



Christ Our Light.

Matthew 17:1-8 describes an event called the transfiguration. That word means change in appearance, which is what happened to Jesus. Why was it that Jesus's change in appearance happened in this way: "his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light"? What does light tell us about God?

1. Light is good

The Bible associates darkness with lots of bad things: frustration, chaos, danger, evil, and death. In stark contrast to this, life begins when God says, "Let there be light" (*Genesis 1:3*) and it is good (*1:4*). The sun's light is what brings life to our planet, all the food we eat exists because of light. Light also enables us to make the most of being alive: exploring and discovering, meeting and relating, working and creating.

With all these positive connotations, it's no surprise that light is associated with goodness, and therefore with God. But part of God's goodness is that He is the cause of light; without Him, light would not exist. He is the creator of all good things, His goodness is radiant.

2. Light is separate from darkness

Dark and light aren't two sides of the same coin, they aren't related or opposites, they are utterly different. This points us towards God's holiness, His being different to us and separate from us (*1 Timothy 6:16*). Just as our eyes cannot cope with exposure to sunlight, our sinful and weak selves cannot survive in the presence of God's pure goodness and greatness: His glorious holiness (*Isaiah 6:1-5, Revelation 1:12-18*). God is altogether too much for us.

Yet even as we realise this, and holy fear should rise in us as we do so, we hear Jesus say to us what He said to John both times when he fell on his face: “*Don’t be afraid*”. Why not?

3. Light illuminates

The transfiguration is a moment of illumination and revelation. Jesus “*had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him*” (*Isaiah 43:2*) because He had taken on human flesh to become like us in order to save us (*Philippians 2:6-8*). He did this so totally, so perfectly, that most people who met Him did not realise that they were speaking to the eternal almighty God but those at the transfiguration “*were eyewitnesses of his majesty*” (*2 Peter 1:16*)

More glorious than the divine light was God the Father’s declaration of love and authority (*Matthew 17:5*). This reveals to us that God has taken on human form: to be the Son of God is to be God, all the fullness of divinity is as much in Jesus as it is in the Father, and always has been (*Hebrews 1:3*).

Furthermore, we have the presence of Moses and Elijah and their conversation with Him. They represented the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets: all that God had said and done prior to Jesus coming to us. They were used by God to speak about Jesus, to prepare the world for Him. Luke tells us that they talked with Jesus about His “departure”, the Greek word there is “Exodus” (*Luke 9:31*), which indicates that through His death a great multitude would be brought into freedom from slavery to sin and death. This is the answer to a deeper question than “Why all the light?”: why would Jesus go down the mountain again? It’s dark and chaotic down there. The answer is that only by His death and resurrection could the light and life and love of God be shared with us.

Jesus shines brighter than the sun because He is more powerful than it, and we need Him more than we need it.

We could never have seen this unless God had shown us (*2 Corinthians 4:6*). His glorious light enables us to see His glorious light.

How does this event help us to draw closer to Jesus, how does it encourage us to believe Him for more signs and wonders?

- **This is what He is really like; He is always like this**

Jesus is in Heaven right now in all His glory (*Revelation 1:12-16*) and we need to remember this whilst living through “*this present darkness*” (*Ephesians 6:12*). Just as we don’t doubt the sun’s existence or light when it goes behind a cloud or at night but eagerly await its return, so we mustn’t let dark times define our perception of reality. God is real, He is good, He is loving, He is powerful. We can always call on Him, and always trust Him. Whether we see His light or not, He is with us (*Matthew 28:20, Psalm 23:4, Genesis 28:16*). One day, we will see Him more clearly than Peter, James and John did (*1 John 3:2*). Even now we hope in this, and it is true whether we see it presently or not.

Don’t doubt Him, don’t deride Him either – treating Him too lightly or scorning Him for what He has or hasn’t done. Delight in Him instead, remember what you’ve already seen of Him, and looking ahead with eyes of faith to the glorious future awaiting those who are faithful to Him.

- **Listen to Him**

The Father’s words take us from light as glory (“Wow!”), to light as truth (“Listen!”). We must obey Jesus.

Our listening begins with opening God’s Word, hearing Him speak to us through it – as He always is. Sometimes He’s saying things that tally perfectly with our present concerns or focus; sometimes He’s setting the agenda for us, so we have to adjust our expectations. “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*” (*Psalm 119:105*) Check out our “Reading God’s Word Together” (<http://www.kingschurchedinburgh.org/biblereading>) plan.

The elders at King’s believe that God has spoken to us about becoming a church where signs and wonders happen. We don’t know what’s going to happen but we believe that Jesus is alive and glorious, so we’re going to invite Him to shine on us and among us. Next month we’ve got Adrian Holloway coming to visit because he’s been listening to God and obeying Him in this way for years and he’s got loads to teach us.

Questions:

- Which of the aspects of Jesus’s nature that Luke spoke about did you find most exciting? Which did you find most challenging?
- Which do you think your non-Christians friends would be most keen to hear about

and which would they struggle with?

- What blinds us to these truths about God? What can we do to keep them at the front of our minds?
- The transfiguration is one of several events in the gospels (and there are many more in the rest of the Bible) when an encounter with God is terrifying at first for the people involved. Why do we not expect this? What's healthy about our expectations and what might not be?
- Have you any experiences of dark times during which you were able to trust that Jesus is light that you'd like to share with the group?
- What does the obedience of "Listen to Him" look like for you right now?
- How can you as a small group be responsive to what God is saying to us as a church?

Remember that Adrian Holloway will be doing a training day for us on Saturday 9th March, as well as praying for the sick and preaching on Sunday 10th March.



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