

Sunday, February 27, 2022 – Transfiguration Sunday

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Introduction

Witnesses to the glory of God in the face of Jesus reflect that glory in the world. It was true for Moses. It was doubtless true for Peter, James, and John. We pray that it will be true of all of us who see God's glory in the word and in the supper and who are being "transformed into the same image" by God's Spirit.

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, mighty and immortal, you are beyond our knowing, yet we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Transform us into the likeness of your Son, who renewed our humanity so that we may share in his divinity, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Exodus 34:29-35

Moses' face shone with the reflected glory of God after he received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. The sight caused the Israelites to be afraid, so Moses wore a veil to mask the radiance of God's glory, taking it off when he spoke directly with God.

²⁹Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. ³⁰When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. ³²Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. ³³When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; ³⁴but whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, ³⁵the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

Psalm 99

¹The LORD is king; let the | people tremble.

The LORD is enthroned upon the cherubim; let | the earth shake.

²**The LORD, | great in Zion,
is high a- | bove all peoples.**

³Let them confess God's name, which is | great and awesome;
God is the | Holy One.

⁴**O mighty king, lover of justice, you have es- | tablished equity;
you have executed justice and righteous- | ness in Jacob.**

⁵Proclaim the greatness of the LORD and fall down be- | fore God's footstool;
God is the | Holy One.

⁶**Moses and Aaron among your priests, and Samuel among those who call upon your
| name, O LORD,
they called upon you, and you | answered them,**

⁷you spoke to them out of the pil- | lar of cloud;
they kept your testimonies and the decree | that you gave them.

⁸**O LORD our God, you answered | them indeed;
you were a God who forgave them, yet punished them for their | evil deeds.**

⁹Proclaim the greatness of the LORD and worship upon God's | holy hill;
for the LORD our God is the | Holy One.

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:12--4:2

In his debates with the Corinthians, Paul contrasts the glory of Moses with the glory of Christ. The Israelites could not see Moses' face because of the veil. But in Christ we see the unveiled glory of God and are transformed into Christ's likeness.

¹²Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, ¹³not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. ¹⁴But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. ¹⁵Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; ¹⁶but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

^{4:1}Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. ²We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

Gospel Reading: Luke 9:28-36 [37-43a]

The conversation about Jesus' suffering and death is enclosed in a dazzling foreshadowing of the resurrection. God affirms Jesus' identity, the disciples are stunned speechless, and Jesus resumes his mission with a demonstration of his power over evil.

²⁸Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. ³⁴While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" ³⁶When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen. [

³⁷On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. ³⁹Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. ⁴⁰I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." ⁴¹Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." ⁴²While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ^{43a}And all were astounded at the greatness of God.]

Prayers of Intercession

The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made, saying “God of grace,” and responding, “hear our prayer.”

A brief silence.

Transform us by your greatness, O God. Send us down the mountain to share joy with all people. Make us agents of change, confident that your hope will vanquish despair and your goodness will conquer evil. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

The mountains and valleys sing your praise. Dazzle us with your presence in every landscape: bluffs built by ancient glaciers, canyons carved by flowing rivers, flat horizons with uninterrupted views, and sands shaped by ocean tides. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You love justice and establish equity. Strengthen leaders of local governments, community nonprofits, and grassroots campaigns. Bless them with gifts of integrity, creativity, and sound conscience. Build up safe and joyful communities where all people may thrive. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Heal those who are in distress (*especially those who we name at this time, aloud or on our hearts...*). Give patience to those waiting for answers. Grant hope to those who have reached the limits of treatment. Give compassionate hearts to those who accompany loved ones through illness and uncertainty. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Today we shout alleluia from the mountaintop; this week we enter the wilderness of Lent. Bless all who prepare and lead us in worship during this change of season: pastors, deacons, musicians, and all who contribute to our worship life. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Blessed are they who listened to Christ’s voice in this life and now rest with him (*especially*). Transform us from glory into glory, and give us your peace, that we do not lose heart. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Amen.

A reflection for Transfiguration Sunday...

Lifting the Veil

The transfiguration is frustrating for disciples—past and present—who long for an unmediated experience of God. Jesus' glory is revealed, and then, just as suddenly, a cloud descends and the vision fades. And even though Paul contrasts the Christian's experience of God with Moses's veiled experience of God, he notes that we see the glory of the Lord "as though reflected in a mirror" (2 Cor. 3:18). Even with unveiled faces, we don't see directly, or even clearly. Even when God is revealed in shining glory, much remains veiled and hidden.

As he witnesses Jesus' transfiguration, Peter's understanding remains veiled; ours does too. The glimpses we get of God's glory—through the veil or reflected in the mirror—are expectation-shattering, alarming, overwhelming, and awesome. The love of God shines too brightly to view directly, and yet we do have the privilege of directly experiencing that love in baptism, in communion, in service to God, and in relationship with God's creation and our neighbours in need. The veils we contend with daily are the barriers that prevent us from truly loving those neighbours, caring for creation, and seeing the shining face of Jesus in the faces of people who are different, hungry, difficult, enemy, invisible, or poor. God is always revealed in ways that surprise and confuse us, whether shining on the mountaintop or dying on the cross.

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