

## Veils

Preached FCCW March 3, 2019

Transfiguration Sunday

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 and Luke 9:28-43a

The quote for meditation on the cover of your bulletin comes from a prominent leader in the early days of the Christian Church, named Irenaeus.

It begins with these words, "The glory of God is a human being fully alive."

But, what does it mean to be fully alive?

For some it might involve some kind of thrill-seeking adventure.

Maybe bungee jumping, climbing Mt. Everest, or booking a seat on one of Elon Musk's SpaceX orbiters.

Someone else might discover what it is to be fully alive in the stillness of solitude in a forest, or the tender caress of a loved one.

The expressions of what makes a person feel fully alive are seemingly limitless; but the fullness of life that reflects the glory of God consists of more than adrenaline rushes or oases of tranquility.

The full quote reads, "The glory of God is a human being fully alive; *and to be alive consists in beholding God.*"

Sometimes the pursuit of experiences that make us feel fully alive can also act like a veil that keeps us from beholding the presence of God, without whom fullness of life remains an ever-elusive goal.



Jesus' disciples had their minds set on a certain idea of what being fully alive meant to them. But it had more to do with grasping for a human glory than beholding God's purpose for them.

So, one day Jesus took three of his closest disciples with him up a mountain to pray.

Maybe Jesus went there to pray for the strength and faith he would need for the ordeal that lay before him.

He might also have been praying for his followers to have their eyes opened to see how God would be glorified through the testing of *their* faith.

On the mountaintop the veil drops long enough for them to witness the face of Jesus glow with the brightness of a lightning bolt;

to see a glorious appearance of Moses and Elijah,

and to hear the voice of God telling them,

"This is my son, my chosen one. Listen to him!"

Because up to that time, they really hadn't been listening to him.

At least not when he tried to tell them what they didn't want to hear.

Like, that he would not be the conquering hero they hoped for him to be, but would be crucified like a common criminal.

And that the life of discipleship would call them to take up their own crosses and follow him.



It has been suggested that what happened on the mount of transfiguration was that a veil was pulled aside briefly, revealing to these three disciples a vision of Jesus in all his glory, as he would appear after his resurrection.

If a picture is truly worth a thousand words, maybe beholding the glory of God in this mountaintop vision of Jesus would make an impression that his words – to that point – had failed to make on them.

In his second letter to the church in Corinth, the Apostle Paul urged the Corinthian Christ-followers to “act with great boldness.” Apparently, that’s not what they were doing.

He reminded them how, long ago when Moses would be in God’s presence it would show in the way that his face shone with a reflection of God’s glory for everyone to see.

But because this shiny-faced appearance freaked people out a little, he would cover his face with a veil.

Paul made a comparison between Moses hiding the glory of God behind the veil he wore -- to the Corinthian’s reluctance to live with a visible boldness rooted in their faith and hope in Jesus. To be – in other words – fully alive in Christ.

And he traced the problem of veiling the glory of God on the outside, to a failure to *behold* the glory of God on the *inside*. He warned against reading or hearing God’s Word with veiled minds that prevent us from beholding the glory of God to be discovered in those words.

Unveiled minds, he concluded, lead to unveiled faces which we show to the world -- recognizable in a life fully alive with the glory of God. That kind of being fully alive does not come all at once, but by a process of spiritual growth. As Paul put it, “We are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”

Hopefully, when we come together to worship, to hear the Word read and preached, to celebrate the Lord’s Supper ... the veil is pulled back for us, as it was for Peter, James and John on that mountaintop -- to see *for ourselves* the glory of God in Christ and to reflect that glory in our lives.



Eugene Peterson once wrote that for him fullness of life was discovered in being a pastor.

But he recognized the potential of other definitions of a fully alive existence, where one encounters God.

He wrote, “I remain convinced that if you are called to it, being a pastor is the best life there is.

But any life can be the best life if you’re called to it.”

The Apostle Paul also said that “with unveiled faces, we see the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror.”

Is that what you behold when you look in the mirror? The glory of God fully alive in you?

This is the last Sunday before we enter into the season of Lent on Ash Wednesday. The season of self-reflection and spiritual growth.

It’s a good time to ask yourself these three questions:

What makes me feel fully alive?

Where am I beholding the glory of God?



What veils do I need to stop wearing for others to see the glory of God reflected in me?

Maybe you can literally put a sticky-note with those questions on your mirror during Lent, so that you can remember to ask yourselves those questions daily.

Pay heed with an unveiled mind to the answers that come to you.

You might find yourself hearing the voice of Jesus calling you to the transfiguration of *your own life*.

Listen to him.

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