



Sermon Based Curriculum for Small Groups

8th January – 19th February 2023

**Including the Series,
'Covenant Discipleship'**

Greetings to Home Groups

This booklet is laid out so that your gathering as a home group each week will follow the four W's rhythm of Welcome, Worship, Word, Works. I hope this helps you and makes the journey meaningful. The times in brackets are a guideline that should help to keep you on track.

Welcome (10 minutes)

This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and 'catch up' with each other.

Worship (10 minutes)

Use the Psalm for the week. Ask one person to read it slowly and prayerfully. As you listen to it allow this to be a moment of worship, love, devotion, adoration, thanksgiving and praise.

You can do your prayers of intercession for each other and society at this time, or at the end of the gathering.

Word (60 minutes)

Here I offer some notes on the reading and the theme for the week. You will then do a Bible Study together and discuss the theme and also the sermon you heard.

It is up to the group leader to decide whether there is enough time for all of the questions – and to select which questions to discuss if there are too many.

Prayer for Trinity

This year we are asking for Home Groups and Classes to pray for specific aspects of Trinity's life. Suggestions for these prayers are given in the notes below.

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Introduction

The call to discipleship from Jesus is disconcertingly direct and it usually catches us unaware. We begin the Christian life by accepting the gift of God's salvation. We experience God's forgiveness and reconciliation, and we come to know the deep joy and inward peace of walking with Christ day by day. But then the call to follow Jesus brings us face to face with some obligations. The call is to become one of his disciples, and the more we learn about Jesus, the more we find that his invitation to discipleship leaves nothing in doubt, yet everything open.

The world is waiting for a rebirth, those of us called to follow Christ must not only share his vision of the new age, but share it to the fullest.

There are now Methodists who have believed for some time – and are now even more convinced that our heritage in Wesley's early Methodist societies provide us with a good pattern for discipleship: the home groups, formally known as class meetings. Class meeting was a weekly gathering, a subdivision of the early societies at which members were required to give an account to one another for their discipleship and thereby sustain each other in their witness. These meetings were called 'sinews' of the Methodist movement, the means by which members watched over one another in love. This weekly form of early Methodist discipleship was based on the cardinal principle of grace, it was a response to God's grace. They watched over each other in love and held one another accountable for their discipleship.

Sermon series theme: **Covenant discipleship**

Resources:

1. **Foundations of Discipleship by Alan Storey**
2. **Class leaders by David Lowes Watson**
3. **Covenant Discipleship by David Lowes Watson**
4. **Forming Christian Disciples by David Lowes Watson**
5. **A Blueprint for Discipleship by Kevin M. Watson**
6. **Spiritual Disciplines by J. Oswald Sanders**
7. **Discovering our spiritual identify by Trevor Hudson.**
8. **Textweek- Online**
9. **Lectionary resource- Bill Louder-Online**

Sunday 8th January

The Unconditional Condition

Welcome

This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and 'catch up' with each other.

Worship

Psalm of the week- Psalm 29

Word

Read Matthew 4:18-22 as a group

1. Read these notes on the passage

The name Covenant Discipleship comprises two of the most important words in the life and work of the Church: Covenant and Discipleship.

Covenant

There are covenants which Christians make with each other as they endeavor to perform their service faithfully.

The term **discipleship** is not found in scripture, much to the amazement of many Christians it is an English word that comes from the term disciple and disciples. If we want to use it biblically we must use it to describe the ongoing life of a disciple. Disciples grow as Christians through the process of discipleship. The Christian is always in the process, which will include setbacks as well as progress toward Christian maturity. So discipleship is allowing God's grace to work in our lives and accepting God's conditions. To enter into a covenant is to accept a disciplined agreement.

Covenant discipleship is the model we have in the New Testament. Jesus called his disciples to follow him in person, wherever he went, whatever he did. Today we tend to use the word disciple much more loosely. We tend to apply it to anyone who has accepted Jesus as Saviour and Lord, overlooking the fact that this does not necessarily make of a person the disciplined follower described in the New Testament.

