

TRANSFIGURATION

As Lent approaches, we begin to look a little deeper at some of the events in the final months and weeks before Jesus was crucified. Today our Gospel reading was about a wondrous event that happened around this time.

Jesus went up on the mountain to pray, and took John, James, and Peter with him. And when he was praying, we read that Jesus' face – the appearance changed and his clothes became dazzling white.

Then James, John and Peter looked and saw him standing there in a transfigured state – in glory – shining in a glorious light with Moses and Elijah – probably the two most prominent people in the Old Testament.

When I read about this transfiguration of Jesus – and how his face changed, it reminds me of how Moses' face changed after he was given the 10 commandments by God. It was shining so much that people were scared to approach him.

So Moses actually ended up putting a veil over his face when he wasn't speaking to the people so they wouldn't be so afraid. And then when he went to speak or pray to God, he removed the veil so there was nothing in the way between him and God.

When I looked at these scriptures this past week and prayed on them and studied them, I realized that I could have spoken about so many things.

I could have talked about where Peter said, 'Jesus, this is a good thing we were here to see you with Moses and Elijah so we could build tents – for you' and then I could have talked about how Peter just didn't fully understand exactly what he was seeing.

Or I could have spoken about how seeing Moses and Elijah was a way of showing how the Old Testament and the New Testament had come together with Moses representing the Law of the Old Testament and Elijah representing the Prophets of the Old Testament.

And how these two influential parts of the Old Testament – The Law and the Prophets - are two of the most important aspects of the Old Testament according to the Jewish traditions. And how this shows that Jesus didn't come to abolish the Old Testament, but to fulfill it.

The list went on and on of what I could speak about today. But I decided to look at the veil that Moses wore.

He wore it because people didn't know what to think with his face glowing as it was. He went into his tent, spoke to God, came out and then taught the people what God had to say.

Then, he would put the veil back on his face until he spoke to God again.

I thought it was very interesting that Moses removed the veil from his face when he spoke to God. Then I wondered what that means for us, today.

I believe that there are a couple of very important lessons for us to learn from Moses here.

For the first lesson, I believe Moses took off the veil because nothing should come between us and God. We need to learn to be open with God at all times. He knows our heart, so why hide our true thoughts when we pray to him?

A good relationship with God starts off with opening ourselves up to him. Being honest with him. Removing that veil so nothing stands between us and him.

Before Jesus, there was a veil between us and God. That only certain people, like high priests were able to penetrate. For those of you who are familiar with the Old Testament, I am speaking about the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from everyone else.

This was a place where the ancient Israelites believe God “hung out.” It was a place for the Priests to be able to draw even closer to God.

When Jesus died on the cross, that veil literally was ripped in half. Through Jesus the barrier or veil that God wore was removed with Jesus’ death. Because of Jesus’ death, we are able to have a new relationship with God – in a way never imagined. God does want a relationship with us here and now. That is one of the reasons he sent Jesus.

So there isn’t anything standing between us and God anymore --- unless we put it there.

So we need to take a tip from Moses, and when we pray to God, or talk to him, let’s remember to open ourselves up to him – and not hold back.

We can’t be afraid to let God know what is bothering us – and then to trust God to help us through those issues. Jesus’ death was for our salvation – but that salvation isn’t just for when we die. If we choose, we can start to enjoy a little bit of that Heaven on Earth and join into a relationship with God today – here and now.

So God has removed his veil and when we go to God we need to remove ours.

But Moses did something else with his veil. When he was teaching the Israelites the laws of God, he kept his veil off. He let them see the Glory of God through him.

He didn't want anything to come between what the Israelites were hearing and the Glory of God. No barriers at all.

I have this exact same philosophy. For those of you who were at the State of the Church, you heard how I feel about barriers between you and Christ.

My job as your pastor is to share the Word of God the best I can, but to also be responsible for all aspects of your Worship experience. If the bulletins are messed up, or the sound is bad, or something just isn't working correctly, you end up focusing on that instead of God.

So here in worship, I try to make sure there aren't any veils in our way. Nothing to come between our Worship and God.

And then when worship is over and we join for fellowship in the back of the room – everyone is friendly and loving and genuinely concerned for one another.

When we are back there, we aren't hiding God's Glory behind any veil. We hug each other, we shake each others' hands, and we tell others that we care about them – and we do.

But sometimes I think we do what Moses did after he was done sharing the Word of God. Remember what the scripture said he did? He put the veil back over his face.

How many times have we gone out those doors and put a veil over our faces?

Sure it is easy to show that we are Christians here. It is a safe environment. But out there – it isn't a safe environment.

Just like they looked at Moses a little strange, if other people “out there” knew we were Christians, they might look at us strangely as well.

Now I am not talking about telling everyone we bump into that we are a Christian. But I think we need to show the love that Christ has shown us by respecting and loving others.

Most of us probably do this pretty well right now, but I know some of us can still work on this.

Every week I meet with a pastor friend of mine who holds me accountable for my actions. Every time we meet he asks me if I have missed any opportunities to share that I am a Christian. Now we aren't talking about going out there and knocking on doors, or talking about Jesus to everyone I might meet.

But what he holds me accountable to is if an opportunity presents itself where someone strikes up a conversation about God, or even simpler, did an opportunity exist – for me to just show the kind of love Jesus showed? And if it did present itself, how did I respond? Did I do what Jesus would have done or did I completely ignore the opportunity?

You might think as a pastor I would never miss an opportunity to reach out to someone, but I do. I get wrapped up in what I am doing, I end up not paying attention to people around me – or if I do notice, maybe I just don't want to take the time.

But like everyone else here, I am a work in progress. I have a long way to go.

Most of you probably don't have a friend that you meet with every week that holds you accountable by asking you if you missed any opportunities. So I challenge you to hold yourself accountable.

As we come into the Easter Season this year, let's all try to keep ourselves accountable and not be afraid to show we are Christians.

Let people see who we are by the joy in our face and the love in our hearts. Let's remove that veil and let others see we are Christians by our love.

In closing today, I am going to play a praise song that speaks to this.

I ask that you just clear your mind and listen to the words.

PLAY SONG – “They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love”

So I ask this question, “How will others know we are Christians?”

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