

The Transfiguration of Our Lord: February 5, 2017
“The God Effect”

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Our text for this morning is our Old Testament lesson, Exodus 34.

Shining faces are not a normal, everyday experience. If you were to see someone's face and it was actually shining, you would know something is different. What would you do if you saw someone's face literally shining? I know that when we see someone who is really happy, we say things such as, “They are glowing,” or, “They are radiant,” or “They are just beaming.” But what if you saw someone's face literally shining? It might scare you just a little bit. I mean, isn't the natural thing for many when their telling scary stories around the campfire to take a flashlight, and illumine their face so that there is an added element of not normalness? The point here is that a shining face is not normal, and this what the people of Israel saw of Moses, and what the disciples saw of Jesus.

There is something that seems so ordinary, and yet not so ordinary in both our Old Testament and our Gospel lessons today. Moses was an ordinary man. He went to a seemingly ordinary mountain that was covered with what one would see as a supposedly familiar, normal and commonplace cloud that covered this mountain. Except, this cloud was not your average cloud. God used this cloud to show His very presence with His people, and to cover Moses from God's awesome glory so that Moses could talk to God face-to-face.

Just for a moment, ponder the order in which God records these events in Exodus. The sequence is beautiful. Moses in the presence of God, writing the Law on the Tablets of Stone. Then he comes down to speak God's Word to God's people, and his face is shining. He is literally changed being the presence of God. Immediately following this event, the instructions for constructing the Tabernacle is given; the place where God's glory is housed for His people. Part of those instructions include the Mercy Seat.

Now those tablets of stone are to be placed into the Ark of the Covenant, and covered with the Mercy Seat, that is the throne of God. Through Paul, the Holy Spirit proclaims, *“Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came*

*with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?"*¹ Put this together with the Words in John spoken of Jesus, *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."*²

Being in the presence of God has an effect. Jesus is God, so it makes sense that being in Jesus' presence has an effect. God uses a seemingly simple building, and average, normal people, to speak God's Word. We come to this place and we enter into God's presence, and as we do, it has an effect. Here we are covered with God's grace and restored in God's peace. Here He feeds and comforts and sustains us. Here we hear God speak through the mouth of sinful, normal (just don't ask Markie about me being normal), human Pastor's. Here we gather to hear, pray, and praise together, and it has an effect.

When we leave, we shine. We reflect God to the world, at home, in school, at work, wherever we go this next week when we leave these doors. Just like Moses, we may not be aware that we do. We simply have no other choice as God's children. We do what God asks and that will frighten some. Sinners don't want to hear of their sin. We love and we pray and we lead them to God's Word; we lead them to God. As we reflect, some will be frightened, but others will draw near. Like a light in a dark place, they will be drawn to you, rather you will draw them to Christ.

God uses the most ordinary things, to do some of His greatest work. He used the cloud throughout the entire Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to serve as reminders of His presence. Clouds seem so simple, and God continues to use simple, seemingly every day common things to show His presence even today. Loving and teaching our children and grandchildren, seems rather simple, but how much of that truly gives glory to God? A lot! Raising our children to know God's love and to follow His commands, you set them up to never reject by word or deed the free gift of eternal life in Christ. The mother who changes her child's diaper, does a great and wonderful work. It seems simple and necessary. It doesn't seem glorious, but does that not fulfill helping a neighbor in every physical need?

¹ 2 Corinthians 3:7-8

² John 1:14

Changing diapers is easy, and they don't talk back yet. They only listen, well mostly. What about others as they get older? They don't listen right away because they may not readily trust you. They cannot see that you truly are looking out for their welfare, for their benefit, for their good. Sometimes being a Christian, reflecting that love of Christ, first means gaining trust. Sometimes wearing the veil of humility is required. Others need to know that you care, before they will hear you when you speak to them the good news. This is one of the challenges a Pastor faces in any congregation. Some trust him right away and are able to talk to him because they respect the office of the ministry. They can see past the person and speak to the office.

Others, take more time to make that distinction. This is the very need for missions and whose work is that? Each and every child of God is given the task of speaking to others. For those that live around here, for those you interact with, for those that have been here forever, for those that may have not been here that long, and for those that have not come for a while, one of you may speak their language. They already trust you and you know how to speak to them. Go! Share the good news with them! You may be the missionary that God is waiting to send to them.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, what about moving pictures, what about our actions? In Exodus we see Moses' actions, we see that He continued to speak to God's people. What did Jesus do? Jesus showed many things by His actions, and especially today as we celebrate His Transfiguration, do we recall who He is as He showed His disciples. He was ordinary, and at the same time, He was extraordinary. This showing of who He truly is was for their benefit and their good. Through this action of His Transfiguration, Jesus prepared His disciples for what was to come. He prepared them for His suffering, death, resurrection, and their subsequent persecution. Take stock of your actions. With your actions, you are preparing those whom you teach for their life, death, and suffering in this world until the life to come.