A good way to describe these accountable disciples is that they are the 'muscle' of the church. Covenant Discipleship groups are a way of 'turning' it again, providing not only the opportunity to commit to Christian discipleship, but also further that commitment. Jesus stipulates only one condition, but this condition proved to be unconditional.

Each believer is responsible for his or her own development as a disciple of Christ. "Follow me," he said to Simon. There was no trial period to see if they liked it. No discussion about potential benefits. No mention of the prospect of a fulfilled life and personal good. The reward of following this rabbi would be neither more nor less than the privilege of sharing in his work. The purpose of joining Jesus is to share his vision of a new age for this planet and that he was the one who would bring it to pass. His word for this vision was the kingdom. To do this, Jesus invited disciples to work with him.

Trinity is in need of people who will say, yes, I want to join Jesus in sharing the vision of the new age for this planet. Trinity needs groups of people who say, here I am, I want to learn, I want to be discipled, I want to be part of a group that meets once a week to read scripture, to pray together, and care for others.

Are you available to join a group that co-works with Christ?

Matthew 4:18-22

J. Oswald Sanders (1994:27) believes that Jesus did not command his followers to go and make disciples of all nations or converts of all nations. His clear unequivocal command was: "All authority in heaven and on earth is *has been given to me*, therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-19; emphasis added). Disciples here are to learn from Jesus', accepting his teachings. Disciples learn in order to put into practice what they have learned. This attitude is the essence of discipleship.

Another fact is that we cannot be Christ followers alone. Trevor Hudson (2010:54) believes that when we open our lives to him, Jesus enters with his arms around his brothers and sisters.

Trevor Hudson says, “Without others it is doubtful whether I would ever have started on the Christ following journey, let alone remained on it.” Matthew 4 shows that Jesus too worked with people, he invited the fishermen to partner with him.

2. Questions and notes related to the passage

- a. What are my feelings about being placed among the other disciples?
- b. How seriously have I invested myself in this family whose foundation is Abba, an inclusive, self- giving love of Jesus?
- c. What are my plans for a greater sharing in God’s household?
- d. How am I going to make real my belonging within the community?

3. Engaging with Trinity Sermons

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?
- b. Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

4. Radical Discipleship Question

Jesus was the voluntary servant of God on the earth. Would you like to be a servant of God? speak to your home group champion of discipleship about it, he or she will get you in touch with one of ministerial or pastoral staff members.

5. Close in Prayer for Trinity

This week we ask you to pray for...

A safe return of those travelling from holiday
and a return in numbers of members
to services on a Sunday.

6. This Week’s Lectionary Readings for Daily Reading

Isaiah 42:1-9 Psalm 29 Acts 10:34-43 Matthew 3:13-17

Sunday 15 January

Come follow me closely

Welcome

This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and 'catch up' with each other.

Worship

Psalm of the week- Psalm 40:1-11

Word

Read Matthew 4:18-25 as a group

1 Read these notes on the passage

Taking a step towards your discipleship.

Think about the honeymoon period in a marriage, the time when the spouse seemingly can do no wrong. Eventually that period ends. Nobody has to tell the couple when it is over, they just know. For some people the honeymoon period lasts only as long as the honeymoon itself. For others the honeymoon ends while they are still on the honeymoon. For others it is much later. But it is around the time that one begins to have the uncomfortable feeling that being in marriage is going to take more work than getting married did. Getting married is the easy part, it is fun. People give presents and they stand while the couple walks down the aisle. But in a successful marriage both people eventually understand that being married takes work, and then they commit to growing together in love for the rest of their lives.

John Wesley's goal was not to get as many people as he could to pray a certain prayer. Rather his goal was to get as many people as he could to trust in Christ, not just for one moment, but for the rest of their lives and with all their lives. God wants to transform us until every chain of sin, even the very root of original sin is pulled up from our lives. To achieve this: John Wesley organized people into small groups so that they could connect with each other and give account of how they are growing in their faith.

