

February 22, 2004
Transfiguration Sunday

"You Have Seen the Glory of God"

2 CORINTHIANS 4:3-6

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

I am holding in my hand a pink business card with the name on it of "Perry's Alterations." As some of you may know, Louise Perry, from our congregation has a business that involves making alterations to clothing. If you have lost some weight and need to have the pants taken in, or a dress altered, I am sure that Louise can help you.

Alterations. Just think of some of the major alterations that have come into your life over the years. Your life was never the same after you were married. And what about the alteration that came with the birth of your first child? And then there was the time when you joined the Marines. To this day the Marine Hymn brings tears to your eyes. Going off to school sure changed your life, and what about growing old or getting sick, or losing someone that you have lived with for 50 years. Life is full of alterations.

Today we want to speak about the biggest alteration that came into your life when God opened your eyes to see his glory. As you just heard read to you, "God made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Peter, James and John saw the glory of Jesus shining before them on the holy mountain, and they never forgot that moment. John would later write, "And we beheld his glory." Peter would write, "We were eye witnesses of his majesty." What a blessing it is to spend every moment of our lives on this earth with our eyes as wide open as saucers, marveling at the glory of God that we have seen in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. You are amazing people, truly amazing, because **"You Have Seen the Glory of God."**

1) This glory is veiled to many

When you go to school tomorrow, or walk in the office to work, or do your shopping, you are rubbing elbows with people who have not seen this glory of God that you have seen. The Apostle Paul writes about a veil that keeps people from seeing. "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing." This word for "veil" is used by Jesus to describe how you do not take a light such as this candle, and then put it under a container. Yet, that is what has happened to people. The glory of God is veiled for them, because they do not want to see God's plan to redeem and rescue them from the flaming fires of hell.

There is a reason why they are so blind to God's glory and God's plan to rescue them.

"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." A dad took his children to the museum on their day off from school. As they walked into the front of the museum, they saw a display showing the ascent of man, from a one celled plant, to a lizard, to an ape, to a half human half ape, and finally a fully developed human in a business suit. There are people living in our world who sincerely believe with all their hearts that we developed accidentally by chance over millions of years of time from a one-celled form of life. That is a totally different view that we share here this morning of God who not only made the heavens and the earth, but made man in his image. The god of this age keeps people from seeing the glory of God displayed in the stars as the psalmist wrote, "The heaven's declare the glory of God and the earth shows forth his handiwork or design." Romans 1 says of this blindness in the human heart, "For though they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and foolish hearts were darkened." Deep down, they know that there is a designer of all things, but they refuse to give him glory, and even talk mother nature being responsible for the design process

The god of this age or the world-view around us, has so blinded the hearts and minds of people that they cannot see the glory of God that exists in Christ Jesus our Lord. Peter, James and John saw that glory of God shining in Jesus on the holy mountain. When Peter was asked by Jesus to give an opinion of who he was, Peter responded, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." When Thomas saw the nail marks in Jesus' hands after his resurrection he proclaimed, "My Lord and my God." That, my dear Christian, is what your eyes have seen. You believe with all your heart and every fiber of your being that a lowly, despised carpenter's son from Nazareth, was born in Bethlehem, is your Lord and God from all eternity. Do you fully realize how much your life has been altered by the fact you have been led to believe with your heart and confess with your lips that Jesus Christ is Lord? It's this faith in Christ as Lord and God that you long to see in the lives of people who are still groping around in blindness.

Because the god of this age blinds people, they will not see the plan that God has for rescuing them from sin. Paul writes, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." They cannot see the light of the gospel. They don't want to hear the good news of what Christ has done to rescue them. They see no need for being rescued, because they are blind and clueless on how sin has totally damaged their lives, made them unacceptable to God, and even made it utterly impossible to do anything good to rectify the situation. Paul wrote in Romans 10 about his fellow Jews, "They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." The Muslims have a zeal for their religion, but it is not according to knowledge. They sincerely believe that if they follow the five pillars of Islam, they will make themselves worthy to spend paradise with Allah.

This blindness, this veil over the heart, this inability to see the glory of God in Jesus Christ will become even more aware to us as we hear people react to the movie, "The Passion of the Christ." There are those in the media who say that this may cause people to lash out in anger against the Jews. Christians know the truth of Christ's suffering and death. I have heard that Mel Gibson appears in the film, but only with his left hand holding the nail as Jesus is nailed to the cross. If you see the film, and see the hand that holds the spike, then think of yourself nailing Jesus to cross. That's why Jesus died. It was our sins. "He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification." If you

know someone who is blind to the glory of Christ's suffering and death that has rescued us, point them to the words of Isaiah 53, "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity."

The blood of Jesus runs down from his hands, stains the cross, and drops to the ground. Eyes that are blind think this is only a legend that has been passed down and put on to the pages of a book called the Bible. Eyes that are blind will proclaim this blood to be that of a man who ran around claiming he was the Messiah and was put to death for his false claims. Eyes that are blind will deny the blood that fell to the ground was the blood of someone who was Lord and God from all eternity. Eyes that are blind will dismiss as antiquated blood theology the teaching that Jesus' blood actually pays and atones for sin. As we are told in 1 Corinthians 2, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." In this vast sea of humanity where many do not see the glory in the cross of Christ and his precious blood, there are those who sincerely believe that the blood of Jesus cleanses them from all sin. That's where we stand together this morning, looking in awe and wonder at Jesus as Lord and God, and looking in awe and wonder at the good news of how he has rescued us.

2) This glory is visible to you

It's amazing, truly amazing, at how clear all of this is to you, and you had nothing to do with it. Paul writes, "We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake." It was not the teaching of Paul that opened the eyes of people to see. It was the simply message that Jesus Christ is Lord and God. Remember how blind Paul was when he went to Damascus to look for more Christians that he could persecute and put to death. Then a bright light appeared to him. He cried out in fear, "Lord who are you." He used the name, "Lord" or Jehovah God. The voice came back to him, "I am Jesus." Immediately the dark veil was removed, his eyes were opened. He was born again. He became a Christian. And he spent the rest of his life telling people he was a servant for Jesus' sake. He wanted other people to see what he had come to see, and he was willing to tell anybody he could that Jesus is Lord and God, and share the rescue plan that had come to mean so much to him.

Paul had nothing to do with coming to believe in Jesus. His eyes were opened by a miracle of God. "For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Remember how it was described as "formless and empty." The Hebrew for that is "tohu va bohu." Then on that same first day of creation God said, "Let there be light." Light enables us to see things that around us. You not only have physical eyes to see the physical world around you, but faith eyes to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

None of us sitting here has ever seen the face of Jesus. We have seen films depicting Jesus' life and actors who played the part of Jesus. We have pictures of Jesus in books and even in reproductions of paintings. Even though we have never seen the face of Jesus with our physical eyes, we can look into his face with our faith eyes. When Peter, James and John heard Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah on the holy mountain, they heard him talk about his suffering and death that was coming soon. What had to amaze them was the joy that was there on the face of Jesus. The book of Hebrews says, "For the joy set

before he endured the cross and the shame." Jesus told stories such as the lost son, and painted a picture of love on the father's face that we can never forget. He did this to help us see the love on his face. Little children were brought to Jesus so he could bless them. Even as he dies we see love on his face as he prays, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" and love that shows itself in his words, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise. That's the love and glory that we have come to see in the face of Jesus. That's the biggest change or alteration that has come into your life, and you never grow tired of seeing the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. Amen.