How are we to keep God's name holy? God makes it very simple. Don't have other gods, don't misuse His name, don't despise preaching and His Word, honor authorities, protect life, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't destroy reputations and be content.

Very simple, yet we make it so complicated. Oh how many times I have tried to skate around these clear commands. “You mean I can’t...?” “No.” “Well, what if I just...?” “No.” “But you don’t understand God, I just wanted...” “No.” Simple ordinary commands, but they have heavenly, eternal effects.

Ordinary, yet not so ordinary. An ordinary man is the extraordinary Son of God. The disciples get a glimpse of this on the Mount of Transfiguration. A man who was tempted in every way that we are, kept every law of God perfectly. An ordinary betrayal, led to an extraordinary dark trial and a mob prosecution won in the public court. Three ordinary nails fixed Jesus to an ordinary cross in the midst of two ordinary criminals. The son of God died just like every ordinary man. He struggled to breath and bowed His head with His last breath. But this death was far from ordinary. This death saw the wrath of God for all man’s sins poured upon this man. This death saw the Lord of the heavens and the earth, turn His back and forsake one of His own creation. This extraordinary death, this man who was the glory of God, died for you.

Ordinary, and yet not so ordinary. You, ordinary, sinfully conceived, poor in spirit, and miserable people, are forever forgiven, children of God and inheritors of God’s eternal kingdom. With ordinary water and God’s Word, He shows you who He is. He gives His glory, His presence. Through baptism you are brought into the presence of God and it has an effect. With flesh and blood, body and soul, you are God’s everlasting children with love for all of God’s creation. Love so super-abounding you cannot stop speaking of God’s love. You can’t wait to join with others in praise and prayer. You can’t wait to hear Him speak, and you can’t stop telling and encouraging others to do the same.

Ordinary, and yet, not so ordinary. Ordinary, humble, bread and wine veils Jesus’ very crucified and risen body that you get to feast on for our forgiveness. You get to gather around the heavenly banquet and feast on life. He breaks into our common time. With very ordinary things, God’s gracious presence shines through. Things aren’t always what they seem. God’s children seem like normal people, yet you are different. You are in the presence of God, and He has promised to keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. Through His Word and Sacraments, you are in God’s glorious presence. He is with you always, even to the ends of the age.

“Remember, Lord of life and grace,
How once, to save our fallen race,
You put our human vesture on
And came to us as Mary’s son.
Today, as year by year its light
Bathes all the world in radiance bright,
One precious truth outshines the sun:
Salvation comes from You alone.

Alleluia!” Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds
in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

**Prayer of the Church
The Transfiguration of Our Lord
10 February 2019**

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. Heavenly Father, You admonish Your children to listen to Your Son. Give us ears to hear Him, as He speaks to us through His Holy Word and Sacraments, and give us faith to believe that He delivers forgiveness, life and salvation to us through the same. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

While Your Son commanded Peter, James and John to tell no one what they had witnessed on the Mount of Transfiguration until He was raised from the dead, He charged them, and the rest of His apostles, after His resurrection to go out into all the world and proclaim repentance and the forgiveness of sins in His name. Continue to raise up faithful men for this task, and bless all pastors with bold confidence in Your prophetic Word. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You resist the proud and give grace to the humble. Grant us true humility after the likeness of Your Son, our Lord, that we may never be arrogant or prideful and thus provoke Your wrath, but in all lowliness be made partakers of Your grace. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In order to maintain peace and order in our world, You place authorities over us. Bless the leaders of the world and give them wisdom to govern according to Your will. Where there is strife and conflict, bring reconciliation and peace. Where there is persecution, bring freedom. And help us to be good citizens as we carry out our various vocations. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Look down with mercy upon all those who are sick, hospitalized, homebound or suffering in any way [*especially Doug, Larry, Phillip, and those we name in our hearts*]. Provide them with compassionate care and knowledgeable physicians. And send pastors to deliver Christ and His gifts to them, so that they would be comforted in their time of need. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, our times are in Your hands. We give you thanks for the new birth of **Lane Michael**, keep him ever in Your grace, and as you have added him to the earthly family, may You also add him to Your heavenly family through the waters of Holy Baptism. May You also look with favor, we pray, on Your servants **Kistie, Carmen, & June** whom You have granted another year of earthly life. Grant that *they* may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen *their* trust in Your goodness all the days of *their* life; Lord in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

Bless all those who approach the holy altar to receive Your Son's body and blood this day, that they would come in repentance and faith and depart in the peace only Your Son can give. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We give You thanks for all the faithful witnesses who have gone before us and have now received their heavenly reward. Fill us with Your Spirit, that we would remain steadfast in Your prophetic and apostolic Word until we are called out of this vale of tears to join them in the place Your Son has prepared for us. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Through Him, with Him and in Him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is Yours, forever and ever. **Amen.**