Matthew 4:18-25

Following Christ closely means to:

- a. Follow Christ as your Teacher.
- b. Follow Christ as your Example.
- c. Follow Christ as your Friend.
- d. Follow Christ personally

2. Questions and notes related to the passage

- a. Who is this Jesus that we have to follow?
- b. How do we need to follow him?
- c. Why should we follow him?
- d. When is the right time to follow Jesus?

3. Engaging with Trinity Sermons

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?
- b. Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

4. Radical Discipleship Question

The great lesson of the text may be summed up in this — that successful work for Jesus must spring out of a devout imitation of Him.

As we learn, walk, and embrace the life Jesus offers, what more should we do in order for our relationship with him to be more personal? What commitment do we need to make?

5. Reflection Questions

1. Jesus' call on fishermen: They were to leave their work that they might engage in higher work. What is Jesus' call on your Home group?
2. What does following Jesus closely mean for this group?

6. Close in Prayer for Trinity

This week we ask you to pray for Children's and youth ministries:

- That children and youth return to Friday night and Sunday morning programmes.
- That teenagers eligible for Seekers would sign up
- That the 18:30 Home service would return in numbers.

7. This Week's Lectionary Readings for Daily Reading

Isaiah 49:1-7 Psalm 40:1-11 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 John 1:29-42

Sunday 22 January

On Call for Christ

Welcome

This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and 'catch up' with each other.

Worship

Psalm of the week – Psalm 27:1;4-9

Word

Read Matthew 5:13-16.

1. Read these notes on the passage

God has countless children to be brought home and a planet to be redeemed in every direction of its existence and we are commissioned to be Christ's colleagues in this task.

When we view discipleship from Jesus' standpoint instead of our own, our discipleship becomes inside out rather than outside in. We see that the true intent of incarnation was to reach out to the world that God deeply loved. This is the bedrock of the gospel.

Discipleship is not so much a constant task as it is to be on constant call. Anytime Jesus may require a particular act of compassion and a particular word of justice.

Small groups can exert a powerfully positive impact on the church. Those who walk with God embrace the idea that God's power is greater than any power known to humanity. We derive authority from Matthew 28:18: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." When people embrace power, they bring energy and vitality to local congregations. They dream up new ideas. They create new ministries. They empower new leaders. The disciples had that mandate, of going to all corners of the earth, to make disciple of all nations. What attracts new people to the church? What attracts new people to home groups?

It is seeing men's and women's lives being transformed. It is seeing people who are on call for Christ. It is because they want to be on call for Christ. Jeffrey Arnold says the church is a series of relationships or cliques. The term clique has a negative connotation because most cliques are exclusive, consisting of groups of persons operating within the safety of exclusive relationships. But cliques have a positive side too. We cannot survive without cliques. They provide safety. They offer a place to belong. They give acceptance. Christian cliques offer koinonia. They have compassion for those who hurt. They have energy to give. They influence the church in a positive manner.

So being on call for Christ is to be the salt and light of the world. Salt penetrates. It moves in and flavours everything around it. Light permeates. It boldly drives away darkness. Salt is subtle, light is invasive. We are to be both.

2. Questions related to the passage and notes

- a. The passage on being the salt and the light of the world has been preached for so many years. What is, or has been, your understanding of this passage?
- b. If salt gives taste and the light gives light to people and the world, what are we being called to be?
- c. What should have been the reason why this passage was written? Why is it still important for the church today?

3. Engaging with Trinity Sermons

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?
- b. Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

4. Radical Discipleship Question:

The Church exists for the world's sake more than for its own. Christ's disciples are to be saviours of others. How can we begin to identify the grieving and hurting ones in our midst and make a commitment to speak for them, to serve them and to protect them in any way we can? Which dark areas of our Church, families and community need our us to lighten and give them a better flavour?

5. Reflection Questions

1. The Church exists for the world's sake more than for its own. Christ's disciples are to be saviours of others. What does your Home group exist for? How does your group plan to improve from what it currently is?
2. Salt is intended to nourish: it is an article of food. The godly must nourish the earth spiritually.
Salt is intended to preserve.
Salt has also a consuming power. There is something sharp, biting, and aggressive in it. Laid on a wound it is painful. The Christian often pains people in order to heal them. How does your group plan to be 'On call for Christ'?

