

Sermon: See and reflect the glory of the Lord.

Trinity February 11, 2024.

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Readings: 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 and 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.

John starts his gospel:

“The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was with God in the beginning... 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

What is darkness?

It is the absence of light.

This Sunday immediately prior to Ash Wednesday is the time we celebrate the Transfiguration of Jesus and is referred to as Transfiguration Sunday.

The Transfiguration was an important event in the life of Jesus, and it is recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.¹

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain. As he was praying his appearance became radiant and glorious shining with bright rays of light - as bright as a flash of lightning.

Moses and Elijah, symbolising the Law and the Prophets, appeared in glorious splendour talking to him. A voice came from the cloud, saying “*This is my Son, whom I love; listen to him.*” Jesus called Son, by God the Father, echoing the affirmation heard during the baptism of Jesus. But also giving an instruction to the three disciples, to the church, and to us: “Listen to Him!”

We will come back to this instruction.

So, today, we celebrate the glorious revelation of God in Jesus Christ, emphasizing his fulfillment of the law and the prophets. The Transfiguration was a transition in the ministry of Jesus. After this he sets his face toward Jerusalem, where he would ultimately die for us.

In the Transfiguration, we are assured that Jesus is the hope of the ages. Jesus is the One who fulfilled the Law given through Moses, the one dreamed of by the prophets, of whom Elijah is the greatest.

And in celebrating this event, we rejoice in the divine majesty of Christ, whose glory shone even when confronted with the cross.²

Hold that image of Jesus illuminated by God, as the Son of God, and reflecting this bright light.

The image will bring to mind Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Law in his hands.

In Exodus it is recorded that Moses was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord.³

When he had finished speaking to the Israelites, he put a veil over his face.

¹ See Matthew 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, and Luke 9:28–36

² <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/christianyear/transfiguration-lord/>

³ [Exodus 34: 29-35](#)

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Paul picks up on this in the two passages read for us this morning from 2 Corinthians. He goes to great lengths to point out the differences between Moses receiving the law and the new covenant ushered in by the glory of Jesus.

The old way, with the laws etched in stone led to death, even though it began with such glory that the Israelites could not bear to look at Moses' face, radiant with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away.

Then Paul asks whether we shouldn't expect far greater glory under the new covenant. Now that the Holy Spirit is giving life.

A writer suggests we need to imagine the argument backwards. Paul is not saying the law was wrong or bad. But he sees God's glory as he has never seen it before. It was as if the Law shone a torch in the darkness, but Christ shone daylight. It was after seeing the world in the light of the sun (and Son) that the limitations of the torch became obvious. While the Law produced glory that fades, seeing Christ results in glory that grows as the witnesses are being transformed into Christ's likeness.⁴

In the New Living translation:

"If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God! ... if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever.

Paul was writing to those in Corinth where the church had been infiltrated by false teachers who were challenging both his personal integrity and his authority as an apostle. And he writes that this new way gives us confidence so that we can be bold. Moses put a veil over his face, so that the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was to fade away.

He takes this further, when he says that the people's minds were hardened so that when the old covenant was being read the same veil covered their minds so that they could not understand the truth.

And this veil?

This veil, writes Paul, can only be removed by believing in Jesus.

And this brings us to verses 16-18.

Here Paul writes that when ever someone turns to Jesus, the veil is taken away. There is freedom. Whereever the Spirit of the Lord is there is life and there is freedom.

From the New Living Translation:

"18 So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord."

As we turn to Jesus and accept him as our Lord and Saviour the veil is lifted, and we have new insights. We get to see the glory of the Lord.

Peter, James, and John saw this in the most dramatic way on Mount Sinai.

In some translations we read that we **reflect** the glory of the Lord. In other translations. We read that we **see**, or **behold**, the glory of the Lord.

I read that the Greek word used (*kataprizomai*) can mean both "to behold" and "to reflect" as in a mirror.

And this works in two directions:

⁴ <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/transfiguration-of-our-lord-2/commentary-on-2-corinthians-43-6-3>

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- † the glory of Jesus as the Son of God reflecting on us so that we can see; and
- † us seeing so that we can reflect the glory of God to others as we travel on our journey of faith.

As this happens Paul writes that we are “transformed” into that image, from one degree of glory to another.

“And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.”⁵

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”⁶

Here Paul is referring to the process of sanctification.

An author, explains this⁷:

“Salvation is extended by a free act of God’s grace. We did not and cannot do anything to earn it. But . . . once we are saved, the new life that Christ plants in us should result in a new way of living. The unchanged Christian is a contradiction in terms. . . . (Christians) are in the process of changing. There will be times of rapid growth and there will be times of apparent standstill but over the course of the years real change will be evident.”

Salvation is vital, but it is the start, not the destination. We need to journey further.

