

*Exodus 34:29-35. <sup>29</sup> When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. <sup>30</sup> When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. <sup>31</sup> But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. <sup>32</sup> Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai. <sup>33</sup> When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. <sup>34</sup> But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, <sup>35</sup> they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.*

### **Come, Sinner, Behold the Glory of God**

- 1. Reflected brilliantly in the Word**
- 2. Revealed in unfading glory in Christ**

“Come here, you have to see this!” His brother ripped open the dark curtains and revealed the radiant blanket of freshly fallen snow. The brilliant light that suddenly poured through the window made the boy recoil, squint painfully, and cover his eyes as he dove back into bed, but soon he joined his brother by the window, taking in the brilliant scene.

Come near. You have to see this. You have to hear about this breathtaking thing that God has done. This Sunday, as we celebrate the Transfiguration of the LORD, we arrive at this marvelous place in the church year where we are asked to draw near and look intently upon the passion of the Christ. As we descend upon the season of Lent, we have this brilliant perspective made abundantly clear: God sent his perfect Son to die for our sins. Christ Jesus, who was the fullness of God, in bodily form, would suffer the wrath of God in our place. He would be pierced and crushed, battered, smitten, and scorn; not for anything that he had done but it was for our transgressions, our iniquities, our sins, that he suffered. The perfect for the imperfect.

As human beings we might instinctively recoil, even turn away at such a thought. Some are so opposed and appalled by this concept of a holy God, that they refuse to even consider that such a being exists. Be perfect. Be holy. “Impossible”, human nature mutters and either in shame or in frustration we turn our heads.

Some are shocked that such a holy God would demand atonement for sin. Some recoil at the thought of his solution. Death, punishment, blood, a cross, the innocent on trial and punished for the guilty.

But this is the very thing that God reveals for us to see and in his grace, he desires that we draw near. Reflected brilliantly in the Word, and revealed in unfading glory in Christ, the glory of the LORD is revealed. God is both perfect in his justice and perfect in his mercy. And though we are sinners, the LORD in his goodness, invites us to come near, to hear, to see, what he has done.

Our lesson for today takes us to the base of Mt. Sinai. The people of Israel had sinned, they had angered their leader, they had disgraced themselves, they had violated their covenant with God. In their weakness and their doubt, they had forged for themselves an idol of gold and had given themselves over to shameful idolatry. They had broken their promise to God, they had shattered their relationship with him. They had incurred the wrath of a holy God.

The LORD would chastise and bring punishment and cleansing upon his people. The Lord would relent as he would not destroy his entire people, but the people would be made very aware of the power and the glory of God. They became very aware of their own sinfulness, which stood in stark contrast to the brilliant holiness of the LORD.

Therefore, As Moses came down from the mountain, holding the tablets of stone, reflecting the glory of God from his radiant face, the people cowered in fear. They fled from the sight of Moses shining forth with the glory of God. But Moses called out to them. It was a simple but significant gesture as God invited the people through Moses to come near and hear. Come near and hear the Word of the Lord. <sup>30</sup> ***When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. <sup>32</sup> Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai.***

The commands had been shattered (both figuratively and literally - remember how Moses in his anger had smashed the first set of stone tablets). Those same commands of God had been given once again to Moses, and at the LORD's direction he would read these commands to the people. No sinner could ever stand in the presence of God and live, but according to God's gracious plan, Moses, would serve as the go-between between God and his people. Moses would be shielded from the entirety of God's holy presence, but he would be near enough to God that he would receive the Word of the LORD and he would then go and read God's Word to the people. This is what God desired, come near and receive my Word. Because of his grace he would convey his message, his holy will, his gracious love, to his sons and daughters, sinners though they were. They would draw near to his Word, and they

would hear and receive his commands. God would make his will and his ways known to his people through the Word he passed through Moses. God would make known his being and his essence to the people as it was reflected brilliantly in his Holy Word.