6. Close in Prayer for Trinity

This week we ask you to pray for

- Friday night 'Illuminate': 5-7pm.
- Friday night 'Focus': 8-10pm.
- Sunday morning Youth Church: 9.30am

7. This Week's Lectionary Readings for Daily Reading

Isaiah 9:1-4 Psalm 27:1,4-9 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 Matthew 4:12-23

29 January

Covenant service – The day of decision

Welcome

This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and ‘catch up’ with each other.

Worship

Psalm of the week – Psalm 15

Word

Read Joshua 24:11-15 as a group (The day of decision)

1. Read these notes on the passage

Laying aside the past, looking to the future. A future of serving the Lord, doing his will and engaging in the call he put on my life.

We have this passage where God, through Joshua, addresses the people of Israel for three verses and then Joshua puts in his own plug as leader – telling the nation his view on a thing or two.

God was initially pointing out to the people of Israel that they were where they were through no other means than that He, God alone, had brought them there. If you recall the history of this nation, God had blessed them continuously. They had more recently escaped Egypt under Moses’ leadership and after grumbling and being disobedient for forty years been led by Joshua and Caleb into the land that God had promised their ancestor Abraham.

Joshua 24:11-15

There is something that occurs as people leave behind their past life of sin and enter into one of obedience to God, that of social uplift. God has given us strengths, and gifts that are to be used in lovingly living with one another and in serving God. As we live for God, serving all people, we remember God’s promises and God’s faithfulness to us. We remember that God wants our total devotion, blameless – in the worship of God.

Then Joshua puts this proposal to them...

“But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your

ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

This was a direct piece of speech. Sort out your desires, what is it you want? This was decision time, were they a weak link, were they in or out. Joshua had made his decision, he and his household were to serve the Lord. For Joshua this was to be whole hearted devotion of himself and his household. God had been faithful in the past and he would continue to be in the present and the future. Joshua knew the power of God at work. They would serve the Lord.

It is time to decide.

2. Questions and notes related to the passage

- a. Life’s conflict is not always won by the human effort and energy, but by God’s aid. How has this been the case in your life or family life? Has God ever fought for you?
- b. Joshua 24:14 “Therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and faithfulness” What would it mean for our group to serve God in sincerity and faithfulness?
- c. Joshua 24:15 “Choose this day whom you will serve.” Did Sunday’s covenant service help you to make a right decision?

3. Engaging with Trinity Sermons

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?
- b. Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

4. Radical Discipleship Question

And it is as we participate in God’s reign – which has come to us in Christ – that we discover life, guidance and salvation for ourselves. As we embrace God’s reign and take a decision to be God’s own people, and make a commitment to be spent in God’s work, we must remember that many desire to be Christians, they wish they were the servants of God, but they are unwilling to ‘choose’ to become such.

Here is the question recorded in Isaiah 6:8 ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’

Will you be God's messenger today?

Remember, you don't have to be a preacher to do this, but by saying:

"I am no longer my own but yours.

Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will

Put me to doing, put me to suffering Your will,

Let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you

Exalted for you, or brought low for you

Let me be full, let me be empty,

let me have all things, let me have nothing;

I fully and freely yield all things to your pleasure and disposal"

You are saying yes to being used by God.

The Act of Choice.

- a. Our choice should be Divine in its object. We should choose the Lord for our God.
- b. Our choice should be rational in its character. Let us wisely consider what we are doing.
- c. Our choice should be decisive in its nature.
- d. Our choice should be practical in its operations. Having chosen God, serve Him —
 - I. Totally
 - II. Uniformly
 - III. Evidently.

5. Close in Prayer for Trinity

This week we ask you to pray for Vision Sunday – 5 Feb and Annual Society Meeting – 6 Feb: That all members of Trinity would see the vision of 'A Great Commitment to the Great Commission' and respond to Christ through it.

