

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus be yours this day. The title for today’s sermon is: ‘Reflecting Christ’, and is based on today’s Gospel reading from St. Mark, the 9th chapter. Let us pray... Amen.

Today is the Transfiguration of our Lord Sunday, the point in the Church Year which marks the end of the Epiphany season, when Jesus revealed Himself as the Saviour to the world, while also pointing to the Lenten season, when Jesus would reveal to what extent He was willing to go to be the Saviour of the world.

The Epiphany season is the season of light, when Christ shone who He was into a darkened sinful world. The Epiphany season asks the question: “Who is this child born in Bethlehem?” The Transfiguration provides a climactic answer, until Jesus on the cross of Lent. This season is bookended with God speaking for people to hear. To begin the season, at Jesus baptism God proclaimed: “**You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.**”(Mark 1:11). Here at the end of the Epiphany season we hear God proclaim to Jesus’ ‘inner circle’ of disciples: “**This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.**”(Mark 9:7)

Beginning and ending: Alpha and Omega: “**This is My Son!**” If there were any questions, God the Father answered them.

Equally important are His words: “**Listen to Him**”. There on the mountain were Peter, James, and John. Jesus had brought them with Him. Just six days earlier, Jesus had a discussion with them which did not go as well as one may plan. You see, six days earlier Jesus “**began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.**”³² **And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.**³³ **But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”**(Mark 8:31-33) Peter, along with the other disciples, did not understand the divine necessity of Jesus’ death and resurrection. As such, as the disciples’ mouth piece, Peter, tried to rebuke Jesus, and that is when Jesus called Peter Satan.

Jesus was about to start His journey to the cross, where He would teach, and they were called to listen. Part of the reason Jesus brought these three men with Him up the mountain was to reveal a little more of who He was and what He told them those six days earlier. Jesus brought them because their eyes and hearts were veiled to who He really was. Jesus may also have brought them to keep them from starting any other problems He may have to fix. Peter, while he confessed some of the greatest confessions as to who Jesus is, also got Jesus wrong more than he did right, at least until the Day of Pentecost.

Part of the issue was Peter, and the rest of the disciples, did not want to accept the thought of Jesus suffering. Peter’s eyes were veiled and he could not see God’s plan, in spite of Jesus teaching him, and pointing him, to God’s plan. Peter would not fully understand it until after Jesus resurrection and the day of Pentecost.

Still, the four of them went up the mountain. Peter, James, and John likely carried with them all kinds of doubt and confusion because their eyes and hearts were veiled to who Jesus is and what God’s plan was. They were much like the Israelites in the wilderness with Moses as they walked around for the forty years. They are also much like many people still today who have not heard or who do not believe in Jesus: whose eyes and hearts are still veiled by sin and Satan.

But then on that mountain something incredible happened: Jesus was transfigured and His clothes literally shone. This was not Tide’s new formula; it was the holiness and righteousness of Christ Jesus. I think most of us would have loved to be there to witness Jesus in His glory, radiating like the sun. It would be great to be able to stand there and have God’s glory shine down on us and to bask in God’s presence... well at least we would like to think so. But, what we think would happen and what the Bible actually says about being in the glory of God are two very different things.

The Bible does not tell of anyone who stood and basked in the glory of God. Even the most righteous of men, when exposed to God’s glory, fell to the ground like dead men, fell on their faces, and shook with fear. The reality of the situation is, if God were to show up in all His power and glory, you and I would also have a panic attack. When Jesus began to radiate, Peter, James, and John did not smile in surprise, rather, today’s Gospel account says, “**Peter did not know what to say, for they were terrified.**”

While Peter’s eyes and heart may have been veiled from seeing God’s plan in Christ, along with many other things, his eyes and heart were **not** veiled to see the reality of his sin in the presence of God. You see, when God shows up in the full majesty of the glory that He revealed on the mountain top, we too become intensely aware of how holy He is and how sinful we are. This is the terror of sinful people in the revealed presence of our Holy God. There is a reason angels normally begin their message with the words, “Fear Not!” Even though the angels only reflect the glory of God’s holiness, it is enough to terrify even the bravest soul. We think we would like to stand in God’s glory, but the terror of Peter, James, and John teaches us to rethink our desire for this kind of mountaintop experience with God.

