the moment, and one of the lines was ‘Are you trying to tempt me? Because I come from a land of plenty’. It spoke of the reality of temptation only being effective if you don’t have something or are desperate for it.

The devil knows where we are weak. He knows our needs. He knows our longings probably better than we do. And that’s where he will focus his energy. Jesus was hungry, and the devil tempted him with food. Twice he questioned Jesus’ identity as the Son of God, encouraging Jesus to use his supernatural power. In each case, Jesus responded with words of Scripture used in faith. The word of God enacted by faith is a power the devil cannot overcome.

Jesus demonstrates his belief that life and identity are found only in God. God provides for our needs. His declaration that we are his children gives us our identity. We have plenty. We, too, can say in Christ, ‘Are you trying to tempt me? I come from a God of plenty’. When the devil tempts us to trust in something other than God’s provision, this Scripture shows us that we can resist when we return to the truth of who we are and speak the word of God in faith. May the abundance of his grace lead us not into temptation.

**Lord God, when we are tempted, send your Spirit to show me your word and love for me. Allow the truth of your generosity to rest in our souls. May we resist temptation, in your strength, not ours. Amen.**