

# GOSPEL WONDERS

**A different way to look at the gospels**

## **The Transfiguration (suggested) Order of Service**

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(all hymns from Singing the Faith)

## Opening Prayers

Today we think of our Heavenly Father in His glory and give our praise and thanks.

So, we pray.

Let us think of the beauties of the world around us and how blessed we are in so many ways: we think of the grace and strength of trees, the contrasting colours of nature, some muted pastels others bright and vibrant. All these and thousands of others speak of a great designer's hand. We acknowledge the way in which one-part fits together with another and how life exists one element fitting with another. We are blessed by the knowledge that we ourselves live in the love of that creator.

So, with that in mind we give thanks to our Lord, acknowledge in His place in our lives and the blessings we receive.

But within this we also have to acknowledge our own failings and imperfections. We do on occasion fail to live up to our own expectations, our actions are less than we would wish for.

When that happens, do we have the courage to accept it and sincerely seek forgiveness for if we do forgiveness will be ours.

Do we need a little time this morning so that, in the quiet we can bring anything that is on our hearts before Him.

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Know that through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus our sins are forgiven

Amen

We will now join together in the Lord's Prayer.

## Introduction

Today we are privileged to go on a special day out with Jesus. We are part of a very select party. Peter James and John are the only others invited. This was a day to be remembered: one that they would certainly remember until their dying day. It gave a glimpse of the glory of heaven but also left them shaken and bewildered with questions that tore into their very make-up.

Putting ourselves there that day we can join them and share in their puzzlement as they left the plain and set of up the mountain. There wonder and maybe disbelief as the shining figures appeared and enveloped them, the terror as the storm exploded around them temporally blinding and deafening them and the problem they had trying to understand what Jesus said about not telling anybody what had happened and what did it mean about dying but coming back. For surly such a thing was impossible. Wasn't it?

How could mere men understand all that? It shows a great deal of faith and trust in Jesus, their leader and master, for them to carry on.

Our story today then has all the elements of a good mystery. A mystery journey, strange happenings, exceptional and frightening weather, a mysterious message and a secret to be kept at the end.

Shall we see what it is all about?

## Rachel's Story

You ask who I am. I'm Rachel, and I don't really know why you are asking me about this. I was a lot younger then and there are others who know the story better.

I mean I had been one of the master's followers for some time but to be honest a lot of the things He said I didn't understand. At least not then.

Anyway, that day. Well, it was in a lot of ways, an ordinary sort of day except that Jesus took Peter James and John and set of along the track up to the mountain. That wasn't in itself unusual. Jesus often went off on His own and it wasn't the first time He'd taken the other three.

Still, it was up to them. I got on with some of my chores around the camp then sat chatting with the other women.

Then they came back, and I tell you it was scary. They looked pale and stressed and walked in quietly and sat down. No sign of what they had been doing. Then the whole camp went quiet waiting.

I had always liked Peter, the best of Jesus's men. He was always solid, and sometimes got into trouble for speaking out when he should have shut up, but if the Master was having a problem with some trouble maker then you could bet he would be close by, and you knew that with him around Jesus would be safe. I think he quite liked me as well. He used to call me 'nosey', perhaps because I was the one always asking questions, and I think the youngest of the women who regularly travelled with, and looked after the Master and His group.

I thought, if anybody would tell me what had happened it would be Peter, so I went and sat beside him and asked him.

"Not now Nosey"

He said quietly. Then he got up and walked away down to the lakeside. After a brush off like that I left him to it for about an hour, until it was time to eat, so I took him something on a plate. He just said

"Thank you, but I'm not hungry"

And carried on throwing stones into the water.

Anyway by the next morning the camp was getting back to normal and so everybody just shrugged and said 'whatever' and that was that.

### UNTIL

That terrible time. Other people will tell you what happened that terrible week. The crowds. Soldiers. What they did to the Master. I saw Him as they took Him up covered in blood dragging that big piece of wood and I still hear, in my dreams, the sound of that hammer as it hit the nails and His cries of pain as they raised him up.

