

Worship For the Love of ...

On 14-15 February 2015, the St Valentine's Day weekend, your church, congregation or parish is invited to explore in worship and action love for God's creation, using resources specially written for the occasion.

This is part of a broader campaign, ***For the Love of ...***, which recognises that everyone loves something that is threatened by climate change. It asks people to share what these things are, and to join together to demand climate action, for the sake of all the things that matter most, both here in Scotland and further afield.

The campaign comes from [Stop Climate Chaos Scotland](#) (SCCS), a diverse coalition of 60 organisations in Scotland campaigning together on climate change. Members include faith groups such as the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, Christian Aid, SCIAF, Tearfund, Eco-Congregation Scotland, A Rocha, the Salvation Army, Methodist Relief and Development Fund and the Iona Community.

You can view a short, imaginative video on *For the Love of ...* at <http://www.theclimatecoalition.org/campaigns/love>

As well as inviting us to think about the thing we love and how it is affected by climate change, the campaign encourages us to call on Scotland's new First Minister to prioritise this issue during a key year for climate action. A resource pack to help people organize local events, either independently or related to Sunday worship can be found at <http://www.stopclimatechaos.org/get-involved-event-near-you-valentine%E2%80%99s-weekend>

Additional Sources Concerning Responses to Climate Change

[SCCS](#)

[Eco-Congregation Scotland](#)

[Christian Aid](#)

[SCIAF](#)

[A Rocha](#)

[Tearfund](#)

[Church of Scotland](#)

Worship For the Love of God's Creation

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Prayers

Opening sentence

In contemplation of created things
By steps may we ascend to God

[John Milton *Paradise Lost*, V, 511]

Collect

God of life and glory,
your Son was revealed in splendour
on the mountain.
For the achievement of our self-will we climb the mountain
but lose our way in a cloud that covers us with shadow.
Help us to reorient our minds and hearts
so that we may experience the inner change
that will transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and for ever.

Kyrie

Creator God, in your overflowing love you have governed and arranged your creation but we have
disordered the world with chaos and destruction.

Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy,

Lord Jesus, we climb the mountain to experience the view yet fail to apprehend the vastness of the
earth's mystery and beauty.

Christ, have mercy

Christ, have mercy

Holy Spirit, you nourish and increase the abundance of the divine garden but we are not satisfied with enough and cry for more.

Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

Intercessions

Almighty God, when they were on the mountaintop, Peter, James and John looked upon the majesty of Jesus Christ and heard your voice declaring him to be your Son. Lead us to that mountain, into the cloud of unknowing, into the luminous darkness where we may know you, and rest in your presence, before we descend to the place where we walk each day.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, from this lofty place, we gaze in awe at the beauty of this sacred earth, perceive its heights and depths, nourished by the fountain of your love. Forgive us that we have abused the world and marred your image. Help us to act with reverence, and live lightly, for the love of your creation.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Son of Humankind, lover of life, plant in us your imperishable love. Forgive the shallowness of our love for others, the insensitive way we live our lives, and the lack of understanding of the way that we interact adversely with people of other lands. Teach us to live graciously, as you are gracious to us.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Great Creating Spirit, you brought order out of chaos, moving in the deep of creation. Pour out your Spirit into our hearts that we may reveal your power in our lives and use the gifts you have given us for the benefit of your creation.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Closing Prayer

Holy and wonderful God, you sustain us with the Bread of Life, open our ears to your Word and our eyes to the glory of your created Word. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to reach out in service and in love as stewards of your creation.

Thoughts on the Bible Readings

2 Kings 2: 1-12

The time for departure is near as far as Elijah is concerned but Elisha is not keen to let go, despite discouragements from the former, and irritating reminders from companies of prophets. Previously called from the farm field (1 Kings 19: 21), where symbolically Elijah placed his mantle upon him, Elisha is not now eager to take it for himself, though picking it up is what follows immediately upon the events in this passage (2: 13).

Paradoxically, Elijah's departure is necessary so that there can be a prospect of his return as the harbinger of God's new age, an expectation that was still live among Jewish people in Jesus' time. Indeed, the concluding words of the Old Testament (Malachi 4: 5-6) are of how, when the prophet returns, 'he will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents.' (4: 6) Many years later, Elijah's appearance, along with Moses, in conversation with Jesus should have alerted Peter, James and John to the fact that this new age was imminent.

Elisha's emotional cry of 'Father, father', as Elijah is taken away, certainly suggests that their relationship, where one led and the other followed, has become akin to the bond of parent and child. Tearing his clothes is a further indication of the depths of Elisha's feelings.

There are different reasons why one person might choose to become a follower of another, and then to continue following them. Elisha's situation indicates that love is a powerful motivator. It is also a reminder that love for Jesus motivates many Christians. Like Elisha, however, we also then carry on in life, in the world, working out how to make that love and loyalty count in the here and now, for ourselves and for our neighbours.

Psalm 50: 1-6

When you read these verses do you hear echoes from the other readings? Does the God who comes in a mighty tempest with a devouring fire before him (50: 3) make you think of Elijah taken up in a whirlwind into heaven? Alternatively, since 'God shines forth' in this psalm (50: 2) perhaps it is the transfigured Jesus on the mountain top who comes to mind.

The echoes we hear and the connections we can make are not only visual but relational. It is God's people who are to be judged (50: 4), and judged not as strangers but as those already in a chosen (covenant) relationship with God (50: 5). Covenant implies not only feelings of love or loyalty but also demands practical expression in actions.

