



## 'Worship at home' Sunday October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2023



We come to worship God,  
who we find in the holy spaces and the  
ordinary places of our lives, sometimes in unexpected ways.

*The LORD reigns: let all  
peoples, and all the earth  
tremble in holy awe. The  
LORD is great, exalted over  
all the nations.*

*Let all peoples praise the  
great name of the LORD,  
the one name to be held in  
holy awe. Holy is the LORD,  
our God.*

*From Psalm 99:1-3  
© Jeff Shrowder 1999.*



We come to worship God who is holy. We use the word holy to mean 'sacred', 'pure' or 'virtuous', and 'deserving of awe and adoration' ([www.collinsdictionary.com/](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/)). The Hebrew word for holy is *qđš* (*qadesh*) which means 'to purify or set apart'. God is beyond all created things, infinite and unconceivable, yet at the same time personal and loving, inviting each of us into intimate relationship. It can be difficult for us to comprehend this mystery which is the foundation of our faith.

### **How do you understand God as holy?**

### **How does this shape your relationship with God?**

One of the great ancestors of our faith is Moses, who was called by God from a burning bush, empowered to perform wonders to guide the Israelites out of Egypt, given the strength, wisdom and faith to lead a wandering people to an unknown destination. Yet Moses yearns for a more complete knowledge of who God is. Like his fellow Israelites who fashioned a golden calf as a symbol of God to carry with them, Moses seeks evidence of God's presence and splendour. God's assurance does not convince Moses, and he asks for something of God to be revealed.

### **Exodus 33:12-23**

*Moses said to the Lord, "It is true that you have told me to lead these people to that land, but you did not tell me whom you would send with me. You have said that you know me well and are pleased with me. Now if you are, tell me your plans, so that I may serve you and continue to please you. Remember also that you have chosen this nation to be your own." The Lord said, "I will go with you, and I will give you victory." Moses replied, "If you do not go with us, don't make us leave this place. How will anyone know that you are pleased with your people and with me if you do not go with us? Your presence with us will distinguish us from any other people on earth." The Lord said to Moses, "I will do just as you have asked, because*

*I know you very well and I am pleased with you." Then Moses requested, "Please, let me see the dazzling light of your presence." The Lord answered, "I will make all my splendour pass before you and in your presence I will pronounce my sacred name. I am the Lord, and I show compassion and pity on those I choose. I will not let you see my face, because no one can see me and stay alive, but here is a place beside me where you can stand on a rock. When the dazzling light of my presence passes by, I will put you in an opening in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take my hand away, and you will see my back but not my face."*

*Good News Bible*



*Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide you,  
though the sinful human eye your glory may not see,  
you alone are holy, there is none beside  
you perfect in power, in love and purity.*

*Together in Song 132  
Reginald Heber 1783-1826*



This story reminds us that God is too holy to be visualised and cannot be contained or described in physical terms. Even Moses cannot see or know all there is to know about the mystery of God, who remains unseen, elusive and incomprehensible. However, he was able to experience enough of the glory and holiness of God to be encouraged in his faith and assured of God's presence with him. He was given sufficient to continue in his journey.

*All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever greater degree of glory.*

*2 Corinthians 3:18*

Several hundred years after the story of Moses, a young woman finds herself expecting a 'holy child' who 'will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). In this baby we see the glory of God revealed more fully. Jesus Christ embodies the presence of God in human form. As followers of Christ, we are called to grow in holiness, becoming more like Christ. This is only possible in and through the power of the Holy Spirit, as we are sustained, guided and nurtured in our faith.

*So get rid of your old self, which made you live as you used to - the old self that was being destroyed by its deceitful desires. Your hearts and minds must be made completely new, and you must put on the new self, which is created in God's likeness and reveals itself in the true life that is upright and holy.*

*Ephesians 4:22-24*

**In what ways do you desire to become more Christ-like?**

**Reflect on which aspects of your life you might be rid of, in order for the Holy Spirit to make you completely new.**

**Ask God to help you leave these behind, and to live a life that is upright and holy.**

**Be Holy**

1 PETER 1:13-16

*But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written:*

*"Be holy, because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15,16 3*

Our faith is full of mysterious tension, seeing God as:  
Awe inspiring and magnificent  
Personal, intimate and loving  
Greater than and beyond all things  
In all and through all  
Beyond understanding or imagination  
Always present and accessible  
Set apart, righteous and holy  
Cares about our deepest needs

**What other tensions or questions do you hold in your faith?  
How might these questions strengthen your faith?**

Sometimes we can simply hold these different aspects of God in tension, knowing that we will never fully understand. Like Moses, we yearn for a more complete knowledge of who God is. However, it is in part because of the mystery of God that God is holy and glorified. Whatever we may experience or know about God, there is always more to be experienced and known. God is close to us, loves us and stands with us, but at the same time far above us, far beyond our knowing. This is our challenge, and our hope, as we trust in the holy One who leads us on.

*For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:12,13*

**Closing prayer**

Gracious God, you are holy and righteous. Give us a glimpse of your glory, that we might know your presence. By your Spirit sanctify us to become more like Christ, living out our faith in love, and showing you to those around us in all we do. Amen.



And may the glory of God's goodness be revealed to you;  
May the grace and peace of Jesus Christ be your foundation;  
And may the inspiration of the Holy Spirit fill you with joy. Amen!