We were all broken and just didn't know where to turn. Then, came the stories and rumours about Him still being alive. We just didn't know what to do or believe.

Then Peter broke down and told us what happened that day. That they had heard from God, Elijah and Moses who had told them that they must trust in Jesus. He was the one we had been waiting for. Then Jesus had told them not to tell anybody until He had risen from the dead. All that had been too much for them to take in at the time, but now what He told us made sense.

What did it mean? It meant that Jesus was alive and with us. That He was sent by God and that we must keep faith and trust.

Well! A lot of people have tried to explain that happened, People who would call themselves very clever, but you asked what it all meant to me. After those few weeks so much has changed, then I don't think any of the others have been the same since, When I heard Peter tearing his heart out to tell that story I realised that I had been given something special and through all the ups and downs of life I have trusted and been kept safe.

What! What did you say? Write my story. Maybe one day.

*(Big wink at the Congregation - optional)*

## Isaac's Story

You may be wondering who I am and what have I to do with this story. Well, for what it's worth my name is Isaac and I am a merchant. Travel all over the area. Unless you have done business with me that won't mean a lot to you and after I have told you this story you will probably never hear from me again. I am just one of those people trying to make a living in a big cruel world. But this time I walked into something I didn't understand then and still don't understand it now.

It was like this. I had just come back from a business trip that had taken about six weeks. Now when I got home it was a habit of mine to go up into the mountains. Partly to relax after all those miles on a camel and then to sort out what my next move was to be. I had a favourite spot. A boulder just a few metres below the flat top of the mountain. Sitting there I could look down on the town and see right down the valley. I could see the ants or maybe it was people crawling around down there and could hear their cries floating up to me on the still air. Life just felt good.

I must have been sitting there for half an hour or so when I heard voices and looking over my shoulder, I saw four men walking or should I say stumbling along towards the summit. There was one, who was obviously the leader because he was setting the pace, and the others were trying to keep up with Him and blowing a bit at the effort. They didn't see me, sitting in the shelter of my rock but anyway they had as much right as me to be there.

So, they got to the top. Then the world went a bit peculiar.

Instead of admiring the view and then going home the leader started shining with a pure white light and then a couple of other men turned up and they were also glowing white. Well, you can believe it when I that I wasn't going to get involved in this so I made myself as small as I could and watched. Because it was so still up there, I could hear what was being said. Things about Elijah and Moses and God. Then somebody talked of building tabernacles. I couldn't make head or tail of it but I knew what a storm was and suddenly, without warning one of them hit us and it was a beauty. The clouds rolled over, lightning flashed all around the hills and the thunder crashed in such a way that the very ground shook. You would be surprised how small you can make yourself if you try. At this point I was down on the floor, my robe over my head and wishing I was somewhere else. Then to put the lid on it a big booming voice said something about being pleased with His son and to trust Him. I risked a peep but covered up again very quickly and I mean very quickly.

Then it went quiet. I expected to find bodies all over the place but there they were, the original four walking towards me. I agree that the back three looked a bit pasty but otherwise all was sweet and calm. As they got level with me the leader stopped, told them not to tell anybody till He had come back from the dead then walked on calm as you like.

I tell you felt as if I had come back from somewhere. To be fair you are the first people I have told about this and I bet you have some doubts about me. The thing is I saw the leader again today. Doing a bit of business in Jerusalem today I heard there was a crucifixion going on so went to have a looksee. There He was. I had a job recognising Him though. But that's the Romans for you. They are not the most civilised if they get their hands on you despite what they say about their glorious civilisation. Anyway, there He was nailed up breathing His last. You know I have seen a few of them but nobody should die like that. It's inhuman that's what it is.

What do you say? 'I'm talking rubbish' I've told you what I heard and saw.

Now you can make of it what you like. Just pass that Jug of wine along.



