

**Sermon 3.3.19**

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Luke 9:28-36, 2Cor 3:12-4:2, Ex 34:29-35

Do you ever feel like you're missing out on something? Like everyone around you knows what's going on and you don't? The older I get, the more things I have to look up on google. I always feel like I'm missing out on something in the transfiguration story. I absolutely love the gospels, and am usually caught up in wonder and fascination with the way Jesus maneuvers in our world. He dispenses mercy *and* truth in life-giving ways, elevating the depressed and bringing down the prideful in a manner that seems almost magic. But despite the paranormal elements, this story seems spiritually conventional by comparison. Jesus confirms his connection to the established religion, and God startles the humans with an old testament display of raw power. Maybe it's because I'm not steeped in Jewish tradition and don't have a ready association for Moses and Elijah, but I feel kind of distant from this conference on the mountain.

I'm particularly on the outside when the disciples behold God's arresting glory. Despite the many ways I've known God to communicate God's message, I've never been moved to terror by the brilliant presence of God.

But I got to thinking about this. Where in my world **do** I encounter something that's unmistakably good such as the literal voice of God, yet causes me terror? How about for you? Is there such a place? Are you ever in the situation where the more you discover the goodness of something, the more you seek the safety of the opposite? It seems like a paradox, and yet I think these places exist.

I posed this question to a few of you during Tuesday's lectionary bible study and got some good responses. One parishioner was afraid of her brand new car. She was thrilled to have it, but wasn't sure of all it could do and worried she may push the wrong button. Another talked about the stages of life, and being happy to be alive enough to have them, and yet sometimes terrified by the changes and loss each stage brings.

I eventually found my example of this paradox. It actually happens a lot, and I think it's a phenomenon many will understand. God's hard-to-take-in glory in my life doesn't look like a talking cloud of blinding light, or the glowing face of a religious leader. It often takes the form of an invitation to reveal my true self. These invitations are given by other friendly and loving humans, but often I revert to a veil of niceties or efficiency to avoid the encounter. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Sometimes for us it's easier to be known as the outgoing person, the intellectual person, or the always helpful person, instead of as our complex selves. Call it a veil, call it a façade, or simply being shy, the result is the same.

**We long to be known, AND yet are terrified to be known.**

This is the paradox of intimacy. It's a sudden intimacy with God that drove the disciples on the mountain to cower, the Hebrews to request a veil of Moses, and Adam and Eve to hide in the garden. The invitation is to reveal our true selves, and we hide or lash out when we fear rejection.

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We have an outreach program set up to offer financial assistance to people in need, and much of my time in the office is spent available to hear from help seekers. I usually encounter people at one of the most humbling and painful moments of their lives. I'm aware of the power structure at play in these relationships. We hold the resources to help, and the clients come to us in tremendous need. But when someone bears their soul, and I'm in a good place to hold this pain, that power structure breaks down pretty quickly and a divine connection occurs. These are true moments of God's glory because I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that—despite the economic power at play— *I need this human as much as they need our help*. My heart is watered and softened by their unveiled humanity, and in their presence I am formed more into the person God created me to be. What a glory-filled process, how could I ever resist this?

Sadly, sometimes I shroud this glory with the practical veil of a more efficient use of my time. I might hurry them along, or in some other way avoid this human connection. Even if we help them with their material need, the chance to be mutually known and changed is lost. I'm blessed with a lot of loving people in my life, and I know the sweet peace of being known. Yet, the struggle to sit still in the glory of intimacy is something I also know well.

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Today, we celebrate the rite of welcome to begin the liturgical process of expanding our beloved community. This process began months ago IRL, but today's rites connect the intention of our candidates with our shared worship experience. What a glorious moment, yet I know it's one to which some are hesitant to commit. Earlier, we heard the candidates agree to being known by God and this community, and all of us agreed to be witnesses of Jesus *with our very lives*.

Yikes! How will we fulfill this intimidating call toward intimacy with our broken and imperfect examples? You've already committed to this, so let's figure it out. Do we need a safety veil to hide our un-finished surfaces and incomplete edges? No, we do not. The Apostle Paul lends some encouraging words to this endeavor. Because of our hope in Jesus, we can be bold. We're safe to tear that veil in two.

*And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror,*

*are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.*

The veil is not necessary, and in fact it *is* necessary to see each other with unveiled faces in order to behold “the glory of the Lord.”

It’s important to hear that all of us “*are* being transformed.” No one is done with the process. What this means to me is this: there’s a specific need in the kingdom of God for every one of us to be right where we are in our faith journey. We are not the kingdom of God without your doubts, your anxiety, or your less-than-Jesus-like behavior. This community needs your face, all of our faces, unveiled and free to be known by the rest of us self-doubters. God’s glory is made known in our incomplete areas as much as our complete ones. In fact, the glory has nothing really to do with our accomplishments and everything to do with our freedom to be known in community. This is a little terrifying for some of us, but we can do it. We can bring it all before our creator knowing we’re held together by the promise of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

God made a way,

Jesus is that way,

and Jesus *is* being fully known in community.

In the name of the father, the son, the holy spirit, AMEN.