

Men's Bible Study – Wednesday, February 10, 2021 (11am) – Transfiguration

TEXT: Exodus 34:29-35 – The Glory of the LORD!

1. The context for this story of **Moses' shining face goes back to Exodus 19**, where the Israelites reached Mount Sinai—and Yahweh set out the terms of the covenant—and the people promised to obey Yahweh (19:1-9a). Moses consecrated the people as Yahweh descended onto the mountain with great fanfare (19:9b-25). Then Moses received the law from Yahweh (Exodus 20-31) and went down the mountain with the tablets (31:18), only to find the people worshipping the golden calf (Exodus 32). Moses became so angry that he smashed the tablets that he had brought down the mountain (32:19). Yahweh threatened to consume the Israelites, but Moses interceded for them and God relented (32:11-14). Then “Yahweh struck the people, because they made **the calf**, which Aaron made” (32:35). Yahweh told Moses to lead the people to the Promised Land, but said that he would not go with them lest he destroy them (33:1-3). However, Moses interceded again, and Yahweh relented again (33:12-17). **Moses asked to see Yahweh's glory (33:18)**, but Yahweh replied that no one could see Yahweh's face and live (33:20). Nevertheless, Yahweh sheltered Moses in the cleft of a rock and covered Moses with his hand as he passed by, taking away his hand so that Moses could see his back (33:21-23). **Yahweh then commanded Moses to make new tablets to replace the ones that he had smashed**, and Moses did so. Then Yahweh renewed the covenant with Israel as Moses spent forty days and nights in Yahweh's presence (34:1-28). The **two tablets will later** be placed in the Ark of the Covenant (1 Kings 8:9; Hebrews 9:4).
2. When Moses descended from Mount Sinai with the second set of stone tablets, his face shone like the sun because of his encounter with God. He was so changed that all were afraid to approach him. In the original **Hebrew, the term keren means** to radiate light, or **send forth rays**. The image represented by that word is similar to how a child might draw rays of light coming out of the sun. A similar “ray” image is represented by the points on the crown of the Statue of Liberty. When St. Jerome translated the Bible into Latin, in this verse he used the **Latin word cornuta** — saying that Moses appeared “**horned**.” This translation caused some confusion, & is the reason why many medieval depictions of Moses in paintings & sculptures mistakenly show the prophet with goat-like horns. Questions: In what way does an encounter with the Living God actually make a person different? How is this true in our lives? In what sense do we radiate the glory of God? Can the difference in us as people of faith be the cause of some confusion in the people around us? Why might some people fear being around a genuine person of faith?
3. Why was a second copy of the Tablets necessary? The skin of Moses' face shown when he came down from the mountain **because** he had been talking with God. This caused great fear in the hearts of Aaron and the Israelites. When the fears subsided, Moses **COMMANDED** all that the LORD had spoken to him. He didn't offer God's words as a mere suggestion. Once finished, Moses put on a veil. Why? **The Battle Hymn of the Republic contains these words: “In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea, with a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me; As He died to make men holy, let us live/die to make men free! While God is marching on. Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! ... Glory! Hallelujah! His truth is marching on.”**

TEXT: Psalm 50:1-6 – God Shines Forth! In Righteousness, He comes as Judge.

1. The **theme of God's revealed glory continues in the psalm** for the day, proclaiming that he has called the earth from “the rising of the sun to its setting.” In Hebrew, this was the common way

to express **the expanse of the world from east to the west**. But it also carries with it the connotation of passing time, and the changeless nature of God's glory. Vs. 2 says that "**God reveals himself**" and vs. 3 says God "**will not keep silence.**" How and why does God choose to reveal himself to us primarily through his Word? We live with certainty in the midst of a changeable world, that no matter what happens in our lives, the sun will still rise the next day — the earth will keep turning. But even this is only due to the stability and certainty of God himself. Why is it important to know that no matter what happens in our lives, God is still in control? What makes that so hard to see in times of chaos and tragedy?

TEXT: II Corinthians 3:12-13, 4:1-6 – Hope in Christ makes us Bold! To whom is the Gospel Veiled?

1. The Apostle Paul contrasted the glory of God as revealed in Moses' face with the glory of God as revealed through Christ (2 Corinthians 3:7-18). **Why the veil?** The Apostle Paul, whose interpretation reflected popular rabbinic interpretation, said that Moses veiled his face "that the children of Israel wouldn't look steadfastly on the end of that which was passing away" (2 Corinthians 3:13). Given that Moses does not wear the veil while receiving Yahweh's words or delivering Yahweh's words to the people, it seems that the absence of the veil (Moses' shining face) signifies that Moses is acting in his official role as a mediator between Yahweh and Israel. If this is the intent, then **the veil indicates that Moses is off-duty**—not acting in his official capacity as Yahweh's spokesman.
2. In this text, Paul picked up on the imagery of the veil from our Old Testament reading & used it as a metaphor to describe what it is like to try to understand God outside of Christ. Paul was thinking especially of his fellow Jews, who acknowledged the one true God, but didn't understand the fullness of God's grace and mercy. How do you think your faith in Christ gives you a different view of the Old Testament than Jewish people might have? Paul said that, **in Christ, the veil had been lifted for those who are ministers of the new covenant**. **In faith, we see what others cannot**, and we are able to bear the unbearable. The Bible is filled with commandments & requirements that we could never fulfill. How does the promise of Christ allow us to see the Law of God differently from those who treat the Law as a checklist of works to accomplish for salvation? Compare this text with **Romans 3:20**. How is the Word & truth of Christ veiled to unbelievers? The Gospel is veiled to the perishing. **Who lifts that veil?**

TEXT: Mark 9:2-9 – Transfiguration of our Lord! Listen to Him! Are we listening? It's Better Higher Up!

