

#12 15-16

Psalm 99

Exodus 34:29-35

2 Corinthians 3:12 - 4:2

Luke 9:28-36

Seeing Clearly

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. THIS IS THE WORD OF OUR LORD . . .

In our Exodus reading we have Moses, coming down from Mt. Sinai with his face shining so much that it frightened the people who loved him and followed him. Moses found he had to wear a veil to cover this glory for the people to tolerate. He would remove it to talk with God, because you can never hide your true self from God, but the people weren't ready, yet, it seems, to be exposed to the full glory of Yahweh.

Our Psalm says, "They cried to the Lord, and he answered them. He spoke to them in the pillar of a cloud." In the Gospel of Luke we read that Jesus went through something similar to what Moses did – but Jesus wasn't talking with God, he was talking with the two greatest heroes of the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah and he shone – his clothes became dazzling white, and Peter, John and James a cloud overshadowed them and they were terrified.

Being in God's glory seems to be dazzling and shining and holy and amazing – and yet, for most it seemed to be clouded, veiled, terrifying, frightening, and awesome. Jesus returns down the mountain after his experience and almost immediately a boy who is possessed by a demon is healed and returned to his father and all were astounded at the greatness of God.

The difference between Jesus and Moses seems so clear to Paul as he wrote to the Corinthians. He wrote that with Moses – the glory of God had to be veiled because the people just weren't ready for it. Yet in Christ – the veil is gone – God is there in front of us when believe in Jesus as the Christ. Christ, Moses and Elijah, spoke with God, but God made it clear that there was a difference with one of the three – one was his son – part of him, set apart, someone who should be listened to. We would all do well to realize that in Christ we are free – unveiled – we can face God, and not be afraid, "we do not lose heart."

Paul is encouraging us all to *know* that whatever we think is keeping us from healing ourselves and others – whatever is keeping us standing in God's presence and feeling the dazzling glory of God – whatever is veiling our vision of God and our true selves – it is not the truth any more. They are as false as the demon that possessed the boy.

I sometimes feel the words of Jesus so painfully, when he expressed his frustration at the inability of the disciples to help the Father and son, "You faithless and perverse generation." It seems that even those who lived and walked and worked and experienced Jesus up close and personal – even they weren't able to see the power that was right in front of them.

We all have veils still. We see in a mirror dimly. But it gives us hope to know that that the clouds can leave, the veils removed, the vision cleared and we will have moments in our lives when we state the truth.

Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, the official beginning of Lent, 40 days before Good Friday. It is historically a day of penance, when people would come to church and have oil or holy water which has been dipped in ashes rubbed on the forehead in the sign of the cross and the words, "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return" said to them.

It has been said it takes 40 days of doing the same thing to create a habit. We can spend this season with great intent and purpose, to create new habits which will transform our lives.

This beginning of Lent – of fasting season – is a time of reflection, a time when we can use our church calendar to focus on the state of our spiritual and emotional lives. If we do so I can guess what we will find. We will find that there are some shameful things that we want to hide; images of ourselves that we feel we cannot overcome, tricks that we use to avoid facing our weaknesses. I believe I can say that we all have images of ourselves of things we don't like.

But today can change that. This is a very special day, because Transfiguration Sunday is the day where we not only talk about Jesus' and Moses' transformation, but we also accept that God is shining through *us* as well. God is shining a light of immense love and hope into our souls so that we can glow. Whatever the image we have of ourselves that is painful and hurtful – today is the day to know that it is a false image – like the horns on Moses, they aren't real, and that which we hate about ourselves is not real either – it can be transformed! Jesus wants us to be transformed.

When we go inside ourselves and dwell in that painful place of sadness and disappointment, when we are there feeling overwhelmed by how far it seems from what God would want us to be – what we would want ourselves to be – when we are looking at that and feeling overwhelmed and ashamed, imagine the Transfigured Christ there.

What hopelessness can survive that light? What sadness cannot be overcome by that love?

Replace those visions of horns with radiant lights that cut through the lies and misconceptions of darkness inside of us. Remove the veils that keep us from knowing as Paul has said, "We renounce 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.*"

What happens when "*we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God*"? We bring ourselves together as fellow believers into the light of God's love. What I find as being dark and depressing and shameful, when brought to light in the circle of people who also know how to love and forgive, suddenly we are all uplifted and free to care, to forgive, to perform miracles of faith!

I don't know about you, but just being here today, after so many weeks of snow, getting out of the house and sharing this special day with each of you, I am feeling transformed already. As the snow melts, the anxiety of all that time feeling entrapped by the snow seems to melt away as well. Yes it was beautiful and a good time to relax and reflect – but it did limit us. Especially those whose streets were not plowed or had to go without electricity! Let us take this day of being together and let ourselves relish each other's company – feel the joyous presence of our brother and savior Jesus Christ and let it melt away all that ails us – let it remove the veils of sadness and let this day begin to transform us!