

TRANSFORMED TO ACT WITH GREAT BOLDNESS
2 CORINTHIANS 3: 12-4:2; LUKE 9: 28-36; EXODUS 34: 29-35
TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY
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Luke 9: 28-36

28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. 30 Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. 31 They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now 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. 33 Just 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. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" 36 When 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. 37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. 38 Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. 39 suddenly 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. 40 I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." 41 Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." 42 While he as 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. 43 And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

According to our gospel reading this morning, the disciples were terrified when they saw Jesus transfigured and heard God's voice. The scriptures say that the appearance of Jesus' face changed. His clothes became dazzling white.

Our Old Testament reading also talks about an encounter with God's glory, only this time it is Moses who met with God. It is Moses who was transformed. After Moses talked with God, his face shined and that scared those who saw him. Once Moses shared God's Word with the people, he put a veil over his face – perhaps so that people would not be afraid. Listen to God's Word from **Exodus 34: 29-35**.

29 Moses 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. 30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. 32 Afterward all the Israelites came near, and Moses gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. 33 When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; 34 but whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with the Lord, Moses would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 the 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 the Lord.

Thanks be to God for this holy Word. The Apostle Paul says that Christians need no veil to keep us from seeing God's glory. Thanks to Jesus and by the power of the Spirit, we can see the glory of the Lord and be transformed by it. We are glorified through the Holy Spirit so that we might engage in the ministry to

which we have been called. According to Paul, it is not only Moses and Jesus who are transformed when they talk with God. We are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit so that we might act with great boldness. Listen for God's Word in **2 Corinthians 3: 12-4:2**.

12 Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, 13 not 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. 14 But 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. 15 Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; 16 but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And 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 Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. 2 We 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.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please pray with me. Holy and glorious Lord, we are in awe of your power and your love. O Lord, we seek your presence. As we turn toward Jerusalem during Lent, we are mindful of the incredible sacrifice Christ made on our behalf. By the power of the Holy Spirit, inspire us this morning. Transform us by your Word so that we serve Christ with great boldness. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, for you are our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

All three of our passages this morning talk about the glory of being in God's presence. It makes us glow. According to our passage from Exodus, it was only the face of Moses that shined. People were scared to come close to Moses when his face was shining. People were afraid to come close to God. Moses let the people see his shining face while he conveyed the commandments of the Lord. Then he covered his face, perhaps so that people would not be afraid of him. I wonder if we sometimes hide the relationship we have with God because we are afraid people might think we are strange or different. In a way, we, too, may cover God's glory with a veil.

In the gospel passage, Jesus was transfigured, and, frankly, the experience terrified the disciples. The shining clothes, the conversation between Jesus, Moses and Elijah, the voice telling the disciples to listen to Jesus, and the clouds that covered them- it was awesome. It was so awesome, Peter wanted to stay on the mountaintop. Sometimes we feel like Peter.

The Apostle Paul said that believers are being transformed by the Spirit every day. According to Paul, each of us is in one stage of glory or another. When we look into the face of God, the Apostle Paul says we are transformed by what we see. It is like looking into a mirror of love. Our faces reflect the God we see.

In his Institutes of the Christian Religion (McNeill, ed., V 1, 37), John Calvin observed that *without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self*. It is certain, Calvin said, that we never achieve a clear knowledge of ourselves unless we have first looked upon God's face, and then descend from contemplating God to scrutinize ourselves.

How well do we know God? How much time do we spend intentionally in God's presence? Some of us find it hard to make time for God. We are busy with life responsibilities, including church responsibilities. Who has time for Bible study, prayer, devotionals and worship? Where is the time to

climb a mountain and hang out with God? Have we looked into the mirror of God's love and grace lately?

Brennan Manning, author of Abba's Child, believes our hearts yearn to belong to God, but we construct other images of ourselves that do not reflect God's radical unconditional love. We are precious children of God. Do we see that when we look in the mirror?

