

“The Glory Of The Lord Abounds”

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36

People are captivated by something or someone bigger than themselves. Michael Horton in his book *A Better Way* writes, “Today people want to see God. Not content with hearing God’s Word, they want to see God’s glory.”¹ Today is Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday. The glory of God was shown to Peter, James, and John that day twenty centuries ago. Like then, but today even more so, people want to see God.

Moses went to Mount Sinai twice. The first account is in Exodus 24 and the second Exodus 34. The first journey confirmed God’s covenant with the people and the second is a personal conversation with God and Moses needs to veil his face from the face/glory of God. In Psalm 99, we learn that God is sovereign, that is, God reigns over everything. All things, good and bad work toward the purpose of God’s will. The psalmist declares that God’s end in all things is justice, establishing equity, and ensuring righteousness amongst God’s people. In 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2, Paul utilizes the Old Testament story about Moses’ appearance after being with God to talk about the Christian life. Moses’ appearance had been shaped by his experience with God. The Hebrews focused on Moses, not the Tablets of Commandments. Just as the Hebrews looked at Moses and knew he had been talking with God, so people should be able to see in the face of Christians evidence that we have been with Jesus. In Luke 9, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and led them up a high mountain. As Elijah and Moses

¹Michael Horton, *A Better Way* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2002), 36.

were talking with Jesus, Peter exclaimed, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” But a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him.”² Peter, James and John were in God’s presence.³

The veil between God and God’s people has been shattered. The cross and empty tomb did that. We can get close to God and God to us. Yet, the church over the centuries has clouded our vision or sight of God. Many of our doctrines have become veils which systematize the faith and hide the love of God. Christians must not hide behind the veils of doctrine and practice. In a country where the disparity between rich and poor is growing and children die of the effects of poverty, a veiled faith will not work. We must do more than discuss hunger, deliberate on immigration, debate the ethical demands of homelessness, and pay lip service to end discriminating against categories of people based on race, age, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

The lesson of the Transfiguration is this: if we have experienced salvation in and through Jesus Christ, then we are to live with veils removed, engaging the needs of society, and partnering with others to make systemic change. The Transfiguration teaches us that when captivated by and with the very presence of God we are not to veil that experience and hide it from others. To the contrary, we are to go into the Saddleback Valley with the good news that in Jesus Christ life can be different both now and forever. As Gradye Parsons reminds us in *Our Connectional Church*, we must place an emphasis

²Luke 9:33, 35.

³I am grateful for the thinking and writing of James H. Evans Jr., Pablo A. Jimenez, Kimberly Bracken Long, David A. DeSilva, Gary W. Charles, Diane G. Chen, and Bradley E. Schmeling in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery and Cynthia L. Rigby, editors, *Connections, Year C, Volume 1* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 300-301, 302-303, 304-306, 307-309, 309-311, 312-314, and 314-316.

on thinking. When the clergy and church members are thinkers, they've created a culture to ask questions, seek relevance and become life-long learners. Parsons writes, "Being able to ask questions about the faith without judgement creates a community—a community that is not afraid to learn together through exploration. A community that is courageously applying faith to context. Where is God calling us to love our neighbors."⁴ Faith in Jesus Christ joins us with his power, person, and purpose.

Look at the Table. See the body and blood of Jesus given and poured out for you. Look at the Table and see unconditional love not held back, but freely shared. Like Jesus and the early disciples and disciples throughout the centuries, we might consider being more captivated by God's story and God's presence in our lives. Let's participate with God in God's salvation story by boldly living lives characterized by love for God and others. Amen.

*This sermon was preached (for the In-Person, Online, and Village TV 6 congregations)
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⁴Gradye Parsons, *Our Connectional Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 68.