

Notes for Next Sunday

Transfiguration

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Exodus 34:29-35). Moses veils himself because the Israelites, in their sinfulness, are terrified to see a manifestation of God's glory. Today, our sin also separates us from God's glory and presence, but St Paul reminds us that "when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed ... and we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image" (2Co 3:16, 18). Because of Christ, we see the Lord and live in His glorious grace.

Epistle (2 Corinthians 3:12-13, 4:1-6). The essence of Paul's ministry was "mercy" through the Lord Jesus alone. Such mercy compelled him to be straightforward, authentic, and transparent as a servant to God's people. Merciful ministry exposes and binds us to the people we serve. We must never give in to the temptation to think that merciful ministry can be done from afar, as a master and not as a servant. The same Lord who made "light shine out of darkness" will strengthen our hearts to be courageously transparent servants.

Gospel (Mark 9:2-9). Jesus is transfigured to display His divine glory and to prepare His disciples for His death and resurrection. We cannot imagine the glory of God, especially in Christ, who is fully human. Jesus loses none of His divine majesty in the incarnation, but His glory shines through His human nature. His glory reminds us that He freely chose death and resurrection for our sakes.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Exodus 34:29-35

²⁹ When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. ³⁰ When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. ³² Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai. ³³ When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. ³⁴ But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, ³⁵ they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.

34:29 was radiant. Moses' face was literally radiant, reflecting the glory of the Lord. (TLSB)

34:30 afraid. Even a reflection of the divine glory was too much for sinful people to bear. This is beyond all human experience. (TLSB)

34:32 commanded. Moses proclaimed the things that God had revealed and told the people to follow them. (TLSB)

34:33: he put a veil over his face. Term is different from the veil (wrapping or shawl) used by a woman in Gn 38:19. Since Moses' appearance frightened the people, he covered his face. (TLSB)

34:34 remove the veil. Moses would not conceal his face from God. Likewise, when he was speaking God's Word to the people, he would remove the veil. This reminded the people that Moses had seen God face-to-face. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 2 Corinthians 3:12-13, 4:1-6

¹²Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³We 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. Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ²Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴The 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. ⁵For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. ⁶For 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.

3:12 have hope. This is the lasting glory that we have in the Gospel. – It stresses that this hope is a present reality; we have it now. Hope affects what we do and how we live at the present time. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

3:12 bold This literally means “speaking openly” and here means “boldness, courage, great freedom.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

4:1 this ministry. The apostolic ministry (4:1) has enduring glory which is able to change us from glory to glory (3:18). While Moses’ face reflected a fading glory, we who reflect the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ are transformed with ever-increasing glory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

4:1 we do not lose heart. When God through his mercy calls and commissions his servants, he also supplies the strength necessary for them to persevere in the face of hardships and persecutions. (CSB)

4:2 we have renounced secret and shameful ways. Paul is referring to the false teachers in Corinth. By contrast, he is able to appeal to the conscience of every one of them and also to his integrity in the sight of God, because his practice was always that of setting forth the truth plainly, i.e., without veiling it or resorting to deception (cf. 1:12, 18–24). (CSB)

4:2 deception. It literally means “a readiness to do anything,” an end justifies the means” philosophy. This does not conflict with what Paul had told the Corinthians in a previous letter: “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor 9:22). A minister of the gospel will try to put himself into another’s shoes. He will seek a point of entry, some common meeting ground, which may open the door to an opportunity to bring to the person the saving gospel of Christ. (PBC)

4:3 who are perishing. Those who do not believe in God’s provision of grace in Jesus and are judged in their trespasses and sins (1 Cor. 1:18). (TLSB)

4:4 god of this age. The devil, who is the archenemy of God and the unseen power behind all unbelief and ungodliness. Those who follow him have in effect made him their god. (CSB)

4:4 the light of the gospel. Satan’s work is to “darken” hearts and minds. However, the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins through Jesus, remains a clear and visible light to the whole world, even though some have closed their eyes to it. (TLSB)

4:5 we do not preach ourselves. As did the false teachers, puffed up with self-importance. Paul does not lord it over their faith (1:24), for there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, and he is the theme of Paul’s preaching. (CSB)

4:6 *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.* The light that now shines in Paul’s heart (qualifying him to be a proclaimer of Christ) is the knowledge of the glory of God as it was displayed in the face of Christ—who has come, not just from an earthly tabernacle, but from the glorious presence of God in heaven itself (see Jn 1:14). (CSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 9:2-9

² After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) ⁷ Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” ⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. ⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

9:2 *After six days.* See note on Mt 17:1 – (Mark also says “six days”(Mk 9:2), counting just the days between Peter’s confession and the transfiguration, whereas Luke, counting all the days involved, says, “About eight days” (Lk 9:28) (CSB)

9:2 *a high mountain.* See note on Lk 9:28 – (Although Mount Tabor is the traditional site of the Mount of Transfiguration, its distance from Caesarea Philippi (the vicinity of the last scene), its height (about 1,800 feet) and its occupation by a fortress make it unlikely. Mount Hermon fits the context much better by being both closer and higher (over 9,000 feet). (CSB)

9:2 *transfigured.* “He was transfigured.” Note the passive voice. It is the work of the Father that discloses the identity of Jesus and points forward to the glory that would be his after the death and resurrection he had predicted was accomplished. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

9:3 *dazzling white.* Matthew and Luke speak of Jesus’ face and garments, whereas Mark speaks only of Jesus’ garments. By the way, good commentators point out that the many details in the account of the Transfiguration indicate that all three Synoptics wrote quite independently of each other. That is the best and soundest view. (Buls)

9:4 *Elijah and Moses.* † Moses is the representative of the old covenant and the promise of salvation, which was soon to be fulfilled in the death of Jesus. Elijah is the appointed restorer of all things. The disciples here witness the confirmation of Jesus’ claim that he fulfills the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah). (CSB)

9:5 *three shelters.* Peter may have desired to erect new tents of meeting where God could again communicate with his people. Or he may have been thinking of the booths used at the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:42). In any case, he seemed eager to find fulfillment of the promised glory then, prior to the sufferings that Jesus had announced as necessary. (CSB)

9:6 *did not know what to say.* Peter did not rightly understand what he was witnessing. Moses and Elijah were preparing Jesus for going to His death (Lk 9:30-31). (TLSB)

9:7 *a voice came from the cloud.* The cloud is frequently a symbol of God’s presence to protect and guide (e.g., Ex 16:10; 19:9; 24:15–18; 33:9–10). (CSB)

9:9 *not to tell anyone*. After Jesus' resurrection the disciples were to tell everyone what they had experienced, for Jesus' finished work would have demonstrated his true and full character as the Messiah. (CSB)