

2 Corinthians 4:3-6  
Last Sunday after the Epiphany  
The Festival of the Transfiguration of Our Lord  
God's Church Revealed: Glorified!

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And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup>For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," <sup>[Gen 1:3]</sup> made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today is the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany. Because the focus of Epiphany is the revealing of Jesus as our God and Savior—the Light of the world, we spend the last Sunday of this season each year looking at one of the three Gospel accounts of a very special day, the day that Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John on a mountain somewhere in Israel. As they stood on the top of that mountain, they saw Jesus' appearance change. This morning we heard the account from Luke's Gospel (Luke 9:28-36), in Matthew's account we're told: **Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light** (Matthew 17:1-2). Jesus, shining like the sun. What a sight that would have been!

It's interesting, I think, that of the four Gospel writers, the only one who doesn't give us an account of that day is John who was there in person. There is one verse in the opening chapter of John, however, that for me, at least, brings the day of Jesus' transfiguration to mind. In John 1:14 he tells us, **The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.** It's possible that when John wrote that verse, he was, at least in part, thinking of the day that he had seen Jesus revealed in heavenly splendor on the top of that mountain, but I think there's a bigger meaning than that too. John had seen Jesus' glory not just on that day but on every day that he had spent with Jesus and through everything that Jesus did.

John and the rest of the Apostles had seen God and all His glory shining in this world through the God-man, Jesus Christ. Then, so that we might see that glory too, they wrote about the many things that Jesus said and did so that today, Christ shines in the gospel. When we hear that gospel, the Holy Spirit creates and strengthens faith within us so that the gospel shines in our hearts, and consequently through us to the world.

God shines in Christ. Christ shines in the gospel. The gospel shines in our hearts. Those are the truths that the Apostle Paul has to share with us in our text this morning, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.

In the first verse of that passage, Paul speaks about a veil that keeps people from seeing God's glory. He says, **And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.** That's a bit of a confusing verse. It leads us to ponder the question, "If God sent Jesus into this world to save sinners and He wants all men to be saved by hearing the good news of what Jesus

has done for them, then why would He veil or conceal the gospel? Why would He hide from those who are perishing the good news that He **so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life?**”

The next verse, sheds some light on those questions: **The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.** So, it isn't so much that a veil has been placed over the gospel message, the reality is that a veil has been placed over our eyes, over our hearts and minds. That veil was placed there, not by God but by **the god of this world.**

So, who or what is **the god of this world?** In a sense, I suppose we could say that the god or gods of this world are whatever things the people of this world set their hearts on, whatever it is that we prioritize as number one in our lives. That could be wealth or power, for some it could be fame or at least popularity, for others it might be knowledge and wisdom, it might simply be fun and happiness. While none of those things are inherently evil, what is evil is when we, the people of this world, set those things up on a pedestal over God. What is evil is when we make those things our gods.

That is precisely the will and the plan of someone who I believe is another prime candidate for an answer to that question “who is the god of this age?” namely, Satan. It is Satan who tempts us to make gods or idols of the things of this world. It is his lies that have blinded the hearts and **minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel.** He first cast that veil of lies over the eyes of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, so that when they looked at the fruit God had forbidden them to eat it looked, **good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom** (Genesis 3:6). The result of their fall into sin—into Satan's web of lies—is that we, their descendants, are inherently evil. We are born spiritually blind, unable to see God's will for us in our lives and able to see only the false promise that the things of this world have to offer.

Left to ourselves, we would chase after those things only to find, when we stand before the judgment seat of God that those things we had idolized and established as our gods, those things that we had dedicated our lives to, had blinded us to the light of the true God and His gospel, and that in our blindness we had wandered off the path God wanted us to follow, the path of everlasting life. We would discover, that stumbling around in the darkness of sin had led us to the only place it could possibly lead, death.

So God did *not* leave us to ourselves. He did *not* leave us in that darkness. Our God, the same God who in the beginning said, **Let there be light to shine out of the darkness,** sent His Son Jesus, who is the Light of the world to shine through the darkness of sin into our hearts.

Where that happens, Paul reminds us, the credit is not ours, but God's. In verse five he says, **what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.** In other words, what Paul is saying is, “the message I have to preach to you is not, ‘look I what I have done that I have won myself salvation,’ but rather, ‘look at what God has done for you through His Son to bring you salvation.’” He has purchased you from sin and death by laying down His life in your place. He has made you a member of His kingdom of light, drawing you out of the kingdom of darkness.

Through the light of His Gospel, God has given you new birth. He has made you a new creation. Just as His Word at the beginning of time brought light out of darkness and order out

of chaos, so He has brought light and order into your life. And through His means of Grace: His gospel in the Word and in the Sacraments, He continues that process throughout your life. Through the gospel, God is transfiguring you. He is conforming you to the image of His Son, so that day by day as we grow in His Word, His light shines through us all the clearer.

And finally, that process will be complete on the next day of transfiguration. This morning our Gospel lesson recounted the transfiguration of our Lord. But the Scriptures also tell us about a day of the transfiguration of God's Church. On that Day, we are told, **the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After which, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air** (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). **In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at that last trumpet... we will be changed** (1 Corinthians 15:52) transfigured, made glorious in the light of Christ.

Amen.