

Sermon for the Transfiguration of Our Lord

“Veils and the Light”

2 Corinthians 3:12—4:6

2/11/18b

[From center]

¹²Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—¹³unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. ¹⁵But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

4 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. ²But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. ³But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ⁵For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. ⁶For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

- Veils cover.
 - Moses veiled his shining face because the reflected divine light frightened the people of Israel.
 - When Moses used the veil it was also to teach the people of Israel something important about God and their relationship with Him. You remember when the people first saw Moses’ shining face he was carrying something; Moses was carrying in his hands the newly cut replacement tablets of stone on which God Himself had written the Ten Commandments. Now, when Moses used the veil over his face it was to teach the people of Israel that while there was glory in these divinely-given commandments, yet God had more in store for mankind. The glory of these divinely-given commandments was going to fade as it would give way, in time, to a greater glory. The greater glory would be the glory of God’s grace and forgiveness coming through the Messiah. Earlier in 2 Corinthians 3 Paul had talked about this—how the letter (the Law) in fact kills, but the Spirit (the Gospel) gives life (v.6). Do you see the difference? In our text Paul regretfully states that the Jews of his day, when they heard the teachings of Moses read, only heard the Law and stuck with that, being blind to the Gospel of Christ which Moses also taught. The Jews preferred the message of works that leads only to condemnation to the message of free grace which leads to righteousness and salvation (v.9) They preferred the glory that was destined to come to an end to the glory that was to be permanent (v.11). In verse 15 of our text Paul ruefully states of his fellow Jews: “A veil lies on their heart.”
 - What kinds of veils, my friends, seek to cover *our* hearts?

Is Christ and His teaching clouded over in your mind and heart by distractions/temporal concerns...?

Does guilt keep you from embracing the Gospel, because you think it couldn't possibly be for you?

Do you get uneasy with a God of lavish grace, preferring the sense of control you feel you have when the operating principle of life is works and merit?

Does the seeming light of human reason glow brighter for you than the beams of God's light shining forth from the Bible?

Do veils cover your heart as with the unbelieving Jews?

- God shines in your hearts today—no less miraculous each time it happens than when He first created light, in the beginning.

You know, original sin makes hearts dark—dark like night. By nature we lack the true fear of God and knowledge of God. We trust ourselves and our idols and not God, nor do we love Him. Original sin places not just a veil, but truly a thick curtain over our hearts, separating us from God.

Yet there—through the veil and behind the curtain!—into my sin-deadened heart and yours—God has entered in. God has shined and daily continues to shine with the Gospel of salvation and eternal life by His grace through our faith in Jesus Christ, apart from our works!

- The knowledge of Jesus that saves is a knowledge given by God the Holy Spirit alone. That is what 2 Cor. 4:6 (the last verse of today's Epistle) teaches:

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God** in the face of Jesus Christ.

- We are people who must be converted, to see the kingdom of God we must be born again (John 3), and the Holy Spirit does that divine work deep in your heart. Veils are taken away through conversion (“when one turns to the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:16)). Behold how the Spirit through the Word converts you!
- And His conversion brings you liberty! (v.17) Liberty is for all those who confess Jesus the Lord, who know and trust His blood-bought forgiveness and His gift of salvation. Liberty is living in grace. Liberty is living for God and for neighbor, because you know your own future is in God's sure hands.
- And you are being transformed by God! This is a wonder! “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed** into the same image (i.e. of Christ) from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (v.18).

How are we being transformed? “From glory to glory”. Through the gift of God's salvation in Christ, we are sharing more and more in the glory of God Himself. What a difference from the life of darkness that sin brings! God makes us partakers of His glory. This happens now through the Word, through repentance and faith, and shows itself to others as the fruit of the Spirit is produced in our lives. This all has its end in the resurrection. Glory! For now, that glory lies concealed to human eyes under the cross of suffering, but at last, in the resurrection, it will be fully revealed to all.

- And all these truths we can and must speak, and speak boldly, as Paul did. “Therefore, since we have such hope—hope in the permanent glory that God shines on us and shares with us through the Gospel—since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12). Paul further says,

“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart” (4:1). Do you see the confidence Paul has from God? I have that confidence and so do you.

Paul adds: “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (v.2).

Friends, like Paul, we are unafraid, as teach and confess God’s truths without any deceit (why would we need to use deceit?) but in truth and openness before God and people’s consciences.

We know God, that He is gracious and forgiving toward us and that we have eternal life in Christ.

We confess and share the Word, the Word of God. We teach and speak the Gospel, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.