



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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The Transfiguration of our Lord

Exodus 34:29-35

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 148

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

Gospel: Luke 9:28-36

Reflect the Radiance of God's Glory

What scares you? What makes you afraid? Quite often it's things we can't see, so our imagination runs wild, or things we don't understand quite fully. I'll give you an example; when I was kid, and I mean little, my older step-brother, about 11-12 years older than me, had a bedroom in the basement. When it came time for supper and he was down there, it was my job to go down and get him. So I would go down the steps in the garage, around the corner, then start going down the steps to the basement. Evidently I was a loud kid because as soon as I got to the second set of steps, my brother thought it would be great fun to start making monster noises to scare his little brother. So you would think the first time he did that I would be scared but the next time I wouldn't right? Every stinking time I went down there, when he did that I still got scared. I knew it was silly. I knew it was my brother. Yet, because I couldn't see it and because you let your imagination run wild as a little kid, I got scared and ran back upstairs yelling, "Mom, Dad, tell Craig to knock it off!" I knew it was him, but it still scared me because I couldn't see it and my imagination ran wild.

Can't you just kind of picture the Israelites when Moses came down from the mountain carrying those two tablets of stone; it kind of sounds like they scattered. They didn't run up the steps yelling, "Mom, Dad, tell Craig to knock it off," but it sounds like they scattered and ran away from Moses because his face was shining. They could see it, but they couldn't understand what in the world was going on. Why was his face shining? It scared them. So he had to call them back, and it says they came back. But it sounds like they had scattered. It sounds like when you are throwing work in front of some young kids and they just scattered, right? That's what happened.

You have to remember what happened right before this. Remember what I read to you said the "second tablets?" The "two tablets in the Testimony in his hands" were the second tablets he came down with. Remember the first tablets he came down with? When he came down, Joshua was there part way up the mountain or something and said, "What's that sound in the camp? It sounds like the sound of war." Moses said, "Not the sound of war, this is not a good sound." He knew it was the sound of the Israelites sinning against God. Remember Moses had been up on the mountain for 40 days and it took too long. When is the last time you waited 40 days for anything patiently?

Forty days took too long, right? So they convinced Aaron to gather all the gold and make the golden calf. They started worshipping the golden calf that they had seen worshipped in Egypt, and they worshipped it the way that other nations worship their false gods. It was drunken sexual revelry going on that Moses was hearing in the camp. So remember what he did to the stone tablets that God had inscribed? He threw them down. He was upset because he knew God is going to be upset.

So he comes down, and the Levites come to his side, and they attack and kill many of their fellow countrymen because they had turned against God. Remember Moses said, "Burn the golden calf," put it in the water and made the people drink it so they would recognize they had sinned against God.

So now Moses went back up in the mountain and he comes down and he looks a little different. He looks a little funny. His face is shining. You have to wonder if some of them thought "God is going to punish us again somehow. Something else is going on now that isn't going to be good for us." Can you understand why they are running away? They can't understand. They are afraid. Moses has to call them back and run through everything with them.

But then Moses, I suppose for a couple of reasons, puts a veil over his face. I think one was because they were so scared and with the veil, it wouldn't scare them all the time. And from what Paul told us in our Second Lesson, it also sounds like it was so they wouldn't see that this glory that comes from him talking with God faded away. It's that reminder that the glory that comes from the Law is a fading glory. It's not meant to endure. It's not meant to last forever. So he wore that veil. But when he went to God, he would take it off. And when he came back down, there was that same radiance. You have to believe that they finally understood that the radiance was a reflection of God's glory.

You would hope that whenever they saw that radiance on Moses' face as time went on, it wasn't frightening but it was comforting. It showed that God was with them. He spoke directly to them. And he delivered them from the hand of their enemies time and time again even though they had often turned their backs on him. That radiance would have been something that you hope they would have treasured and rejoiced in; that radiance that was just a reflection of God's perfect glory.

I know what an honor that must have been for Moses to reflect God's glory, to go and talk to God face to face, not like other people did, but talk to him face to face and then be the one that carried his message to his people and instructed them and told them what God wanted them to know. Wouldn't that be cool to be able to do that today?

Guess what? That's what you and I get to do yet today, right? We reflect the radiance of God's glory as we talk to him face to face. We talk to him face to face in his Word. He comes to us and shows us what filthy rotten wretches we are and how we don't deserve his love and we shouldn't have his love and get over ourselves because we aren't perfect and we can't be perfect. That was the purpose of the fading glory of the

Law. It shows us how often we find all kinds of other things to focus on except God's love for us and how we can get so petty and bitter towards our brothers and sisters in Christ at times.

