

Exodus 34:29-35

March 3, 2019 – THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

Reflect the Lord's Glory

✦ Remember the epic fail (vv.29-30)

✦ Recall eternal freedom (vv.31-35)

In the name of Jesus, our glorious Savior, dear shining Christians:

On an escalator in the Mall of America a couple couldn't help noticing some youths going their way. Multi-colored hair and earrings piercing every possible place on each face made it hard not to look. But when asked, "How's it going?" one youth swore: "Better if you'd stop look'in at us!" We so easily stop and stare, especially when attention seems to be demanded. Yet people looking makes us nervous.

Moses had a serious reason for preventing stares. You and I need to understand why because at the last trumpet every face will covered with one of two choices: either shame or **Glory**. What will cover your face? It is God's desire that each of us **Reflect the Lord's Glory** now and forever.

✦ Remember the epic fail (vv.29-30)

Now that we all have cameras in our pockets, everybody is a photographer and everyone is a producer. YouTube, baby! Is it real...or is it fake? She stands so close to the waves in her beautiful wedding dress. Does she really not expect that rogue wave to ruin her make-up? Is it an **epic fail**? Or just another chance to grab attention and "go viral," maybe become famous?

None of us can capture the **epic fail** of God's people in the wilderness. On the way from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land of Canaan they stopped at Mount Sinai. Everyone trembled with the mountain all ablaze and God's voice thundering the Ten Commandments. "***You shall have no other gods.***" Clear and plain as all the others that followed. The whole nation swore: "***Everything the LORD has said we will do.***" (Exodus 24:3 NIV84) Good thing because that's what the Old Covenant demanded, absolute compliance without exception. Loving God with all your heart and soul and mind would also lead you to love your neighbor as yourself. We have a religious fanatic inside who thinks he can!

So how long before Israel's **epic fail**? About as long as it takes a skier to hike into the wilderness and get caught in an avalanche. Moses' brother Aaron, the first high priest, made a golden calf, then tried to pivot off sin by announcing, "***Tomorrow there will be festival to the LORD.***" (32:5) Too late. The LORD was angry enough to destroy Israel and build a nation from Moses. Instead Moses pleaded God's Name-reputation and His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Israel to give them the land of Canaan.

Remember an epic fail in your life? We come to church, hear God's Word, receive the blessed Sacrament. Does it make a difference? Or do we go back to arguing, finger pointing, blaming, restless because we want other things besides God. Augustine said, "He who is not satisfied with God alone is much too greedy." Only happy if God does what we want? Otherwise, we party in the wilderness?

Remember the epic fail. By the time we get to our text, the LORD has kindly promised to go with Israel in the Person of the pre-incarnate Christ. Moses has been called back up Mount Sinai with two new stone tablets for God to write the Ten Commandments again. No amount of human sin will destroy God's holy, immutable will. We need the memory of how we have failed so that we can appreciate: "***The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.***" (Exodus 34:6-7 NIV84) God wants to break that cycle with grace.

Moses came down with his face shining enough to scare Aaron and the Israelites away. Sinners first hide from the glory of God, but Moses called them back. God seeks us, calls us, refusing to let us go in spite of more **epic fails** than we can count. God's pure grace and mercy call us near in Christ.

So why did Moses hide His face? Just to save the rest from fear? Our Second Lesson (2 Corinthians 4:3-6) says that Moses had to hide the fact that the Old Covenant was temporary, passing away. It had its purpose, but a New Covenant would be announced again, "new" as in life-giving, invigorating – all because it's one-sided with God doing everything. God rescues us to **Reflect the Lord's Glory**. "*Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.*" (Psalm 34:5 NIV84)

✠ **Recall eternal freedom (vv.31-35)**

Moses had to hide the fading of the Old Covenant behind a veil. But the glory of Christ never fades away. The Lord says through His Apostle Paul: "*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. 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. 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. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*" (2 Corinthians 3:13–18 NIV84)

See God's mercy? See why we do not lose heart? That religious fanatic inside each of us wants recognition, then runs to hide in shame if anyone, especially God, looks too close. But all that shame is cleansed away when the dear Holy Spirit shines the light of Christ into your heart. Now there's no reason to hide because God has declared you righteous and holy in His sight. God looks at you in Baptism with sins all washed away. He says that the Absolution of forgiveness spoken by the Pastor is as good as Christ Himself standing here to say it. And lest any doubts linger, Christ comes miraculously in His Holy Supper to bring us into that common-union of faith in God and love for one another. This New Covenant is not ended by our sin, but sanctified by the death and resurrection, the glorious ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's all resting on God, who said, "*Let light shine out of darkness,*" [and] *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.*" (2 Corinthians 4:6 NIV84) **Recall eternal freedom**, and Christ is shining through your face too.

That's the wonder of this Sunday, the Transfiguration of our Lord. We celebrate between the bright shining revelation of Christ as God during Epiphany, right before we come down the mountain to the sorrows of Lent because of our sin. Maybe Peter sounds silly, knowing what you know now. But I would be nodding in agreement when he bursts out, "*Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.*" (He did not know what he was saying.)" (Luke 9:33 NIV84) Who would not love to hang on to that mountaintop experience?

How I wish we could **Recall eternal freedom** once and for all! Midweek worship would not be so hard to attend. We would see the need to view our sins in the light of Christ's suffering in our place. We would hurry to hear those "Three Words of Truth" each week to see how they impact our lives. We would follow Jesus humbly and patiently down the Mount of Glory to Mount Calvary where His shed blood washed our shame away. You'd be there Maundy Thursday and Good Friday because no one could keep you away. God wants to lift the veil, but "*only in Christ is it taken away.*" He wants the return of *Alleluia!* on Easter morning to burst unhindered from our hearts, overflowing with joy. Transfiguration leads to Lent so that we can **Reflect the Lord's Glory** more brightly in the midst of heartache and turmoil. "*For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*" (2 Corinthians 4:17f NIV84) What shows on your face? Amen.