The people recoiled, they scurried in fear, because they were painfully aware of their sinfulness and the holiness of God, but God would call out to them through his servant. The merciful God would reach out to the very people who had grieved his heart, and he would gently restore his covenant to his people.

Maybe you know someone that hesitates at coming to church because of something that they have done. Maybe you know someone who turns away from God because of the shame and the guilt that they feel because of a past or current sin. Maybe you know someone who is not sure that they could ever stand in the presence of a holy God. Maybe that person you know is you.

This is the message that God has for all sinners, for you and for me. Come near and hear. See what your God has done. In his faithful mercy, in his unfailing love, he sends this gracious, undeserved invitation to his people, come near and hear the Word. Through his servants the LORD delivers a message of restoration and reconciliation. He restores his covenant to underserving sinners. In mercy he sends out his servants to speak his Word. His law shows us our sin and our need for a Savior. His Word reveals the promise of Savior that would be so graciously fulfilled. The LORD in his mercy invites us to come near and hear so that our relationship with him would be restored.

Moses was a servant whom God would send out with his Word, but notice what is happening in this account concerning the radiance that was reflected in the face of Moses. It was temporary. Moses would actually veil his face *after* he was done reading from the Scriptures so that they would not see how that radiance was fading. This radiance reflected on the face of Moses was temporary because it did not come from him. Moses was but a servant of the LORD, and the message that he had to bring to the people was in part a temporary agreement as well. Moses wrote down and shared with the people not only the 10 commandments, but he also wrote the words of the covenant that included, ceremonial and civil laws, that were to set the people apart until the promise of the coming Messiah was fulfilled. Moses and the Law would not, they could not, bring eternal restoration with God. Something else, someone else would be needed. This is the point that the apostle Paul drives home when he writes in 2 Corinthians chapters 3 & 4. ***Now if the ministry of death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at the face of Moses because of its fleeting glory, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? Indeed, what was once glorious has no glory now in comparison to the glory that surpasses it. For if what was***

*fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which endures!... For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

The LORD in his goodness and mercy would invite his people to draw near and hear through the Word of Moses, but in his great mercy God's ultimate plan was to bring about a message of reconciliation through Jesus that endures. Moses would serve as a go-between between God and his people for a time, Jesus would serve as the perfect go-between for God and all people for all time. None of us could stand in the presence of the LORD on the basis of the law, but only through the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so, as he stands on the mount of transfiguration, he shines, and Elijah and Moses want to know more about his departure. They are speaking about his suffering, his death, his resurrection, and ascension. Jesus stands in brilliant light, shining his own magnificent brilliance, and sinners like Peter, James, and John gaze upon this terrifying, yet wondrous thing. God in his brilliant glory, revealed on that sacred mountain to prepare Jesus and his disciples for this great thing that he would bring about. God's perfect Son having fulfilled and kept the entire law for us would lay down his life to satisfy God's wrath. He would restore the relationship with God and sinful mankind for all eternity. On that Mountain of Transfiguration, we receive a glimpse of the holy power and glory of God, that Jesus would conceal and lay aside full use of, so that sinners might be spared, and so that we might share in his glory for all eternity.

This is God's gracious invitation to you, come near and hear. Come near and hear the glory of God reflected in the Word and revealed in all its unfading glory in Christ Jesus. Come near and see what your God has done, ***"though your sins be scarlet, they will be as white as snow"*** – ***Isaiah 1:18***. Jesus fulfilled the law for us. God's holy Son would take on the wrath of God to spare us. He would do all this, so that we might share in his unfading and eternal glory. Come and see this thing that God has done for you and me. Heaven is opened by the one who goes down from the Mount of glory through a valley of deep suffering and up to Calvary's cross for us. He lays aside his glory, he takes on our shame, our guilt, our sin, our punishment, so that eternal glory would be given to those who believe. Jesus is our perfect Lord and our glorious Savior. Come near once again and hear this glorious thing that our God has done. Amen.