

## Gaze upon His Glory! 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 Transfiguration Sunday 2/19/2012 Pastor Aaron Nitz

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! In the name of Jesus, dear friends in Christ, Students have mastered the art of doing this...I think. Think back to a time when you were in school. You can tell it's been a long day and your teacher is more frustrated today than usual. Little Johnny already has 3 detentions which is a record even for him. You can feel the tension mounting in the air. Then the teacher does the inevitable...asks a question which everyone knows they ought to know the answer to, but no one's sure. "What did God give Moses on Mt. Sinai?" Complete silence settles over the room. No one seems to be ready to dare to make a stab at the answer for fear of embarrassment or upset the teacher with the wrong answer. But then little Suzy in the back corner cautiously and carefully barely sticks her hand in the air so the teacher has to wonder whether she's actually raising her hand or is she doing something else. Well, "Suzy, do you know the answer?" Then in a quiet, timid, and barely audible voice little Suzy answers turning her answer into a question, "God gave Moses...the ten commandments?"

Little Suzy had the right answer but she was afraid, timid, scared, cautious, unsure, and uncertain about her answer. This doesn't just happen in a classroom with little children, does it? This same phenomenon happens whenever someone is unsure of themselves or their message. A company that's unsure of its product will often dress it up in fancy packaging or advertise it with outrageous claims. A politician who is unsure will often sugar coat his message in order to make it sound pleasing to the most amount of voters. Even in our lives, each one of us can think of times when we've felt unsure or uncertain or uneasy about something. In fact, life is full of uncertainties, isn't it? Well, by God's grace we all have something that we never have to be unsure about or uncertain about or apologize for. And that's the Gospel: The message of free and full forgiveness of all of our sins in Jesus and the certain hope of eternal life with Him forever. That message that is ours and gives us confidence for every day of our life; it's a message we are not timid of and never have to sugar coat or dress up.

This is the point that Paul makes in our text for this morning. We have boldness, confidence, we don't lose heart, because of what the Gospel is! Our text kind of jumps right into the middle of one of the Apostle Paul's letters. Remember that Paul on one of his missionary journeys established the church at Corinth in Greece. A couple of years later he again returned to the city of Corinth for a brief visit and found all kinds of problems going on in the church: divisions, immorality, abuse of the Lord's Supper, lawsuits among Christians, etc. So after leaving he wrote them a letter known as 1 Corinthians to address all of these problems. He was quite concerned with how they would receive 1 Corinthians so he met with Titus a little while later who gave him a good report; that most of the problems were being taken care of. However some still remained. There were still people in the church who were trash talking Paul and trying to discredit his ministry. So about 56 AD Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians explaining his ministry and his authority as God's chosen apostle.

He pointed out that he doesn't mope around timidly or bashfully or like he's scared of his message. He said, **"Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold."** We have the best and surest hope of all: eternal glory in heaven because of Christ, so we have every reason to be bold! Then he goes on, **"We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away."** In order to understand what Paul is talking about here let's recall a bit of Old Testament history:

When Moses would meet with the Lord in order to receive a message from God for the people his face would actually reflect brightness from being in the presence of God. When Moses would then in turn speak the messages of God to the people his face would be brightly shining with glory. There would be no mistake that what Moses had to say was from God. Imagine I'm standing here and when I spoke God's Word to you my face would beam with blinding light. After Moses spoke God's commands and laws to the people he would then put a veil over his face. Well, why did he do that? Paul explains that to us. You see, Moses put this veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the glory of his face fading away. The Old covenant, the system of laws and regulations God commanded in the Old Testament was fading away, it was preparatory for new things to come, which would come in the full way when Jesus arrived. If the Israelites saw the glory fading away they would have less respect for the covenant that God had made with them, "What does it matter if we follow God's laws if they are only fading away anyway." But the fulfilled message, the message of the Gospel, of Christ, of forgiveness of sins and life, is the New Covenant. This Gospel, which we have, is of far greater glory than Moses' message. We don't have to be reluctant or hesitant with our message, our message is not fading and will not go away and so we don't have to hide it! We are bold with it!

