

Transfiguration Sunday C
February 14, 2010
Hymns: 369 - 286 - 97 - 95

II CORINTHIANS 3:7-18 (slide 1 during reading of text)
LOOK LIKE YOU'VE JUST SEEN JESUS!
***Our Faces Often Show Sin and Its Effects.**
***Our Faces Can Reflect Jesus and His Salvation.**

Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for Her to make Her holy, cleansing Her by the washing with water through the Word, and to present Her to Himself as a RADIANT Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Amen! Ephesians 5:25-27

Dear Radiant Members of Christ's Church!

Welcome to worship on this Valentine's Day, 2010. Of course, we're not in this place today to celebrate Valentine's Day, even though romantic love is one of God's most profound gifts. We are here to celebrate something far more profound than that--the love God has for us, the love God has for the world. Still, Valentine's Day can remind us about some truths of our faith--truths that drive home our lesson for the day.

Slide 2 Many singles today are going to online dating sites. Now, do you imagine that the people who use these online dating sites go there to advertise their flaws? Of course not. It appears, however, that people have gotten wise to personal data on these dating sites that might be, shall we say, misleading. The number one way to fail at online dating, according to a study, is to omit posting your picture. Describing yourself as attractive does not carry nearly the weight as an actual picture of yourself. The study shows that a low-income, poorly educated, un-happily employed, not very attractive, slightly overweight and balding man who actually posts his photo stands a better chance of getting a positive response than a man who says he makes \$200,000 a year and says he is deady handsome but does not post a photo. I guess you can file this under the category, "You can fool some of the people some of the time . . ."

People who are looking for love want to put on their best face. Nothing in the world is more normal or natural than that. **Slide 3** But here is something we need to see: **no matter how beautiful you may be, your face reveals what is in your heart.** This is true for most of us. I know some people have what's known as a "poker face." That is, you can't read their face. For example, it was said that no one could read President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's face, which is a wonderful asset when you are negotiating treaties with other countries. But experience tells us that over time what is in your heart steals out to your face.

A baby can perceive emotional content--anger, fear, love--from facial expressions long before he or she can understand words. You can tell a baby while you are feeding it that you like strained liver, but your face gives you away. Your face is a communication tool that transcends language and cultural barriers. You can communicate emotional content in a split second. You don't have to describe it. You don't have to tell baby, "I'm happy you finished all your food!" You can say, "You finished all your food!"and happiness is communicated.

But . . . every powerful tool has a good news/bad news aspect. The bad news with facial expressions is that if you have emotions you want to keep hidden--you don't want someone to know you are angry, for instance--anger is impossible to hide. If you feel it, it is registering in your face. If you do not respect someone, no matter how big a smile you paint on your face, the lack of respect shows through. If you are hopeless, despondent, or frustrated, and yet trying to inspire others to enthusiasm--no matter how great your story is--your hopelessness will show through and corrupt your message . . . In other words, you cannot fool your face. You may be able under some circumstances to hide your emotions, but sooner or later what is in your heart steals out to your face.

In our Old Testament Lesson Moses had been on Mount Sinai. The name Sinai comes from a root word meaning “to shine.” Moses has been in the presence of God and God has given him the Ten Commandments. When Moses descended from the mountain “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.” How radiant was he? His face glowed so much that when Aaron, his brother, and all the rest of the Israelites saw Moses they were afraid to come near him. He had to put a veil over his face. The writer tells us that whenever Moses entered God’s presence, he removed the veil. But afterward, when he would come out to tell the Israelites what had been commanded, he put the veil back on, because, once again, he would be glowing.

Slide 4 You can’t fool your face. **If you have been in the presence of God, it’s going to show.** Besides being Valentine’s Day, this is also the day when we celebrate Christ’s Transfiguration. In our lesson from Luke’s Gospel, Jesus was on a mountain with Peter, John and James. As Jesus is praying, Luke tells us, the appearance of His face changes, and His clothes become as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appear with Him, Luke says, “in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.” Peter, John and James were very sleepy, Luke continues, “but when they became fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him.”