8. This Week's Lectionary Readings for Daily Reading

Micah 6:1-8 Psalm 15 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 Matthew 5:1-12

Sunday 5 February

Call to true righteousness

No real relationship with God can be found outside of engagement with the struggles and needs of our world.

Welcome

This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and 'catch up' with each other.

Worship

Psalm of the week- Psalm 112:1-9

Word

Read Matthew 5:13-20

1. Read these notes on the passages

Today's message needs to be taken closely with the beatitudes which precede them. It continues the theme of shining as a light, to be salt, and to be a city on a hill which is to be living out the attitudes espoused in the beatitudes. God is light. Jesus is light. And, Matthew's Jesus says, so are you!

Together we are a city, already gathering for a feast and hearing God's word, but shining?

The strong emphasis on attitude and behaviour is underlined by 5:17-20. Too often, it seems we create a division between Christians who live with an experiential relationship with God, and those who are concerned to make a difference in the world, and who may, at times, seem not to be interested in experiencing God's presence or power. It's like relationship with God and service of God are separate and disconnected things, and we need to choose to be either one or the other. Yet, this week's Lectionary readings proclaim that both expressions of faith are one, and that those who seek an authentic spirituality must embrace both the experience of the divine and the call to work in the world. In truth no real impact can be made on the world without a vibrant, empowering relationship with God, and no real relationship with God can be found outside of engagement with the struggles and needs of our world.

Psalm 112:1-9, (10): Those who live righteously are compassionate, just and generous, and they have confidence that God will care for them.

Matthew 5:13-20: Jesus calls his followers to be as salt and light in the world – allowing our good works to be seen in order that others may praise God. Further, Jesus calls his followers to true righteousness, beyond the external legalism of the Pharisees, but embodying the true spirit of the law.

May our worship this week lead us into true encounter with God, and lead us out in the power of God’s Spirit to serve the world that God loves.

2. Questions and notes related to the passages

- a. What is authentic spirituality? In what ways do we know – and do others experience – that we have a real, vibrant relationship with God?
- b. True spirituality is seen in a living, vibrant relationship with God through Christ, and by God’s Spirit, which is then reflected and expressed through actions of compassion, justice and service in the world. If we live this kind of spirituality, it will inevitably draw others to this God we serve – and that’s a huge bonus for us! What is God’s call on our Home Group?

3. Engaging with Trinity Sermons

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?
- b. Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

4. Radical Discipleship Question

As in Christ, God came to raise up the least and to include and restore the marginalised, so God invites us to participate in this work of joy-bringing, life-giving and saving.

As we embrace the emphases on the purification of society: — how can we begin to identify the grieving and hurting ones in our midst and make a commitment to speak for them, to serve them and to protect them in any way we can?

Local Application

It is very easy to allow our sense of call to be reduced to becoming the conscience, or the moral watch dogs, of our communities and neighbourhoods. It is easy to point fingers and judge, to identify evil and, like Pharisees, make our religion about separating ourselves from 'others' who don't live up to our standards. This can be true for both conservatives and liberals, for both 'evangelicals' and 'social justice' Christians. But such engagement with the world seldom brings any real change. It is when we are salt and light – those who live out in our own lives what we seek to see in the world – that we make a real difference. Salt and light people are those who bring flavour and colour, integrity and insight, healing and compassion into the world by the way they live, love and interact. Their influence is felt not through judgement or legalism, but through a life lived with a completely different quality, that touches others with grace and truth and compassion and calls out to the best in them, leaving them longing to live better lives themselves. This is what it means to let our good deeds be seen so that others will praise God, and it's the only thing that really brings change into the world. As Gandhi famously said: "Be the change you wish to see in the world".

5. Close in Prayer for Trinity

Ministry to visit: Vision Sunday and ASM. For more information, please contact John Wessels

6. This Week's Lectionary Readings for Daily Reading

Isaiah 58:1-12 Psalm 112:1-10 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16)

Matthew 5:13-20

Sunday 12 February

Doing the work of the heart – Only God gives growth

Welcome

This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and 'catch up' with each other.

