

St James' Church, Weybridge

Sunday next before Lent – 15 February 2026

Introduction and Call to Worship

We come to worship the God who transfigures our lives and enables us to talk to him, face to face. Let us come into God's presence with confidence and joy.

Today's Readings

First Reading 2 Peter 1:16-21

Peter reminds his hearers that he was an eyewitness as God glorified Jesus.

Gospel Matthew 17:1-9

Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a mountain, where they witness his transfiguration. Then a voice from above declares Jesus as 'Son' and commands all who hear to 'Listen to him.'

HOMILY *"and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"*" (Matthew 17:5)

Are you good at listening? Now I don't mean a casual hearing of what people say or tuning in to the radio, or television, or even streaming the St James' Service while doing something else...! I mean, really listening, paying full attention and taking in what is being said? I was told a story of a child who asked their parent why he was whispering while at the kitchen table. The Father told his son he was worried that MI5 could be listening in. The child laughed. The Dad laughed. Amazon Echo laughed.

Truth be told, it is not always easy to listen well. The Church of England has struggled with listening to each other and our different lived experiences; we have on occasions failed to do what God says we must all do – we must listen to Jesus, who searches for the lost and finds them, who calls us to love one another unconditionally!

Just before today's Gospel, Jesus had told the disciples that he wanted to go and pray. So, they trek up to this high point where clouds can sweep in and change everything in minutes. The view from a mountain top can be beautiful – a high point – but also deadly and dangerous.

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 17:1–9, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28–36) all describe the Transfiguration of Jesus. Our Lord leads three of his closest disciples, Peter, James and John to the Mount of Transfiguration to pray, when he radiates light. Then two of the greatest Old Testament heroes appear either side of him - Moses and Elijah no less, and Jesus speaks with them. Then a voice is heard, proclaiming, This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" In a mirror of his baptism, Jesus is named as "Son." The great theologian Thomas Aquinas considered the Transfiguration "the greatest miracle" in that it complemented Jesus' baptism and showed the perfection of life in Heaven. After his baptism, Jesus had to go into the desert and face temptation and now, after his transfiguration, our Lord will journey on to Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets, and face the politics of earthly power and challenge of evil again.

For Matthew, the Transfiguration forms a pivotal moment in his Gospel account with the setting upon a mountain presented as the point where human nature meets God: the meeting place for the temporal and the eternal, with Jesus himself as the connection, transforming lives.

Presumably, the three witnesses Peter, James and John, would have known their Hebrew Scriptures well, hence Peter's desire to make dwellings, one for each. Things become more challenging as the cloud descends, the way ahead less clear. Have you ever felt like that? To enter the cloud of unknowing is scary. At such times we dare to place our trust in that heavenly voice, be open to listening to Jesus, in prayer, Word and Sacrament.

Matthew wishes to place all this excitement in context: Moses and Elijah are the scriptures personified, they represent both the Law and the prophets, the great tradition that points to the work of God who saves people and builds the kingdom. They stand and point to Jesus, the one we are to listen too, the new Covenant revealed to bring the Creator God and humanity closer than ever before. They affirm him as Lord and the heart of what God has been doing throughout history, and then they go away again, leaving Jesus alone. Then the Gospel pivots towards what is to come, the journey to the Cross.

Faith can seem like a trek up a high mountain, with all kinds of stumbling blocks along the way and dangers too. The summit may feel hard to reach. We can feel ourselves weary from our daily lives, trudging up higher, over hurdles. Harder still, having arrived at the summit, we can find ourselves enveloped by terrifying cloud, as we long to gaze upon the face of Christ, the transfigured love of God. But amid this fear there is also the potential for wonderful transformation and at our Lord's transfiguration, a reminder to "Listen".

Are we good at listening to Jesus? Let us pause for a moment and think. Do we do what God commanded from the clouds, and listen to the voice of the Lord, in prayer, in scripture in the sacraments? Here at St James' we are entering a period when we need to listen very carefully to what Jesus is saying to us, as we long for our church life to be spiritually and physically transformed; as we live through a time in the world with increased challenges – personal, family, work, church, political, international – a time of local government reorganisation and so much more. Change is all around us.

At this stage in our journey together we really need to listen to what God is saying to us here, through his Son our Lord Jesus Christ and be guided by the Holy Spirit, the Advocate who will lead us into all truth. Remember how this all started – with prayer, for it is there we look upon the face of Christ and discover ourselves to be loved by God, forgiven our failings and transformed by his creative glory. By looking outwards to the world around us, the community of Weybridge in all its diversity, our faces can shine with prayer, and our presence transform the lives of many – that just as we seek to be transformed, and shine with faith, we are able to offer transformation to others around us also.

The promise of this story is that like Christ our very lives can be transfigured by prayer. So too can the challenges we face as a community if we allow God's spirit to illumine our path. In all that we are about at St James' Weybridge, may we pray, and "Listen to Him!" Amen.

Father Damian Harrison-Miles, February 2026