**January 10, 2021 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6**

 ***See the Glory***

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6 NRSV

 *(12)Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, (13)not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. (14)But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. (15)Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; (16)but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. (17)Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (18)And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.*

*(4:1)Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. (2)We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. (3)And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. (4)In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (5)For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. (6)For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

**Notes:**

1. God is beyond our ***comprehension***.
	1. God is beyond our understanding and can still be ***revealed***.
	2. We are able to ***experience*** the glory of God.
2. The way to “see the face of God” is through the ***heart***.
	1. “the ***heart*** is the temple where all truth resides.”
	2. To experience the glory of God, realize we are ***free***.
3. The glory of God is revealed when we “speak the ***truth***.”
4. To experience the glory of God through Jesus “let our ***lights*** shine.”
5. When we let the love and light of God ***reflect*** from us, we realize the presence of God and experience God’s glory.
	1. We see God most clearly when we become His ***reflection***.
	2. To teach, pray or counsel; you need a ***relationship*** with God.
	3. You are called to see the glory of the Lord in your ***actions***.
6. The ***church*** is called to make others aware of the Lord in this world.
	1. We have the honor of being selected, to ***join*** the Lord in His redemptive work.
	2. We are the ones who must ***accept*** the invitation, and then get to ***work***.
	3. We ***experience*** the glory of God every time we let our ***lights*** ***shine***.

**Script:**

Have you ever had an experience that brought you so much joy that you could not help but tell everybody about it? In my life I have had several events like this. When I was finished with my first-grade year, my parents bought me a surprise for doing such a good job in school; At least that is how I remember it. Dad and Ronnie Brown were down at the driveway and mom lured me down to where they were with some story. When I got to where Ronnie was, he began to tease me and torment me till he got me to go where I would find this brand-new Bicycle. I tried to ride it but the sissy bar was on backwards and hit me in the back. Besides, at 6 years old I was not a skilled bike rider yet. If you speak to some of my riding friends, they may tell you I am still not a good bike rider. Anyway, this was the first time I remember receiving a surprise that made me feel so special. Throughout my life there were events and moments that put this moment to shame; but this was the first moment like this in my life that I remember, so it seems that it is a special moment in my life.

We have all had moments like this in our life, moments when we felt special, achieved, and in some moments, you felt especially close to God. In those moments when you felt close to God, how did you react, how did you feel, and what have you done with those moments. Have you ever experienced the glory of God and been unable to talk about it? Perhaps there have been moments where you felt uplifted in a special way and did not realize that you had a God Moment.

In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians Paul speaks of such events in the lives of some of God’s most remembered followers. Paul makes reference to Moses who experienced the glory of God. It was an awesome event for him and Moses was so enthralled by it all that he had to cover his face. When Jesus was transfigured, he too was in the presence of God, however unlike Moses, Jesus did not have to cover his face, because he is God.

Turn with me in your bible’s to the 2 Corinthians 3:12 and share in the reading of our passage today from 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6.

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In 1977 there was a movie named, “O God” starring John Denver and George Burns. In the movie John Denver has been chosen to deliver a message from God. But John Denver’s character doesn’t believe in God. Anyway, there is a scene where John Denver sees God for the first time, played by George Burns, who is dressed as an old man wearing a fishing hat. Denver says, “So this is what God looks like?” But Burns responds by saying, “If I appeared as I really am, you couldn’t handle it.” The reason being of course is that God is beyond our comprehension.” I wonder, have you ever seen God?

Paul wants his friends in the Corinthian church to realize that God is beyond our understanding and can still be revealed to them. This still holds true today. As intelligent and wise as we think we are, God is still beyond our understanding and if we look closely, can still be revealed to us in this present age. Paul illustrates this by contrasting Moses on Mt. Sinai to the mountain top event of Jesus. Paul says, it is Jesus who is proclaimed as Lord and we are “slaves for Jesus’ sake.” In other words, by living as Jesus lived, we are in fact able to experience the glory of God, and unlike Moses we have no reason to hide. We can let His light shine to all who wish to see it.

I have this issue, each year when I go to the eye doctor he looks at my glasses and asks me what I do to scratch the lenses so bad. My answer is simple I wear them. But once I get new glasses and I look through them I am able to see so much better even though my prescription has not changed. You see the scratches are not able to be seen when I am wearing my glasses but even though they are very small they do have a tendency to blur my vision.