1. The **transfigured Jesus** isn't supposed to be figured out. He's supposed to be appreciated. We should be drawn to him, as if we were moths. **Epiphany** began on Jan. 6 with a story about a **manifestation** of Jesus' identity; a much more covert incident: Jesus' baptism. The Transfiguration is a very different kind of a **revealing**, however. Jesus becomes a beacon, like a lighthouse planted in the middle of the desert. The heavenly voice addresses all the witnesses: Peter, James, and John. In Mark's Gospel, a story so full of concealment and secrecy, the Transfiguration says that this Jesus has plans to be conspicuous (standing out so as to be clearly visible). Jesus insists on being seen. How did Peter know that the two heavyweights from the past were Elijah and Moses: **nametags?** The **story ends with Jesus alone**; but of course when one gets Jesus one also gets the Father and the Holy Spirit (see baptism of Jesus also). What to do? **Build 3 booths/tabernacles (capture the glory)? Or listen to Him?**
2. **Listen to Him!** What is it that Jesus wants to tell us? He's a Teacher and a Preacher (Mark 1). "The Kingdom of God is here. The time is NOW; no time like the PRESENT. Repent and Believe

(present tense) in the Gospel.” Prior to our Gospel Reading, Jesus asks his disciples, “What’s the word on the street? Who do others say that I am?” Then he asks his disciples, “**Who do you say that I am?**” Peter, as spokesman for the others, says, “You are the Christ”. Flesh and blood doesn’t reveal this TRUTH! **Jesus then reveals what it means to be Messiah.** Are the **disciples listening?** Apparently not. Peter chastises Jesus, “God forbid. Never.” **He didn’t hear Jesus say, “And on the third day rise.”** Jesus says, “Get behind me Satan.” Then Jesus reveals what it means to follow in his footsteps; to be a disciple. **Are we listening?** The Transfiguration confirms the words and identity of Jesus. **Are we listening?** Mark tells us that this incident took place some **6 days after** the preceding story that rounds out Mark 8. We as readers are brought directly from Jesus’ words about death, suffering, & cross-bearing to this moment on the mountaintop. Mark 9:33ff, and Mark 10:35ff – Who’s the greatest? Seats of honor?

3. Not a spectacular half time Super Bowl Light Extravaganza, but the transfiguration of Jesus. **Not, “Look at Him,” but “Listen to Him.” Go figure.** Example: Listen? Did they hear that voice from the cloud right? *It reminds me of a scene from the rather quirky film, Forrest Gump. At one point in the movie Forrest’s erstwhile childhood sweetheart (and future wife, as it turns out) is trying to launch a singing career, but the only gig she can secure is one that requires her to appear on stage wearing nothing but her guitar. Perched on a stool naked as the day she was born, she finds it powerfully difficult to get the audience to listen to her singing and guitar playing. The men in the audience had come to look, not listen, and the figure on the stage was ensuring that looking was what it was going to be all about no matter how well she tried to also sing.* Listen! What we see on the cross, versus what we hear – Psalm 22: My God, My God! It is (I Am) finished!
4. The **word Transfiguration is the Latin version of the Greek word “metamorphosis”** — meaning to change form or change in appearance. What the disciples witnessed on the mountain was a sudden transformation — a vision of Jesus in his glorified form; **preview of Easter (looking back to Jesus’ baptism and forward to his resurrection).** To describe his clothing as “**dazzling white**” is to say that Jesus radiated the power and holiness of God. **Scientifically,** we are able to recognize that **the sun and the moon both radiate light, but in different ways.** How is the difference between the light from Jesus and the light from Moses similar to this same distinction? St. Mark reported that a cloud covered the mountain where Jesus was met by Elijah and Moses at the transfiguration. **This cloud** immediately draws to mind the cloud that appeared on the top of the mountain when the Israelites were camped at the foot of Mount Sinai. At this new manifestation of God on the mountaintop, not surprisingly, **Peter immediately suggested building tents.** The Jewish people had a holiday called the “**Festival of Booths**” where they camped in tents to remember their people’s wilderness wandering of the Exodus. The Hebrew word **mishkan** (tent, booth) comes from the same root word for **shekinah** (tabernacle) which was the way the Israelites referred to the dwelling place of God. Jesus never dignified Peter’s suggestion with a response. Instead, by the voice from heaven, the disciples were called to **focus their attention on Jesus alone.** In what sense is Jesus himself the true “dwelling place” of God? How does Jesus supersede and fulfill the promise of the Exodus?
5. **Jesus’ Unveiled Divinity:** Jesus took John, James, and Peter to a high mountain where his face changed to a bright, shining visage. His clothing also changed in appearance, becoming brighter white than any bleach can manage. Elijah and Moses appeared to the four men, which spurred Peter to suggest the idea of building tents on the mountaintop. At that moment, **a voice from the heavens reiterated the words from Jesus’ baptism.**