Yet there on the mountain were Moses and Elijah talking with the radiant/shining Jesus: The Law and the Prophets pointing to their Lord and God in the presence of the Peter, James, and John. Now, if it didn’t terrify the three amigos enough for Jesus to be glowing—personally

radiating light—and for to Jesus to be talking to Moses and Elijah in person, what happened next was enough to even quiet Peter: a cloud overshadowed the mountain. In the Old Testament, specifically during the Exodus and the wandering of the nation of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness, God regularly appeared in the form of a cloud. God demonstrated His presence at Mt. Sinai by overshadow it with a cloud. Anyways, it was at that point even verbose Peter ran out of words. From the cloud God proclaimed Jesus as His Son and told them to “**listen to Him.**”

There is a time to talk and a time to listen. This time it was to listen. From the cloud God pulled back the veil covering the eyes and hearts of the three disciples. The Law and the Prophets were pointing to Jesus. Yet, when God finished speaking from the cloud it vanished and only left was Jesus. The fulfillment of the Old Testament promises and prophecies was present in the flesh of their Teacher and Saviour.

With God’s command still ringing in the disciples ears: “**Listen to Him**”, they were silent. Moses listened to God on Mt. Sinai in today’s Old Testament lesson. There he received, again, the Law for the nation of Israel. Moses shone, literally reflecting God’s glory, after being in God’s presence for 40 days and 40 nights. When Moses came down from the mountain, his radiance scared the nation so much that the people asked Moses to veil his face except when he was speaking God’s Word to them. God’s holiness and righteousness scared the people because it shone God’s light on their sinfulness. Still, Moses simply told the people God’s Word exactly as it was given him and the people were afraid to come near Moses because the veil of their sin was still over their eyes.

Jesus also spoke to Peter, James, and John, as they descended the mountain. They were silent and listened. Jesus reminded them that He was going to die, and that He would rise from the dead. The veil was still over their eyes, but now they listened instead of arguing with Jesus. Jesus was preparing these three future leaders for the reality of what was going to happen to Him on a different mountain in the not so distant future.

It is on this other mountain we should think about joining Jesus and being in His presence. This other mountain is the one Jesus was talking about when He said “**that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.**”(Mark 8:31-32) As marvelous as it sounds to hear about Jesus showing His glory to Peter, James, and John, this is not the glory that we should seek. Instead, we should seek the glory of Jesus blood, sweat, and tears shed on the cross for you, me, and all people.

God revealed His greatest glory in the ugly brutality of Jesus on the cross. The glory of Christ veiled on the cross is the glory that takes away our fear and replaces it with humble

confidence ... a confidence, not in ourselves, but a confidence in the God-man on the cross. It is the brutal glory of Christ on the cross that takes away all sin and replaces it with the righteousness of Jesus. It is this Gospel: Christ and Him crucified for all of us sinners, which pulls the veil off our eyes and allows us to see our Saviour. This is the glory that Peter did not understand when Jesus spoke of His suffering, death, and resurrection.

It is this glory, of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who took our punishment on Himself and reconciled us back to God through the cross and grave that also causes us to glow a little in this world for the sake of our neighbours. It is this Saviour, Christ Jesus Himself, who comes to shine His Life and Light on us that we too may reflect His light into the darkness of this fallen world so some may see Christ through us. The same Jesus who came and shed His blood and gave His life for you, also gave it for each of your neighbours, friends, strangers, and even enemies. Jesus came for all sinners, to die for them, and to rise from the dead that He may share His forgiveness and eternal life with all people.

Jesus shines His Gospel light on you through His Word and Sacrament that you may shine out and share the hope that is in you with those closest and furthest from your heart. Your veil has been removed. You and I are not called to tamper with God's Word; we are simply called to share it and proclaim it so by the work of the Holy Spirit may come to faith through us as servants for Jesus' sake.

The season of Epiphany is about the revelation of Jesus Christ. It begins with the light of the star that led the magi to the Christ child. It ends with the Transfiguration which teaches us that this man Jesus is also true God. In revealing Jesus as both man and God, Epiphany prepares us for the glory of the cross. It teaches us that the man who died on the cross is also the God who shone forth in the transfiguration. That in Jesus Christ, we have both man and God dying for every one of our sins as He hangs on the cross.

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday ... the beginning of Lent. Now that we have once again celebrated the Epiphany of Jesus Christ as both God and man, we are ready to remember that Jesus must be both God and man so that He can go to the cross and save us from sin. We are now ready to remember the journey that Jesus took from the mountain of the Transfiguration to the mountain of the cross. We are ready for Lent. We are ready to meditate on the journey that leads to the cross where Jesus will battle for us and win the victory – the victory that gives us true life with Him forever. Amen

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