Worship

Psalm of the week – Psalm 119:1-8

Word

Read Matthew 5:21-37 – Doing the work of the heart – Only God gives growth.

1. Read these notes on the passage

Matthew has just presented Jesus as one who upholds the Law and the Prophets. That includes fulfilling what they predicted but also making sure what they intend is taken seriously. This would have met the criticism of fellow Jews who might have been suggesting that Jesus (and his followers) set the Law aside. It would have also countered those Christians (and their teachers) who seemed to do just that. According to Matthew, Jesus did not come to present a new set of commandments to replace the old, but to teach what the eternal commandments always meant. God requires righteousness (right living) and it has to be better than what he alleges many Jewish leaders of his time achieved (5:20).

Our passage takes in the first four of six contrasts which Matthew presents in order to show what doing God's Law really means and where its priorities lie. People can hear the commandments and not understand what they are really about. That is why Matthew introduces these six contrasts by saying: "you have heard that it was said to the people of old". It is like saying: you know what they said the commandments meant, well, let me tell you what they really mean!

Jesus teaches that righteousness is not just about following externals, but is about what happens in the heart. He challenges his hearers to

true integrity, goodness and compassion with regard to dealing with anger, lust, adultery, divorce and making promises (vows).

Reflections on the Theme

Not surprisingly, there is a clear development this week from last week's readings. The Old Testament passages, though, if looked at alone, can be misleading in the sense that they seem to indicate that obedience to God's law is a guarantee of health, wealth and happiness. This is, of course, much the way the world was believed to work back when these passages were written, but we know that it's a little more complex than this. It is this complexity that both Paul and Jesus try to engage in their teaching. For Paul it's about growing into a spiritual maturity that no longer needs competitive factions to feel secure and 'righteous'. Paul calls the Corinthians to recognise that all of God's servants are just that – people doing a job for God's reign. What is important is not aligning oneself with particular people, leaders or ideas, but following God's constant work of growth into becoming a true Christ-follower. For Christ, faithful and true spirituality is not about ticking off a few laws in a box of obedience, but is doing the work of the heart, of checking the real impact of who we are and how this works out in what we do and in our relationships. It is embracing the quest to reflect God's grace, God's goodness and God's integrity that is the heart of this week's call. Law is easy, and does not transform. Living with a God-formed integrity of heart, speech and action is what truly saves.

2. Questions and notes related to the passage

- d. How do the teachings of Jesus contrast with those we grew up knowing?
- e. Give examples of the society teachings which we need to disassociate with?
- f. What has been your definition of a servant?
- g. How does Paul's understanding of servanthood in 1 Corinthians 3:1-9 challenge your own?

3. Engaging with Trinity Sermons

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?

b. Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

4. Radical Discipleship Question

Branches have no existence but what they derive from the root. Streams have no existence but what they derive from the fountain. Actions have no moral existence but that which they derive from the heart. Let us cultivate purity of heart. Whatsoever opposes God in the heart, or keeps Him out of it, must be abhorred and cast out.

Allow God to capture your heart

5. Call to Discipleship

It is easy to go to church on Sunday and sing songs and pray prayers. It is easy to not steal, not kill, not commit adultery. But, simply obeying these laws does not bring life to us or to those around us. It is when we allow God to capture our hearts with the truth of the Gospel, when we allow God to continually and disturbingly challenge and grow our hearts, when we live from the inside out, ensuring that our hearts are filled with Christ's love and are right with God and others, and allow that to guide our speech and actions – then we become those who make a healing, restoring impact on the world around us, and who both find, and bring to others, fullness of life.

6. Close in Prayer for Trinity

This week we ask you to pray for:

- Thankfulness for the joy, care and fellowship you experience in your home group,
- new people to join groups in 2023.
- The GroupLink event on the 25th of February

7. This Week's Lectionary Readings for Daily Reading

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 Psalm 119:1-8 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Matthew 5:21-37

Sunday 19 February

The Transfiguration

This is the Jesus who leads us on and out into love and service, self-giving for others.

