

Hymn of the Week

Last Sunday before Lent

Christ, whose glory fills the skies

Words: Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Tune: Rattisbon from Werner's Choralbuch, Leipzig 1815

This week, after all the celebration of Christmas, the manifestation of Christ to the world in the Epiphany and last week, praise for the wonder of creation, our readings now take us to meeting with God in all his glory. First in the Old Testament we read of Moses ascending the mountain to await the presence of a remote and fearsome God who in a moment of glory gives the tablets of the law to Moses and then leaves him to bring them down the mountain to the people. In the Epistle St Peter reminds us of the glory of God shown in the in real life events that have recently taken place but also in the fulfilling of prophecy in the events of the life, death and resurrection of our Saviour.

Finally, the Gospel of Matthew takes us to the mountain of Transfiguration where Jesus in the company of Moses and Elijah is recognised by his Father and his glory “fills the skies” but in this case we are not talking of a remote God shrouded in mystery rather God with us in the form of Jesus who comes down the mountain with his two disciples and who in due course will suffer on another hill before the glory of his resurrection.

The writer of our hymn needs no introduction, and Charles published the hymn in a book jointly produced with his brother John in 1740. In common with all Wesley's hymns this one draws strongly on biblical images including the “Sun of Righteousness” in Malachi 4.2. and the “dayspring from on high” in the Benedictus (Luke 1.78). Interestingly the second and third verses are quoted in George Elliot's novel Adam Bede where they are sung by Seth, Adam's brother and a devoted Methodist.

The hymn was originally set to a much earlier German tune ascribed to Johann Cruger but is now almost universally sung to the well-known Rattisbon.

In the interests of bringing you something a little out of the ordinary the following recording is by the choir and congregation of the First-Plymouth Church at Lincoln in Nebraska. It is an interesting arrangement, and I can only describe the keyboard technique of the organist as novel – it is unlikely to be followed in Granta Vale so if you like it, please make the most of it!

<https://youtu.be/ig81jljBJew?list=RDig81jljBJew>

Keith Day

10th February 2026