In the Wednesday Bible Study group we have been looking at the book of Philippians. Paul called on those in Philippi to continue to work out their salvation.⁸ This is not to earn their salvation. That has already been achieved. But in response to what has been done for us, we are to strive to live in a way that will bring glory to God. We need to step forward.

I like the image of a person standing on a dark night with a lamp. The only things visible are those that are within the circle of light and the person doesn’t know what is in the darkness. The only way to find out is to start moving forward. And as the person moves forward, the light reveals what lies ahead, that which could not be seen before. But we need to play our part. Bruce Goettsche, puts it like this:

When we come to the Savior we must come realizing that the process of salvation is a process that God begins and God brings to fruition. But it is also a process that requires our work . . . our diligent and persistent work. The two go together.

And if we understand this, we will make a conscious effort to build our spiritual life. We need to cooperate with God’s Spirit. We need to build (our part) . . . into our schedule, put it in our budget, nurture it in our heart.”

in Hebrews⁹ we read that Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being. His is the eternal and unfading glory which he had with the Father before the world began.¹⁰

An author writes this:¹¹

⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT

⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV

⁷ [Working Out Your Salvation - Philippians 2:12-13 - Logos Sermons](#). Bruce Goettsche

⁸ Philippians 3: 12-14

⁹ Hebrews 1:3

¹⁰ John 17:5

¹¹ <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/transfiguration-of-our-lord-2/commentary-on-mark-92-9-5>

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“The vision the disciples behold removes the veil of Jesus’ humanness to reveal his divinity: wondrous, frightening, powerful, unexpected, and rich, connecting all ages (the prophets Elijah and Moses with Jesus), giving enlightenment. His external appearance is utterly changed.”

We don’t approach transfiguration with the assumption that we can understand it. But we are to reflect on it so that we can see. So that we may gain a new understanding.

The transfiguration of Jesus did not change who He is. His outward appearance was changed so that the three would gain a new understanding as they saw Him outwardly in a new light.¹² And so that we would gain a new understanding as we reflect on this.

I was delighted when I saw that Malcolm had chosen verses 1-3 of Isaiah 61 as a call to worship for this morning. The words of Isaiah written some 700 years before the birth of Jesus were repeated by Jesus early in His ministry. We read this in Luke’s gospel.¹³

¹⁶ *He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

¹⁸ *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

... *“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

Jesus describing his ministry of preaching and healing: reaching out to the marginalised, those impacted by injustice and inequality and doing so in love and out of compassion. The ministry that the church is called to follow.

The instruction “Listen to Him!” is not an instruction to Jesus but to the 3 disciples and to the church and so to us as well. And “*Listen*” doesn’t just mean to hear; it really means trust and obey. Or hear and act. In other words, it is a call for us to respond. And by responding we are to mirror the love of Christ to those around us.

James writes this in chapter 1:¹⁴

²² *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. ... 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”*

And as I have said before this call to action is not to cause a feeling of guilt: rather it is a gilt-edged invitation to move forward on your journey of faith with energy and guidance from the Holy Spirit.

And we don’t need to be discouraged if we feel we aren’t moving ahead.

¹² <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/transfiguration-of-our-lord-2/commentary-on-mark-92-9-5>

¹³ [Luke 4:14-21.](#)

¹⁴ James 1:22

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Paul says¹⁵ near the end of his life after all he had done to spread the Gospel that he had not yet arrived at his goal. That he was pressing on to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. Leaving behind his sinful past, not looking back, but straining toward what is ahead. Pressing on toward the goal to win the prize for which God had called him heavenward in Christ Jesus. Paul's ultimate aspirations were not in this life, but in heaven, because Christ is there.¹⁶

It is the image of an athlete running a race. Not looking back but driving hard toward the finishing line to win the prize.

So, what are we to take from this sharing?

I believe it is this:

- † Acknowledge and remember that you are continuing on your journey of faith and that you are to work out your salvation, God helping you.
- † "What matters is not so much how far you are – but that you are heading in the right direction and that you keep going".¹⁷
- † That as you see and understand the gospel message better and better you are to reflect the light of Jesus to those around you.
- † We are to do this together, especially as we start this new season with Graham, Joslyn and Caleb joining us.
- † We are to do this within the Courtyard and beyond separately and with our brothers and sisters in the Anglican congregation.
- † We are to do so with joy and with peace.

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Lord, the light of Your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us
Set us free by the truth You now bring us.

Lord, I come to Your awesome presence
From the shadows into Your radiance
By the blood, I may enter Your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness.

As we gaze on Your kingly brightness
So our faces display Your likeness
Ever-changing from glory to glory
Mirrored here, may our lives tell Your story.

¹⁵ Philippians 3: 12-14

¹⁶ [Colossians 3: 1-2](#).

¹⁷ Nicky Gumbel.