Welcome

This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and ‘catch up’ with each other.

Worship

Psalm of the week – Psalm 2

Word

Read Matthew 17:1-9 – This is the Jesus who leads us on and out into love and service, self-giving for others.

1. Read these notes on the passage

Make no mistake, ‘transfiguration’ is a strange word, one that you almost never use in everyday speech. Transfiguration Sunday isn’t all that much more familiar, it is the final Sunday of Epiphany, perhaps the least well understood season of the church year. The relationship to the Baptism of our Lord, the first Sunday in the season, is clear, as we are again invited to listen with the crowds (at Jesus’ Baptism) and disciples (at the Transfiguration) as a voice from heaven announces, “This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

At the same time, Transfiguration leans unmistakably into Lent, as Jesus comes down from the mountain to head to the death he speaks of during that very descent. The injunction to “listen to him” addressed to Peter, James, and John will become poignant, even painful in the weeks ahead as they regularly fail to do just that, or at least fail to understand what they are listening to. And those same words, when taken as addressed also to us as Jesus’ latest disciples, orientate us to listen and watch the Lord of Glory approach his destiny in Jerusalem so that we might more fully comprehend God’s purposes and work in Jesus.

Like the baptismal story this is a symbolic narrative which celebrates that in Jesus, heaven and earth intersect. In him God and humanity

come together. Turning the imagery upside down: in him surfaces the depth of life and the divine reality.

And if we look further, there is even a connection between the suffering which is announced in 16:21 and Jesus' insistence of doing God's will in the baptism scene and being recognized for it by God in the words from heaven.

Some have speculated that the transfiguration story may be an Easter vision read back into the ministry of Jesus. Transfiguration is what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 15 when he proclaims that we shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump. The same applies to the glistening white, even more striking in Matthew, and echoing the prediction of Daniel 12 that the righteous will shine like stars in the sky. The vision portrays in advance what will be seen when the kingdom comes.

Links with Moses are important for Matthew, because Jesus stands in continuity with the Law and the prophets have not come to replace Moses but to bring the authoritative interpretation of the Law given then and of God's will in the present. The motif of making dwellings is without the censure it receives in Mark. The real call is to hear who Jesus is and to 'listen to him'. These words may be echoing the prophecy about the prophet to come after Moses, reported in Deut 18:15-18, which include the same exhortation: 'listen to him!'. This may be even more likely in Matthew, who is keen on echoes of Moses in his portrait of Jesus. This is the Jesus who leads us on and out into love and service, self-giving for others.

On this mountain, the disciples had a foretaste, or moment's glimpse of what heaven would be like. Did the disciples really understand what happened that moment? Did they recognize the importance of that experience?

2. Questions and notes related to the passage

- a. Epiphany is about light, about illumination, about revelation. What does the transfiguration of Jesus reveal to you?
- b. How is the transfiguration a solid reason why you and I should take Jesus seriously?
- c. Is your home group ready to be the light in the dark world? What steps are you going to take towards being the light of the world?

3. Engaging with Trinity Sermons

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?
- b. Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

4. Radical Discipleship Question

The exercise of prayer. “He went up,” says St. Luke, “to a mountain to pray.” He was asking for the wisdom that discerned the Father’s will, for the submission that embraced it, for the perseverance that adhered to it, for the joy that illumined it. If you can dispense with prayer, Christ could not.

Discipleship is modelling and teaching Christians the precepts of the Bible—mainly prayer, doctrine, Christian living, and worship.

What challenges are you facing?

What locked doors do you want opened?

What fears do you have?

How are you going to use prayer as a key to the locked doors before you? Try to imitate Jesus this week, by praying unceasingly, trusting that God will help you.

5. Close in Prayer for Trinity

Ministry to visit:

- Celebrate your own Home Group,
- invite others to attend GroupLink.
- For more information contact Londeka Mabaso

9. This Week’s Lectionary Readings for Daily Reading

Exodus 24:12-18 Psalm 2 2 Peter 1:16-21 Matthew 17:1-9