Paul makes reference to Moses who had experienced the presence of God in a very powerful way. Moses “saw the face of God” and became the deliverer of God’s law. For the Hebrews the law of God was “etched in stone.” But Paul contrasts that event with the life of Jesus. Paul wants his listeners to understand that the way to “see the face of God” is through the heart. In the movie “O God,” Burns says that “the heart is the temple where all truth resides.” How then do we experience the glory of God?

Paul is telling us that to experience the glory of God, or to “see clearly” is to first realize we are free. *“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”* With Moses the people of faith needed the law. One commandment said, “Thou shall not steal.” If you were caught stealing you knew you would pay the consequences. We also know that stealing is wrong, because it is offensive and it is harmful to the community. We therefore don’t steal, not because it is against the law but because we love our neighbors. In other words, we are free of the need to steal or even the thought of it.

Paul also tells us that the glory of God is manifested, or revealed, in us when we “speak the truth.” Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “By the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. The greatest homage we can pay to the truth is to use it.”

Did you know that famed scientist Galileo was a devout Christian? He spoke the truth saying that the world was round and revolved around the sun. The church of his day denounced him labeling him a heretic and was condemned even though he spoke the truth. He lived with this until his dying day, but he was willing to stand on the truth even though he would be persecuted and publicly humiliated. In the long run the truth would prevail as society accepted Galileo’s discoveries; centuries later he would be exonerated and remembered for his scientific discoveries.

Thirdly, to be “Christ-like” or to experience the glory of God through Jesus is to “let our lights shine.” To experience the glory of God is not to receive it but reflect it. Last Sunday morning between Church and Sunday School, I visited the preschoolers class room where they were painting God’s creation. In it was the land with green grass and the blue water; there was the sun of yellow and a yellow moon as well. I asked them why the moon was yellow, and they said something but them I told them the reason the moon is yellow is because it reflects the Sun. Now I could have went on but they would not have gotten the theological ramifications. But today I am going to share this; if our lives revolve around the Son, just as the Moon and planets revolve around the sun, then we must be reflecting His light to the world around us. It is when we use opportunities to let the love and light of God reflect from us that we realize we are in the presence of God and experiencing God’s glory.

The main point of Paul’s message here, is not that we see God more clearly, nor that we have to clean the lenses of our glasses and cleared the smudges. We see God most clearly when we become the reflection of God. We must live a life of service, living in the image of God, where we will experience the glory of God. There are too many of us who come to church wanting to experience the emotional high, the radical blessing, hearing sounds of acclamation and praises from the people without being prompted by the pastor. We want to experience ecstatic moments of the glory of God, within our own bodies and those around us. And when we do not feel this we get discouraged. But God is seen most clearly when we are reflecting God’s love, when we are doing good works, when we are living in God’s image. We only need to look within our own heart to find the truth of who God is and what He means to us; and then we need to act upon this truth; this love.

I realized this in this past week when I looked out the window on Tuesday Morning. My week is scheduled tight with preparing the message, preparing the children’s message to be uploaded online, the fire meeting Tuesday evening, the board meeting Thursday evening, prayer meeting and small groups on Wednesday, and on Monday as I looked to the Scriptures for this week, I wondered how I could possibly experience the glory of God with so much to do. But as I looked out the window on Tuesday morning, I saw the fresh blanket of snow falling down upon the ground. So soft, so clean, so fresh, and the world is illuminated everywhere that I looked. I have countless opportunities to see the glory of God as I am out and about my busyness; opportunities to teach, to pray with those who are hurting and sick, and counseling others.

You are able to do each of these things that I do; you do not need a degree or ordination to teach, you do not need a college education to pray or even to counsel others. But the one thing that each of us are more than capable of is visiting with others. This goes back to the being FED concept. Visiting with others is a form of fellowship. You only need to strike up a conversation, invite them into your home, or if they extend an invitation to their home, accept it. Talk with them about the things that are happening in the community; things that are happening in their life; and things that are going on in your life. You are the one who controls who is invited into your life. You are the one who determines whether to accept an invitation from another or not. You are called to see the glory of the Lord in your actions.

We as the church are called to make others aware of the Lord in this world. We have the privilege of introducing others to the glory of the Lord in the things we do. We have the honor of being selected, much like Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, and John; so that this world is invited to join the Lord in His redemptive work. Will we accept His invitation? Will we invite others to join us in this work? Will we hear the words good and faithful servant on that fateful day when we are called to eternity? We are the ones who must accept the invitation, and then get to work. The glory of God is all around us but we failed to appreciate it. We experience the glory of God every time we let our lights shine. We experience the glory of God when we realize the freedom that we have in Jesus Christ and we experience the glory of God when we have the courage to tell the truth.