A God who is righteous by nature (50: 6) looks for the faithful ones' actions to be righteous, which for a people will be expressed through doing justice. The divine judge's jurisdiction is creation: 'he calls to the heavens above and to the earth' (50: 4). This then is the arena in which a people faithful to God should live justly. They are faithful to a God

who desires and demands righteousness and justice for the earth and for all of its inhabitants.

Mark 9: 2-9

Who is Jesus? When we have an answer to that question, what should we do in response? Previously, Jesus had asked, 'Who do people say that I am?' (8: 27) and Peter, though providing an initial answer ('you are the Messiah') then angered Jesus by failing to understand what sort of actions would flow from that.

Now, Peter is confronted with more questions about Jesus, seen in the company of Elijah and Moses, his appearance transfigured, his clothes dazzling white. Once again, Peter struggles to make an appropriate response, with his suggestion of a minor building project to mark the occasion.

Elijah and Moses were prophetic figures. Both were involved in public, practical action in opposition to the powers that be. Additionally, Moses was the one tasked to carry God's law to the people in the guise of the Ten Commandments. Their conversation with Jesus takes place as he is heading for Jerusalem, and a confrontation with authority.

Discovering how churches and individuals can express the prophetic whilst taking due note of a society's legitimate demands is no easy task, either for Peter or for us. The divine voice which issues from the cloud, expressing love for a Son, demanding that disciples pay attention to Jesus' voice (9: 7), is a good place to start.

Responding to God's love entails action in the world, not simply contemplation of the divine. After all, Jesus and the disciples have to descend from the mountain top, carrying that experience into the concerns of the world they lived in then (9: 14), and which we inhabit today.

Thoughts on the Sermon

2 Kings 2: 1-12; Psalm 50: 1-6; Mark 9: 2-9

'And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.' (Mark 9: 4) Since we are not told in the Gospel, we are left to speculate on the content of the trio's conversation, as it was back then, or what it might have been in different circumstances today. What, for example, might they have said if asked to complete the phrase, 'For the Love of ...' the tagline of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland's call for climate action for the sake of all the things that matter most to people.

[The 'For the Love of ...' campaign features a publicity video where people talk about things they love – gardening, chocolate, football, grandchildren. The video then goes on to show these are impacted by climate change, which affects what can grow, the price of

commodities, the availability of land, and quality of life for future generations.

<http://fortheloveof.org.uk/>

They might have answered, 'For the love of hills and mountains.' All three have significant connections with hills and mountains. Elijah triumphed over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). Moses encountered God in a cloud on Mount Sinai, returning with the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19-20). In the Gospels, hills provide Jesus with a refuge from the demands of the crowd and the venue for preaching the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). And, of course, the moment of his transfiguration takes place 'up a high mountain' (Mark 9: 2), which three disciples have ascended along with him.

Ascent is a metaphor widely used in the Christian tradition. Sometimes it speaks of the upward journey of the soul to God. At other times it acts to express a movement within, a time to reflect on what should be at the centre of our spiritual lives rather than being crowded out by things of less value or significance. One of the risks of the spiritual journey of ascent however is that it can also become a way of seeking transcendence as an escape from the 'mundane' things of the earth below.

No such 'escape' is on offer to Jesus, for beyond this hill of transfiguration another hill awaits; the hill of Zion – Jerusalem – and there, his cross. God's voice, coming from the cloud, carries the authority of the creator of the heavens above, the earth beneath, and its peoples (Psalm 50: 4) Was God to complete the phrase, 'For the love of ...', then 'the world' (which includes supposedly 'mundane' hills and mountains) might be the offered answer. After all, love for the world is what motivates the sending of Jesus into the world; his life, ministry, and journey to Zion's hill (John 3: 16).

Divine love demands human response, but what form should such response take? Today, we get an opportunity to pause, to consider where we have come from and what sustains us on our journey in life; a chance to gain a new perspective of the awesome vastness of the earth's beauty, and a sense too of its mystery, informed however incompletely by the knowledge that in this landscape are found thousands of species of animals and plants, the immensity of God's creative gift to us. Evidence of God's divine love.

Peter's struggle to respond appropriately (Mark 9: 5-6) to a vision of divine love shows that this is not always easy to do. Details of practical responses (which are needed), however, begin with a loving orientation, which reflects God's love for the world. For the love of Jesus, for the love of God, for the love of your neighbour, we are called to love God's world.

Hymns

CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4*

HAAM – *Hymns Ancient & Modern (Standard ed.)*

MP – *Mission Praise (Complete)*

R&S – *Rejoice and Sing* StF – *Singing the Faith*

A song of love	R&S
Beloved, let us love: for love is of God	R&S, HAAM
Bright the cloud, bright the glory	CH4
Come down, O Love Divine	CH4, MP, R&S, StF, HAAM
God, the Lord, the king almighty (<i>Psalms 50</i>)	CH4
Great God, your love has called us here	CH4, R&S, StF
How/'Tis good, Lord, to be here!	R&S, HAAM
Jesus on the mountain peak	StF
Lord, the light of your love is shining	CH4, MP, StF
Love divine, all loves excelling	CH4, MP, R&S, StF, HAAM
Love is the touch of intangible joy	CH4
Loving God, you see us here	CH4
O vision blest of heavenly light	R&S
Swiftly pass the clouds of glory	StF
The great love of God	CH4, R&S
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases	MP, StF
The love of God be with you	CH4
The love of God comes close	MP, R&S, StF
The love of God is broad like beach and meadow	R&S
Transfigured Christ, none comprehends	StF