**“But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read a veil covers their hearts.”**

Now imagine being a Jew in Paul’s day. You come to the synagogue every week and hear God’s law read again and again. Imagine the only readings we read today were the 10 commandments read three times and there was nothing about Jesus or a Savior or redemption or forgiveness. The people in Paul’s day had a veil covering their faces. They would hear these commands of God and think to themselves, “Hmm, well another successful week, good for me! No other gods. Check. Not misuse the name of God. Check. Remember the Sabbath. Check. Honor your parents. Check. I’m doing pretty good. God must be happy with me because I’m such a good person.” Are there people with this veil still around today? Sure. It’s people who vainly think they can earn God’s favor. “God must like me because I am such a good person and not like everyone else.” Anyone who thinks that God likes them because of something they did has this veil. But you see Jesus did not come into the world to save a bunch of good people. He came to save sinful people, sinners. God’s intended purpose of the law was to kill us. To drive God’s sword right into our self-righteous hearts and kill us. So that we’d look at God’s law and hang our heads and sigh, “I’ve broken every single one of those laws, I can’t keep them, God ought to cast me out of His sight forever!”

Now when someone is brought to faith in Jesus the veil is taken away. **“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”** You see, when the Holy Spirit comes through the Gospel and works faith in someone’s heart the veil is taken away. The veil of ignorance and unbelief is removed so you can see...*God’s* glory! When someone is brought to faith in Jesus the law with its condemnation and sentence of death for anyone who disobeys is annulled and made powerless and in its place the person is given the free forgiveness of sins and grace of the Gospel. Where the Holy Spirit has worked faith in the heart, there is true freedom. Freedom from the shackles of sin and death and hell!

Now we who have seen this glory, the glory of the Gospel, are now being transformed into Jesus’ likeness. Our lives actually conform to Jesus’ life. Having been enlightened by the Gospel out of thankfulness to God we have more compassion, kindness, love, and we want what God wants, we suffer for His sake. And we reflect the glory that is in us- it shines out in our lives and we look forward to the glory that awaits us forever in heaven. This is a glorious message that we have and it gives us boldness and confidence and we don’t lose courage.

Are there times when we do lose courage and lose heart? Times when we forget the glorious fact that we have, right now, a far-surpassing glory that awaits full realization in heaven? Our lives are constant ups and downs, Mountains and valleys. When something good happens we feel great, then when something bad happens we plummet and feel awful. Each one of us longs for something to give us confidence, boldness, assurance in life.

This is exactly what Jesus gave his disciples on that Transfiguration day. There on that mountain top the disciples saw a glimpse of who Jesus really is, they saw His glory, the glory of the one and only true God, they saw Him dazzle with blinding light, saw Him talk with Moses and Elijah, and heard the voice of God say, **“This is my Son, whom I love, listen to him!”** This was a mountain top in their lives! But Jesus didn’t stay on that mountain top. Jesus came not just to fulfill the law perfectly, but also to fulfill the Gospel. Jesus led the disciples down that transfiguration mountain into the valley of His passion, his sufferings, and his death.

We are about to enter the church season of lent. During lent we will see our Lord mocked, betrayed, beaten, made fun of, disgraced, rejected, sentenced to death, nailed to a cross, and die. Perhaps remembering again the passion of our Lord will make us want to crawl into a corner in timidity, in uncertainty, in fear. And indeed it ought to, the reason Jesus had to suffer was because of scoundrels and sinners like you and me. But then we look at His glory, shown so brightly on that Transfiguration mountain, and we remember who He really is and what He has come to do. When Jesus suffered and when He died He did so for a reason. He did so to win us freedom, to remove from us the shackles of sin, death and hell! He suffered and died to pay for our sins in full and to win for us eternal glory with Him!

No we don’t veil our faces like Moses; we see the glory of God’s new covenant, His final word, the Gospel. And our faces beam reflecting the Lord’s glory in our lives. We have every reason to face life boldly and confidently! We have seen the glorious Gospel, we know for certain our sins have been forgiven in Jesus, we know for sure that in Jesus God has removed our sins forever, we have absolute confidence that eternal glory awaits us in heaven. Our confidence comes from gazing at His transfigured glory, the glory of his passion, and the glory of his resurrection! Gaze upon His glory, there is where your confidence comes!