A counselor once told me that she did not believe we develop a healthy self-esteem unless we see ourselves as Christ sees us. If we look in the mirror and do not see a precious child of God, I hope we spend more time reading God's Word and praying with other believers. Perhaps we should spend time with a Stephen Minister or our pastor. If we see ourselves as God sees us, we will glow with a powerful love.

It is good to be in God's presence, whether it is in worship, on an Emmaus Walk or at a retreat. We experience the presence of God in different ways. Some of us meet God in music, others in contemplative prayer, Bible study, worship or doing mission work and service. Some of us need to get away to a deserted place to meet God while others experience God in the midst of a crowd. During Lent, I hope we hang out with God. If Moses, Jesus, the first disciples and the Apostle Paul found the time to be with God, surely we can make time to come before our Lord and Savior.

Some of us have little trouble being in God's presence. Our challenge may be coming back to the real world. Throughout the ages, God's people have been blessed to be a blessing. Moses was charged with giving God's commandments to the people. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness to the Promise land. What charge has God given us?

It might be as simple as pouring a cup of coffee for a stranger or giving a hug to someone during fellowship. It might be as complicated as fixing a plumbing problem at church or serving as elder or deacon. And do not ask me which is more important.

Like Moses and the disciples, sometimes we hide the glorification we experience. I have seen people glow after an Emmaus Walk or some other spiritual experience. A short time later, they act like it never happened.

Does our experience of God have any effect on how we treat people at school, at work or in our homes? Would the clerks who serve us in the store or the kids at school see Christ reflected in the way we behave toward them? Does our experience with God have any effect on how we spend our time and money?

Paul took this discussion further in his letter to the Corinthians. Paul believed that we receive the power to do amazing ministry for Christ through the Holy Spirit. Paul was under no illusion that serving Christ was easy. He was chased out of town, thrown into prison and blown off course by storms at sea. Paul trusted God, and so can we.

Peter wanted to stay on the mountain, but Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem. When they reached the bottom of the hill, a man brought his son to Jesus for healing. The man first asked the disciples, but they said they could not help him. Jesus became frustrated because the disciples failed to grasp the power they had in his name. It is probably the case that most of us underestimate what we can do for Christ in this hurting world. By the power of the Spirit, we can act with great boldness for Jesus Christ.

After the Transfiguration, Jesus turned toward Jerusalem. So do we. On Wednesday we begin a journey of 40 days toward the cross. I hope you will join us for our Ash Wednesday service. This is a time to

turn away from whatever keeps us from experiencing God's love. During the Ash Wednesday service we will have the opportunity to write down our sins and watch them burn in the refining fire of Christ's love.

During Lent I hope we intentionally spend more time with God through worship, prayer and Bible study. Some of us may give something up in our lives to help us remember Christ's sacrifice. Others may engage in special devotional or service commitments. We will have the opportunity to make Lenten commitments next Sunday. During Lent we are asked to pray for each other and for the commitments we make.

We each have a journey to take during Lent. Some of us need more time on the mountain top. Others need to focus on serving Christ in the world. Some of us may remove the veil from our faces and let our faith shine through what we say and do. Others may look more closely into the mirror of God's love and reflect that love on someone else. We walk together. The Spirit will guide us.

Ann Weems, in her collection of poems titled Kneeling in Jerusalem believes we will find "The Holy in the Ordinary."

Holy is the time and holy is this place, and there are holy things that must be said.

Let us say to one another what our souls whisper...O Holy One, cast your tent among us; come into our ordinary lives and bless the living!

Forty days stretch before us, forty days of hungering after faithfulness, forty days of trying to understand the story, and then, Holy Week...O God, if every week were holy...

These forty days stretch before us, and those of us who believe yearn to feel Your presence, yearn to be Your people; and yet, the days fill with ordinary things with no time left for seeking the Holy.

Spiritual contemplation is alright for those who have the time, but most of us have to make a living.

Most of us have to live in the real world where profanity splashes and blots out anything holy.

Where, O Holy One, can we find You in this unholy mess?

How, O God, can we find the holy in the ordinary?

May we be transformed during Lent so that we act with boldness for Christ.