

Shine, Jesus, Shine!

"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."

On the first day, God created light. ***"God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good."*** Light is good. Light is essential. Light from the sun warms the earth enough so we can live on it. Light makes it possible to see where we are going. They say the light bulb is the workaholic's favorite invention because he can work into the night and not just during the day. Without light plants can't grow, the food chain would be broken and we would starve.

Also, light chases away darkness. If you open the door between a lit room and a completely dark room, the light from the lit room will always flood the dark room. The darkness from the dark room never floods the lit room.

We need light, especially light from the sun. And more so, we need light from the Son, spelled S-O-N, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Without his light we would never experience the warmth of God's love. His light alone dispels darkness, exposes error, and shows us the way to God and heaven.

You may notice that every year we have Christmas. Every year we have Easter. Well, every year we also have Transfiguration Sunday, which is today. It is the day Jesus let his glory as God shine. So it is good for us to meditate on his Transfiguration and offer this simple prayer: that Jesus' glory shines into our hearts and reflects in our lives.

I. Shine, Jesus, into our hearts.

"Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read." Sometimes I drive home to the parsonage at night and wonder if anybody is home. I can't see any light through the windows. But then I noticed that the blinds are down. People are home and light is on, only I couldn't see it because of the blinds. What a good name, "blinds," to blind outsiders that anyone is home.

So many people don't see or understand or believe in Jesus Christ. One reason is there are blinds, or as Paul states in our text, veils that keep them from seeing. Please allow me to go off on a bit of a tangent so we can understand what Paul is talking about here. Do you know what a covenant is? It is an agreement. In the Old Testament God made a covenant with the world when he promised to send a Savior. That is a one-way covenant. It would be like me saying, "I'll buy you pizza." I promise something and you don't have to do anything. He made a one sided covenant like this with the world, that he will save us.

But covenants can be two-way. "I'll buy a pizza if you shovel my sidewalk." You get a pizza IF you do something for me. God made a covenant like that with his people in the Old Testament at Mt. Sinai. There he said, "I will be your God IF you be my people," then he gave them the Ten Commandments and all sorts of other commands like avoid pork, when to worship, don't work on Saturday, etc. So the people had two covenants, the one sided promise of a Savior and the two way agreement, "I'll be your God, IF ..."

Why this second covenant? A while back I had an achy tooth. It was infected and I needed a root canal, only they couldn't schedule it for a few days. What did they do? They prescribed an antibiotic, which knocked down the infection which in turn knocked down the pain until I got the root canal. The antibiotic was temporary; it kept me comfortable until the dentist could heal me permanently.

Those Old Testament laws were just that, a temporary thing that were to lead the people step by step to Jesus. Jesus alone saves them, not those laws, and once they got to Jesus, the old covenant was suppose to go away. That is why Moses covered his face; the fading glory showed that these laws were temporary.

But there was a problem. The Israelites of Moses' day, and in Jesus' day, even people today don't think those laws were temporary. They became addicted to the pain killers and antibiotics so they don't go back to the dentist for permanent healing. I can see why. If I helped a little old lady across the street, and she said, "Thank you, sonny," I feel good. I get a little high. I think I did something good and because that other person didn't do it, well, I am better than him, and if I am better than him, then I am going to heaven and he is not.

The Israelites thought the only covenant or way to God was through those Old Testament laws so when Jesus came, they didn't see him. In fact, they hated him. It doesn't take an evangelism genius to recognize how veils are up today. The prevailing thought out there is the Bible is all about rules and do's and don'ts. I still remember 1990 when a Russian ambassador visited our little WELS and asked us to do religious broadcasts into Russia. He had a purpose. He wanted a group like us to teach the Ten Commandments so Russian youth would behave better. That is religion to people today.

You have seen the veils, maybe, talking to that niece or nephew who painfully listens to you for a while because they are not really interested; they are blinded by the fact that they think religion and God are only a bunch of rules, and they don't like rules; they want to live the way they want to live. Psychology, sociology, multi-culturalism, the sinful nature are all telling us we are OK and basically good. So, if we are basically good, why do we need a Savior? We find it in the sense of relief of a relative whose son or daughter came back for a church a service as if walking through church doors saves. What veils want to

come into your life to keep you from seeing or clinging to Jesus? A natural sense to buck the system and not do everything the Lord says? A quiet confidence you are OK and others need help? Such glory fades, quickly, into nothing.

“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 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.” There is another glory that does not fade; in fact, it is “***an ever-increasing glory.***” This glory comes only to those who turn to the Lord. How do we turn to him? Is it simply prayer? It depends what you pray for. Is it simply coming to church? It depends why you come. Remember, the word “repentance” literally means to “turn.” We turn to Jesus when we have nowhere else to go. We turn to him when the Ten Commandments shows us what is really wrong. Yes, I may have helped a lady cross the street, but what about the other 11,000 people in St. Peter? What did I do for them? And will I return to help that lady tomorrow, Thursday, everyday?

But the Lord Jesus Christ tears down veils. It is his glory, not our fading glory, that is reflected in our faces and lives. When the Lord looks at us, he sees ones who loved him and all of St. Peter, all of the world with a perfect love all the time. He doesn’t see the sins and failures; they are gone, washed away by the blood shed on the cross by Jesus. Now we live under the other covenant, the one-way promise God made with the world at Eden and to Abraham. He says, “I forgive you so now you are going to heaven.” ***“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”***

II. Jesus, shine in our lives.

And we are being transformed. In heaven we will glow perfectly with the glory of the Lord. But we don’t have to wait until then. The transformation begins already in our frail, weak bodies. Suddenly, his love and his sacrifice shines. We love as he loved us, imperfectly now, perfectly in heaven, but it begins to happen now. Paul, who killed Christians, was shown mercy by God through forgiveness, and he was willing to suffer death so others can experience the same mercy.

And we have confidence. ***“Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.”*** Bold to do what? ***“Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”*** I like those drug commercials on TV. By law they must tell you all the side effects that may affect you if you take that drug, but in the background you see all these happy people living wonderful lives as if they are covering up the bad news with happy pictures. I wonder if we approach God and Christ much in the same way. I admit, as a pastor writing sermons, I feel pressure that the Word of God and the gospel needs my help, that it isn’t powerful enough, that I have to dress it up or make it more appealing than what it is.

I hope you noticed the clip art I put on the cover. It is Jesus, Peter, James and John walking down the mountain where Jesus let his glory shine. Where are they going? To the cross. And that I submit is where God’s glory truly shines. What is more glorious, God parting the Red Sea or God giving up his only Son to die for us? What is more glorious, light and angels and shaking mountains, or that God saves us who are his enemies? You may have noticed at funerals, we do not hesitate to mention some things about the person, but the emphasis is always on the cross and Christ and the resurrection. One involves memories, which fade, the other is a hope that never fades. In fact, it keeps increasing.

Maybe the best thing you can say to your neighbor is, “Yeah, we have all these neat things at our church. But the greatest thing about my church is the honesty. We don’t flinch from admitting we do wrong. My love is never perfect. But there is a perfect love out there. I like my church because we take a journey to the cross where we see God actually trading his Son for me. I am loved despite what I have done. That is the kind of love I want to have with my husband or wife, with you.”

This is why we still have Transfiguration Day. Yes, it shows Jesus is God. Yes, it shows what is awaiting us all. But it truly shows in what Jesus does right afterwards. He walked down that mountain to the cross to save us. Don’t be embarrassed by this. Let it shine. INJ Amen.