

Last Sunday after the Epiphany, February 14, 2021

Collect: O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: 2 Kings 2:1-12 read from the Christian Standard Bible

2 The time had come for the Lord to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal, and Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; the Lord is sending me on to Bethel.”

But Elisha replied, “As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel.

3 Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said, “Do you know that the Lord will take your master away from you today?”

He said, “Yes, I know. Be quiet.”

4 Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here; the Lord is sending me to Jericho.”

But Elisha said, “As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went to Jericho.

5 Then the sons of the prophets who were in Jericho came up to Elisha and said, “Do you know that the Lord will take your master away from you today?”

He said, “Yes, I know. Be quiet.”

6 Elijah said to him, “Stay here; the Lord is sending me to the Jordan.”

But Elisha said, “As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on.

7 Fifty men from the sons of the prophets came and stood observing them at a distance while the two of them stood by the Jordan. 8 Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water, which parted to the right and left. Then the two of them crossed over on dry ground. 9 When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken from you.”

So Elisha answered, "Please, let me inherit two shares of your spirit."

10 Elijah replied, "You have asked for something difficult. If you see me being taken from you, you will have it. If not, you won't."

11 As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire with horses of fire suddenly appeared and separated the two of them. Then Elijah went up into heaven in the whirlwind.

12 As Elisha watched, he kept crying out, "My father, my father, the chariots and horsemen of Israel!"

Hear what the spirit is saying to God's people

Psalm 50:1-6 read from the Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 The Lord, the God of gods, has spoken; *

he has called the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

2 Out of Zion, perfect in its beauty, *

God reveals himself in glory.

3 Our God will come and will not keep silence; *

before him there is a consuming flame,
and round about him a raging storm.

4 He calls the heavens and the earth from above *

to witness the judgment of his people.

5 "Gather before me my loyal followers, *

those who have made a covenant with me
and sealed it with sacrifice."

6 Let the heavens declare the rightness of his cause; *

for God himself is judge.

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 read from the Douay-Rheims Bible

3 And if our gospel be also hid, it is hid to them that are lost,

4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ our Lord; and ourselves your servants

through Jesus.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus.

Hear what the spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: Mark 9:2-9 read from the English Standard Version Bible Anglicized

2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one[a] on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi,[b] it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” 6 For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son;[c] listen to him.” 8 And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On February 15 we celebrate the life of Thomas Bray, Priest and Missionary. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

Thomas Bray was born at Marton, in Shropshire, England, in 1656. After graduating from Oxford and being ordained, he became a country parson in Warwickshire. In 1696 he was invited by the Bishop of London to be responsible for the oversight of Church work in the colony of Maryland. Three years later, as the Bishop’s Commissary, he sailed to America for his first, and only, visitation. Though he spent only two and a half months in Maryland, Bray was deeply concerned about the neglected state of the American churches, and the great need for the education of clergymen, lay people, and children. At a general visitation of the clergy at Annapolis, before his return to England, he emphasized the need for the instruction of children, and insisted that no clergyman be given a charge unless he had a

good report from the ship in which he crossed the Atlantic, “whether . . . he gave no matter of scandal, and whether he did constantly read prayers twice a day and catechize and preach on Sundays, which, notwithstanding the common excuses, I know can be done by a minister of any zeal for religion.” His understanding of, and concern for, Native Americans and blacks were far ahead of his time. He founded thirty-nine lending libraries in America, as well as numerous schools. He raised money for missionary work and influenced young English priests to go to America.

Bray tried hard to have a bishop consecrated for America, but failed. His greatest contributions were the founding of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, both of which are still effectively in operation after two and a half centuries of work all over the world.

From 1706 to 1730, Bray was the rector of St. Botolph Without, Aldgate, London, where, until his death there on February 15, 1730, at the age of 72, he served with energy and devotion, while continuing his efforts on behalf of black slaves in America, and in the founding of parochial libraries.

When the deplorable condition of English prisons was brought to Bray’s attention, he set to work to influence public opinion and to raise funds to alleviate the misery of the inmates. He organized Sunday “Beef and Beer” dinners in prisons, and advanced proposals for prison reform. It was Thomas Bray who first suggested to General Oglethorpe the idea of founding a humanitarian colony for the relief of honest debtors, but he died before the Georgia colony became a reality.

Let us pray: O God of compassion, who opened the heart of your servant Thomas Bray to the needs of the Church in the New World, and to found societies to relieve them: Make the Church diligent at all times to propagate the Gospel, and to promote the spread of Christian knowledge; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**