

“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.”

When Moses talked to the Son of God on Mount Sinai, there was no way he wouldn't be affected by such an encounter. His face glowed as he reflected the glory of the Almighty God. On this Transfiguration Sunday, we consider the nature of the Lord as the all-powerful, all-knowing, holy, and transcendent God. **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”** DESPITE FEAR, THE SON OF GOD APPROACHES SINNERS TO MAKE THEM RADIANT.

First, I. Sinners fear the radiant. Our Old Testament text continues, **“Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.”** Sinners fear the radiant. We fear the light because we're worried about it uncovering the things we do in the dark.

We read in the Bible, **“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible,”** There are many sins that we commit, that we don't want anyone to know about. There are things of which we are ashamed that we think nobody knows about.

We see the same thing at the Transfiguration of Jesus. **“And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.”** The sight of the radiant clothing whiter than anyone could bleach them showed Peter, James, and John how lacking they were compared to the unapproachable holiness of God.

Today, people say, “If only I could see God, then I would believe.” “If God really existed, He should just rip open the sky and wave and say, “Hello.”” Yet we can call their bluff. The Book of Revelation foretells the second coming of Christ, **“Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,”** They wanted to hide from the radiance of God, but even in the heart of the earth they stood naked before the unveiled glory of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

The Lord knows this. II. Though veiled, the Son of God approaches sinners. **“And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.”** Although Moses spoke to the Israelites with an unveiled face, he accommodated them by wearing a veil when he wasn't teaching the commandments of God. He thus made it bearable to be in his presence on a day to day basis.

The Son of God came to this Earth to become one of us. Humanity and Divinity united into one person in Jesus Christ. He hid His divinity during His earthly ministry so that He could approach sinners like me and you. Things such as the transfiguration or miracles were exceptions to what would have otherwise been a seemingly normal man by most external metrics.

It hardly would have sufficed to have walked around Israel looking like He looked on the Transfiguration Mount. It would have been hard to have a conversation with someone glowing as bright as the sun. Humans would have run in fear of his glory, and the Roman army would be in full force to defeat such a terrifying entity.

It was in this act of hiding His divinity that He accomplished our salvation. In taking on the sins of the world, Jesus hid His divinity even further. Satan took the bait and death swallowed Jesus whole. He died on the cross to forgive you from your deepest, darkest secret sins. Inside the belly of death, Jesus divinity broke Him free, splitting open death so that death no longer has power over us. He rose from the dead and share in His glory.

And so too, God in His mercy approaches us today in humble means. The skeptics want God to show up in the clouds to prove His existence, but they don't want to go to Church where the Lord God promises to be through gathered Christians, through a pastor preaching a boring sermon and pronouncing the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus promises that He is present, although veiled, in His Word even though the Bible is ink on paper just like any other book. Jesus approaches sinners through the waters of Baptism even though it is just tap water mixed with holy words. Jesus touches sinners and grants them forgiveness through His body and blood in with and under bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

With this veiling comes the opportunity to step out in faith. We cannot handle the truth of God's unveiled glory. However, the Holy Spirit invites us to follow Jesus even if the path is unclear and the destination is unknown because III. The Son of God makes sinners radiant.

The Son of God invited Moses into His presence up on Mount Sinai not simply to impress Moses or to amaze Him with his glory. The Lord invited Moses so that He could give Him His Word and so that Moses could reflect the glory of God.

It was never all of Israel that went up to the mountain, throughout Exodus, sometimes Aaron would go up with Moses, other times the elders, but never everybody. The select few went up for the benefit of the whole. Moses brought down the law of God and the covenants and promises the Israelites were to live by. Many of the Israelites could not behold God without being scared to death.

Likewise, not even all twelve disciples went up on the Mount of Transfiguration, but rather, only Jesus' inner circle of Peter, James, and John. If even they were terrified at the sight of God's glory, imagine what the others would do. Would they have been zapped by the holiness of the Son of God?

Nonetheless, this event changed the lives of Peter, James, and John as they not only witness Jesus, but Moses and Elijah having a conversation not unlike the one Moses and the Son of God had on Mount Sinai. The disciples would eventually behold Jesus' glory at His resurrection, and Peter would later write of this event in one of His Epistles.

In this life, we may not behold the unveiled glory of God like Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, and John did, but Paul writes, **“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”** By the power of the Spirit, we have the boldness to approach God and become radiant just like Moses.

Through the Word of Absolution from the Pastor, through the Word read and preached, through the Lord's Supper, through these means, we behold the glory of God, even if it seems pretty normal. Through these means of grace the Holy Spirit is working to make us radiant. We may not glow, but we are radiant as we shine forth the joy of salvation and the contentment from being welcomed into the presence of a Holy God.

IV. We reflect the Son's light. **“But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them.”** Moses knew that the people were afraid of his glowing face, but he nonetheless taught the people exactly what the Lord had taught him. His shining face lent credence to Moses' teaching and let people know it wasn't just his teaching, but God's.

Throughout the Book of Acts, Peter and the disciples reflected the glory that they saw on the Transfiguration mount and the light of the Gospel spread to the nations.

We too can share God's radiance with others. We can be the invitation to those who might be too ashamed or afraid to attend church. You might be one of the few Christians your friend knows. We can be the word of forgiveness that is foreign in a world that doesn't get mad, but gets even. We can be a ray of light that unmask sin for what it is, but shines the light of Jesus love even in those dark and shameful places.

Spending time in the glory of God's presence can be uncomfortable, but we have been cleansed with the very holiness and forgiveness of Christ. We are called to be ambassadors of light in this dark and hopeless world. Amen.