

Bible Tuesday for Transfiguration Sunday, 2019

Exodus 34:29-35

29 Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. 30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. 32 Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. 33 When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; 34 but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

God chose Moses to be his representative to the people of Israel. The people whined, complained, and ultimately created and worshiped a golden calf while Moses was in audience of God, thus utterly rejecting God's and Moses' leadership. When Moses returned, he threw down the covenant tablets God carved while the Israelites sinned. Nevertheless, God called Moses back up Mt. Horeb/Sinai and reissued the covenant tablets. Moses' face shone with the radiance of God as he came back down off the mountain and attempted leadership again. No matter what the Israelites said about or did to Moses, there was no denying that he was God's spokesman, not with that shining face.

As a side note, the Hebrew word for "shining" or "radiance" is related to the word for "horns". When Brother Jerome translated the Vulgate (translation of the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin done in the 300's AD, official translation of the Roman Catholic Church), he translated the word not as "shining" but as "horned". This gave way to Moses being depicted as horned in much western art and the evil wives tale that Jews have horns like the devil.





Psalm 99

1 The Lord is king; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! 2 The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. 3 Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is he! 4 Mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. 5 Extol the Lord our God; worship at his footstool. Holy is he!

6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel also was among those who called on his name. They cried to the Lord, and he answered them. 7 He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; they kept his decrees, and the statutes that he gave them. 8 O Lord our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings. 9 Extol the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy.

Yahweh was believed to express himself through volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and typhoons. Such terrifying events! But Yahweh insists that He is the savior of the poor, the widow, the childless, the leper. How remarkable that God is so distant, full of cosmic might, yet so intimate as to know the plights of orphans and sparrows.

From a liturgical point of view, the “beyond-ness” of God is softened and made approachable through the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark serves as God’s throne in this psalm, and footstool in the Pentateuch, a place to which people could come to petition God personally.

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

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.

Paul, as a trained Pharisee, was blinded by Jesus on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. Paul was figuratively blind to the gospel of Jesus, and became literally blind in order that he might experience and see the gospel. Once he overcame his figurative blindness and God healed his literal blindness, Paul was particularly sensitive to the unwillingness of many Jews to see, see God's miraculous gift of grace to fulfill and set aside the law, in Jesus Christ.

Paul is using the literal veil over Moses' face metaphorically to describe this blindness of the Jews, and all pagans, to the glory of God in Jesus. The veil, then, is the adherence to the Law of Moses as if this adherence will save them from God's judgment. In Paul's letter to the church in Rome, Paul refers to this false belief in adherence to the law as being enslaved to the law. In the above passage, Paul speaks of turning to the Lord, whether God or Christ, as freedom, freedom from the burden of the Law to live in love of and service to Jesus and all people.

Luke 9:28-36, (37-43)

28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. 30 Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. 31 They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33 Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" 36 When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

[37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. 38 Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. 39 Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. 40 I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." 41 Jesus answered, "You

faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." 42 While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. 43 And all were astounded at the greatness of God.]

This passage begins with Jesus praying. In Luke, the big moments begin with Jesus praying. It is from faith in God and devotion to God that acts of God flow.

"8 days after these sayings" – The disciples and the 12 are not comprehending who Jesus is and what he must do. Jesus feeds 5000 men (other gospels add "in addition, the women and children) with five pita breads and two pan fish and has 12 baskets full left over. While this miracle impresses the disciples, it does not impress into them Jesus' true identity. When asked, Peter states that Jesus is, "The Messiah of God," but then quickly describes the life of the Messiah and his followers as one of denial and cross bearing. It seems the disciples require a Theophany, a visible manifestation to humankind of God.

So, up the mountain go Jesus, Peter, James, and John. As occurs in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus goes off to pray while the disciples fall asleep. Suddenly, the Theophany! Jesus becomes dazzling, but more than just his face. Even his clothes radiate God's glory! What's more, Moses and Elijah hold an impromptu consultation with him, discussing his looming crucifixion and death. The disciples wake up just in time to catch a glimpse of all this before it is hidden by a thick fog, just as hid Moses when he was on Mount Sinai in audience with God, receiving the Law. But then comes the voice! The ultimate voice of authority out of nowhere, ex nihilo, which speaks specifically for the disciples' benefit. "I am going to say it just this once so you better pay attention. This guy, this rabbi, is MY SON! He is MY ANNOINTED, MY CHOSEN MESSIAH! LISTEN TO HIM! HIM, I TELL YOU!" But the disciples were so stupefied by what they experienced, they shut up, and shut down completely.

Whether up on the mountain with Jesus or down on the plain with the crowds, Jesus' disciples were not faring well on this day. They could not cure an epileptic child, and that infuriated Jesus. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus gives the disciples "power over demons" to cast out and heal. But here the disciples fail to do so, due to lack of faith and comprehension. "Perverse and foolish generation!" Mark's telling of this event puts some of the disbelief on the epileptic's father. "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief!" he cries, just before Jesus heals his son. But in Luke's gospel, all the doubt and incomprehension fall squarely on the shoulders of the disciples and the twelve. They don't understand who Jesus is until after the Ascension, not completely. And even after that, there is still serious confusion as to how one should live into Jesus, the Son of God and resurrected Lord.