It also shows us that God loves us so incredibly much that he sent himself to come to this earth to take on human flesh, to become one of us, and to live and die in our place, perfect where you and I have failed over and over. With all of our sins, all of our failures piled on him on the cross and he, at that point in time on the Mount of Transfiguration, revealed his full glory to Peter, James and John as he talked with Moses and Elijah about his upcoming departure because he was going to go to Jerusalem to die, not because he was a sinner, but because you and I, we are sinners.

That's his glory. And we reflect the radiance of that glory as we spend time in his Word, as we spend time in his Sacraments, as we remember, as we saw in Baptism today, that we have been clothed with that radiance with the perfection that is Jesus Christ. How incredible is that? Our God loved us so much that he found this way, the water and the Word, to cloth us with his perfection before we even know what's going on. That's his intense love for us.

Now we come to his altar today and he gives us, in this little unleavened piece of bread and this little sip of wine, his very body and blood and tells us "This is what was given and poured out for you. This forgives your sins." He gives us his Word so we can dig into it day after day after day. We don't have to wait for a scroll to be unrolled and wait for someone else to read it to us and explain it to us. We can get into the Word day after day after day and grow in our grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which is his command to us. A command not like "take out the garbage," "Oh, do I have to?" A command like "don't stick your tongue on a flagpole." This is a command that's good for you when it's -30°F. This is the kind of command that gives us great blessings.

It isn't a burden to get to know God better. The better you get to know God, the more you grow in your faith, the more you reflect the radiance of his glory, and the more you live your faith. The more you live your faith; you reflect that glory as you use your spiritual gifts and put them in service to God. You reflect God's love and people then see in you the love that God has used to change you. That's God's plan for you and for me.

Here's the problem. We are sinners. Think of how often we still spend time, instead of reflecting God's glory, putting a veil over that glory and hiding it from other people as we bite and devour our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ over petty issues that are not going to last into eternity. We get upset. We point the finger. We say "they" and "them." "What are they thinking?" "What are they doing?" We talk about; we don't talk to. Can anyone see God's glory when we do that? No. No glory is revealed. We reveal that we are filthy rotten wretched sinners. But we do it.

You and I at times think we are going to find a better way than God's plan to reflect his glory. We think we can reflect his glory in other ways besides getting into the Word and the Sacraments. We think there has to be an easier way or a better way. Yet, it's God's plan. It's just so crystal clear. Even this morning, as we looked at the beginning of the Book of Hebrews, God just spelled it out so clearly right there in the beginning.

Be careful to keep listening, pay attention to what you've heard so that you don't drift away. That's what he says. Then put your gifts into practice so that we testify to the salvation he has won for us. That's what he says. We think that's just for kids. So we devote all our time and energy into just sharing God's Word with just our kids. Then once they get confirmed, they are on their own. We seem to act as though being in the Word daily is not something for adults.

We talked about this last month at Church Council. We had a Bible Study on priority, about being in the Word. I made the statement, "we have about 10% of our members in weekly Bible Study." I said, "How different do you think our church would look if we had 50% of our membership in Bible Study? Do you think we'd be using our gifts more? Do you think we'd be producing more fruits of faith? Do you think we wouldn't have some of the problems we have now and that our problems would probably be more along the lines of finding ways for more people to serve? God says it over and over in Scripture," and as I said it, I see some people that are kind of nodding. I see some people that give me that same glazed-over look in their eyes that the 7th and 8th graders give me when I'm teaching Confirmation Class. "Yeah right, tell me something that's going to apply to my life that's pie in the sky by and by. Bull." So God says over and over, "Get in the Word and the fruits will be produced." God will bless us and he will produce the results. We just simply share the Word with ourselves and with those who don't know him and he does the work. It would look incredibly different among us.

But God is gracious and God is good. He loves and forgives us for the times that we find better things to do than to know him. He loves and forgives us for the times that we don't reflect his glory, when we don't use our gifts. He loves and forgives us in Christ through Word and Sacrament and says, "You're still mine. I still made you. I still redeemed you. I still love you and you are forgiven." And that forgiveness, that forgiveness that comes to us in Christ, is what changes us. It's what moves us. It's what compels us to love one another and to serve one another and to forgive one another and put our grudges and our petty differences aside and simply see one another as brothers and sisters in Christ that are an incredible blessing that God has given to us.

Because we live in a sinful world, we are going to face a lot of rotten stuff. But treasure your brothers and sisters in Christ so that as you go through the rotten stuff, they are there to comfort and encourage you. Those that haven't matured into faith so they aren't comforting and encouraging you with the Word of God, those that are more eager to gossip or pick at the differences and bite and devour one another, love them like Christ loved them and forgive them because carrying a grudge against them isn't going to help you. It isn't going to reflect God's glory.

God's glory is seen in his love and his mercy and his forgiveness. May it be seen in us!