Jesus not only had a glowing face. On the mountain of Transfiguration His whole being radiated with God’s glory. Now – it’s time to address the difference between the radiance on Moses’ face and that on the face of Jesus!: Moses came down the mountain with the two tablets of stone bearing God’s Law. God’s Law is glorious! God is perfect. His Law is perfect and true. God’s radiance shines through in the Law. But the Apostle Paul fills us in on a second reason Moses veiled his face: It wasn’t just because the glory of the Lord reflected on the face of the Lawgiver was too much for the people. Moses veiled his face to hide how quickly the glow of the Law faded. You see, God was making the point that the Law is good – but not good for making and keeping one holy before God. We can’t keep the Law. It’s glory fades and fails for all those who try to make and keep themselves right with God through doing good. The point is...we need something else, we need some other glory if we are to stand before God. We’ll get to that in just a minute, but first....

Remember that your face gives away to people what is really in your heart? **Slide 5 Our Faces Often Show Sin And Its Effects.** With what’s written on your face, even a baby can often see right through your charades. Friends, you can never fool God! He sees all – all our sinful acts. He hears every word we say under our breath. He even always knows what we are thinking. It was that reality that struck the people of Israel in the sight of God’s Law in the face of Moses. The glory of God’s perfect and holy Law condemns you and me too. We desperately need another glory!

And we get it – in Christ! In the days before going to the cross, Jesus allowed Peter, James, and John to behold His glory as God incarnate. Who died on the cross is the glory of the Gospel! Jesus was truly a worthy sacrifice for all our sins – from the bold in-your-face type sins we commit against others to the sins we try to hide in our hearts from our fellow man...and from God. The glory of the Gospel, then, is far greater than the glory of the Law. In fact, the Law is a failure unto righteousness. It only shows us and everybody else, including God, our wickedness. But in the Gospel, Christ’s righteousness gets credited to you and me!

When you and I came to faith, Paul says, it was like a veil was being removed from our eyes so that we could see the way of salvation – not in anything we do – but in Jesus. The result!? **slide 6** Is that you and I are privileged to now reflect Jesus’ glory in our faces out to others. It is not the glory of the Law such as Moses shone forth coming down from the mountain. It is the glory of Christ, Who ascended Mount Calvary for your sins, mine, and the sins of the whole world!

Fran died at the age of ninety-two. She attended church regularly and volunteered to help others whenever she could. She was a woman of deep personal faith. She rarely visited the doctor’s office more than once or twice a year, but when she did she always made some reference to her love for God and commitment to her spiritual journey. During her last visit Fran said to the doctor, “I know I’m not

going to live forever, but who would want to? I feel pretty good right now, but I'll be jumping for joy when I meet my Maker face-to-face!" Then the doctor added these words about this ninety-two year old woman, "Her face literally glowed."

Nothing is more beautiful than a person whose face glows with their love for God. Here were Fran's last words to her doctor: "For twice as long as you've been alive, I've been enjoying [God's] companionship and thanking Him for His faithfulness in helping me to try to be who I think He wants me to be. I talk to God all the time, and I'm here to tell you--He listens! It's been a good life, walking hand in hand with Him and other folks who know Him like I do."

Would we not link a personal and meaningful relationship with God to being emotionally and physically healthy? We say that a person has a healthy glow. When we are young that might be primarily physical. I suggest to you that as we age this same glow is primarily spiritual. If you live in the presence of God, it's going to show.

Slide 7 Reflecting God's glory doesn't just affect how others see you, it also affects how you see them and everything else. In the beauty of creation, in the gift of one another, in the promise of a new day, in the challenge of a new opportunity--persons of faith are able to see the radiance, the wonder, of God. I've noticed that about many of the saints I've known through the years. Not only can you see the radiance of God's love in them--they seem to see the radiance of God in other Christians they meet. They sometimes seem naïve, childlike in their dealings with others. Often they are taken advantage of. But they leave the world a better place because they've been here.

Do you know what I am talking about--people who live reflecting the Gospel glory of God? Do you understand when I say that what is in your heart eventually steals out to your face? Brothers, sisters, *(we) are being transformed into His likeness with an ever increasing glory!* May that be said of each of us! Look as if – along with Peter, James, and John – you have just seen Jesus in all His Gospel glory! Amen.

With the Apostle John, you and I can say: *We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth! Amen!* **JOHN 1:14**