## Conclusion

Jesus left people asking the questions. What was all that about?

Do you think that Peter, James and John put their heads together and decided that Jesus was demonstrating that he had some pretty important contacts in heaven and not to worry because He had everything covered? Oh! Yes, by the way I am going to die soon but that's alright because I won't stay dead.

Do you think they would have worked this out and told the others who would then have shrugged and said OK.

Now my view is that Jesus often put things into riddles because the truth would sound impossible. Knock the Temple down then rebuild it in three days. Come back from the dead. Can you imagine the response from his faithful followers, remember they had given up three years of their lives trailing round the country side because they believed in Him. If He said "Look. I am going to be arrested and found guilty by an illegally set up court, then I am going to be beaten up by the Romans before they kill me by nailing me up on a cross. But don't worry about it everything will work out for the best."

Now I don't know about you but I think the disciple's reaction would be.

"Oh no you're not. We're are going to take you back to Galilee and keep you there at least until the Passover is over. You are too important to risk your life like that."

Hence the riddles and the clue is there, we find it later in the gospels when we read "And they remembered what Jesus said."

It didn't make a lot of sense at the time but later on after the resurrection, they thought back and things slipped into place.

Thinking about it, our story today was probably the biggest of these riddles. But when they thought back, they must have realised that Jesus was saying to them "Look! I came here today to make sure that I was doing the right thing. I had Moses and Elijah there to confirm it. You saw them. Then my Heavenly Father told you who I was, His Son and that He was backing me up in what I was doing. You do not understand now but you will. Just keep faith with me"

As ever that same message comes down to us today. Jesus was not just some wandering mystic. He was the Son of the Heavenly Father, the Creator God. While the forces of evil may, on occasion, attack Him, Jesus was fully supported and loved by the supreme power.

So are we.

## Prayers of intercession

As well as those many blessings we have already given thanks for, the world in which we live does, at times, seem to be a difficult, confusing place and dangerous place. Situations which are out of our immediate control. We think about some of them now and take them to the Father in prayer leaving silent spaces for personal reflection.

So, let us so pray.

Firstly, we think of the church, both locally here at \_\_\_\_\_ and throughout world. We know some of the challenges it faces and we would pray for all its members, for all those who work for it to spread your message of love, administer to its needs and make the decisions that keep it moving in the direction that you would wish it to go. We would pray that you strengthen and guide them, in all their efforts.

We also know that there are areas where worshipping you is not blessed with freedom and that people are persecuted simply for acknowledging you as Lord. We would ask that in such places you will be there and let them feel your presence and know that in their endeavours they are not alone.

Then Lord look at our world. Certainly the present health of its people gives cause for concern and we would pray for all those people who keep society going, but stepping aside from that there seems to be so much violence, exploitation and suffering caused through selfishness. Where so often we hear of people with power, authority and wealth who use it to abuse and misuse the lives of others less fortunate in order to gain more. We would ask Lord that you invest their lives with the message of love so that they will find ways to serve their fellows rather enslave them. There is just so much that works against your message. Please bring your love.

And then we all have issues and situations that rest heavily on our hearts. A sick friend or relative whose health gives us concern, who are suffering tension or anxiety or suffering those illness that hurt the mind. Or situations both personal and worldwide that are causing us worries. We pause for a little while to think on this and then use the silence to be quiet and bring these to the Lord.

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All this we bring to you Lord, knowing that you hear us.

So, Lord your world needs you. Please be with your people, be with us and here us we pray

**AMEN.**

## Epilogue

And now my friends our service ended,  
Our hymns are sung our prayers ascended.  
To the throne of God on high,  
To the one who never dies.  
This is no vision, not a dream.  
We share in His eternal scheme.  
He sends us out our race to run  
To follow His beloved son.  
Accept His love its truth sustains,  
Without it little else remains.  
So now good friends it's time to go.  
His blessing take to all you know.

*Dave Bissenden 2017*