

February 14, 2010
Transfiguration Sunday

"Blind, But Now I See"

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.

It was an amazing miracle that Jesus performed on a man who was born blind. We read about it in John 9. Jesus puts mud on his eyes, tells him to wash in the pool of Siloam and the man opens his eyes and sees trees, houses and people. He not only sees these objects but recognizes things he has never seen before. When asked by the Jewish leaders why this all happened he said, "I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see."

"Blind but now I see." We just sang these words from the hymn, "Amazing Grace." "I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see." These words were written by a man named John Newton who was raised by a Christian mother. When she died, his dad, a sea captain, took him along on the ship as a cabin boy where he learned to do all the bad things sailors did in those days. When he was older he worked on the slave ships that took slaves from Africa and brought them back to England. One day in a terrible storm that nearly claimed his life, he was brought back to the Christian faith he had learned from his mother. His blind eyes were opened again to the blessings he had in his Lord and Savior Jesus.

I am sure the Apostle Paul is thinking of his own life when he writes to the Corinthian Christians about how God "shines in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Just as Peter, James and John were privileged to see Jesus' glory on the holy mountain, Paul was privileged to see Jesus' glory on the road to Damascus when his eyes were opened to see Jesus as his Lord and God.

Today we want to talk about how radically changed and altered your life is because you are privileged to see the glory of your God in the face of Jesus Christ his Son, your Lord and your Savior. It is all real to you because once you were blind but now you see.

See how blind we once were

Have you ever taken a tour in a cave where they turn off the lights and it is so dark you cannot see your hand even though it is inches from your nose? An even greater darkness of unbelief was there in our lives when we were born into this world. "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 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.” The Christian witness who seeks to bring the gospel to other people who do not believe will always wonder, “Why is it that so many people do not accept this message?” “Why don’t they accept God’s offer of forgiveness in Christ when it is totally free?” Christians who are eager to share the gospel may even look into themselves and ask, “I wonder what I have done wrong?”

Paul certainly must have wondered that when he saw his own Jewish people repeatedly reject what he told them about Christ. Not only are people born with a natural rebellion and anger against God’s plan, but they are further turned against God’s plan by the “god of this age,” another name for Satan. In chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians Paul describes his beloved Jewish people with these words, “Even to this day, when the law is read, a veil covers their hearts.” Paul often reflected on his own life and how blind he was to who Jesus was and what Jesus had done to rescue him.

Let me illustrate this blindness that exists in all of us before God changes us by holding up this copper penny. When I was a child we would pick up pennies and joyfully say, “Mom, I found a penny.” Today we don’t even bother to bend down and pick them up. They have very little value, unless the penny happens to be a rare coin. If this were a penny accidentally minted with copper when pennies were made with zinc during WW2 it would be worth over \$50,000 dollars. We are born so blind that we think Jesus is like a worthless penny. We are convinced by Satan that Jesus is totally worthless because we have the capacity to save ourselves. The god of this world blinds the hearts of those who do not believe.

To show even more how the god this age blinds the hearts of those who do not believe, let me quote to you from a historic document from the early history of our country. In a book called “The Dividing Line” by William Byrd, a Native American named Bearskin tells what he believes about life after death. “He believed that after death both good and bad people are conducted by a strong guard into a great road, in which departed souls travel together for some time, till at a certain distance this road forks into two paths, the one extremely level, and the other stony and mountainous. Here the good are parted from the bad by a flash of lightning, the first being hurried away to the right, the other to the left. The right hand road leads to a charming warm country, where the spring is everlasting, and every month is May; and as the year is always in its youth, so are the people, and particularly the woman are bright as the stars, and never scold... The left hand path is very rugged and uneven, leading to a dark and barren country, where it is always winter.” That, dear Christian is the natural religion that is embedded in people and encouraged by the god of this age.

The holy book of the Muslims, called the Koran, says this about the day of judgment: “They whose balances shall be heavy with good works, shall be happy; but they whose balances shall be light, are those who shall lose their souls and shall remain in hell forever.” Paul said of his Jewish people in Romans 10, “They have a zeal for God but their zeal is not based on knowledge.” Then he goes on to say about their blindness, “Since they do not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to the God’s righteousness.” Jesus offers a beautiful white robe of righteousness, and in our natural blindness, we prefer to wrap ourselves in our own dirty rags of unrighteousness and think this will make us acceptable to God.

What bothers me is that some of this blindness to Jesus' glory still exists after I become a Christian. In Ephesians 1 the Apostle Paul offers this beautiful prayer. "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better." Isn't that your wish and mine every morning when we awaken from our sleep? "Lord God heavenly Father, I want to know you better. Lord Jesus, I want to know you better. Holy Spirit, comforter, let me know you better. Take the scales off my eyes the way you did with Paul on the road to Damascus. Open my eyes and help me see more of your glory." In Philippians 3 Paul writes, "That I might know him and the power of his resurrection." In John 17 Jesus prayed for his disciples and said, "O Father, I want those who you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you have loved me before the creation of the world."

Several years ago, scientists aimed the Hubble telescope at what appeared to be a dark and empty corner of space. In this dark corner of the universe, they found over 400 different galaxies, not stars mind you, but galaxies, filled with billions of stars, billions of light years away. The god of this world loves to have us look for the dark holes where we fail to see God's love for us. But suddenly in the darkest holes, the Lord appears and lets us see his glory. His love shines brightly for us and we start singing. We start singing softly at first but then more loudly, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so... Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves, yes, Jesus love me, the Bible tells me so."

Look at how well you see

Dear Christian, think of the contrast between the blindness that was once part of your life and the light of God's glory that now shines so brightly in every facet of your being. Paul never lost sight of the amazing way Jesus Christ and eternal life came into his life. "We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." Paul could have made it big in the testimonial meetings of today, by describing the warm fuzzy feelings that came over him on that day when he was converted. He wanted people to see Christ through him. He describes how his eyes were opened up by the Lord. "For God who said, 'Let the light shine out of darkness,' has 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."

When God created the world, he created it without form and shape. Into the darkness of that original creation God brought light, with the well known words, "Let there be light." Paul was in complete darkness. He was blind to who Jesus Christ really was as he made the trip to Damascus to find more Christians he could persecute. Into the darkness a light suddenly began to shine. A light from heaven flashed around him. A voice from heaven said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" When Paul asked the all important question, "Who are you Lord?" the voice came back and said, "I am Jesus." Three little words, "I am Jesus" and the eyes of this man are suddenly open to see Jesus Christ as his Lord and God, and Savior. Everything he hated about the Christian faith and its claims, he suddenly believed to be true. He sees Jesus as his Lord and God. He sees the cross as the place Jesus paid for his Son. He sees the resurrection from the dead as the supreme truth that every part of the Christian faith is true, and trustworthy. He saw the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

On this Transfiguration Sunday we are privileged to stand with Peter, James and John and

look at Jesus shining in all his glory. The Holy Spirit has given you the eyes of faith so that you see the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus your Savior. With faith given by the Holy Spirit you listen to Jesus as he talks to Moses and Elijah about the suffering and death on the cross for us. With the eyes of faith you see determination written all over the face of Jesus as he eagerly goes forward to the cross to rescue us and save us. You realize how much he loves you and cares for you. This glory of Jesus' is more real than the glory of this world, and more real than any problems and troubles you may be going through at the time. I was blind but now I see. That's the amazing story of your life and mine. Amen.