

LET THE LIGHT SHINE THROUGH

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 & Mark 9:2-9

We just heard, as we always hear on the Last Sunday after Epiphany, the account of Jesus appearing before Peter, James and John in heavenly glory. The heavenly light that was in him shone through in that moment with clarity and dramatic brightness. Up till that moment they just saw Jesus. And he was pretty amazing, but up till that moment when their eyes were opened they had not connected Jesus with that heavenly light. Now that light shone through him and they saw Jesus as he truly is, the Lord of heaven and earth, shining brighter than any earthly glory. We call that moment “*the transfiguration*” when Peter, James and John saw the earthly Jesus in heavenly glory.

We have a magnificent stained glass window of the Transfiguration. It is a signed Tiffany window and is priceless and irreplaceable. If you’ve ever had the chance to study the window it is quite beautiful. Jesus shining in glory on the mountaintop with Moses to Jesus’ right (our left) and Elijah to his left (our right). Below them are Peter, James and John. It is a truly magnificent window, dedicated in 1901 by Josephine Leeds in memory of her parents, John and Eliza Leeds. A problem with the window is that the light doesn’t shine through so that we can truly see Christ’s glory. The vivid details of the window are coated in a 100 years of dust and grime. The Plexiglas put up to protect the window has yellowed with age and is now so opaque that it doesn’t let in near as much light as it should. So, Christ’s glory is dimmed. We don’t see it in its fullness. Restoring this magnificent window is one of the projects in our St. John’s Rising building campaign.

In the reading from 2nd Corinthians Paul talks about the problem of the Gospel being *veiled*. People just don’t see it. The god of this world has blinded people from seeing what Paul calls, “*the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*” Paul, who was in the midst of defending himself to the Corinthians, testified that the same light God shone at the beginning of creation had shone also in Paul’s heart, so that he could “*give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” Paul is writing here about his own ministry, but I don’t think it is much of a stretch to say that Paul’s ministry is also the ministry of all Christians. We can make the very same claim in our ministries that Paul made to the Corinthians:

We do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as slaves (servants) for Jesus’ sake. 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.

Only the problem with us, is the same as the problem with our Tiffany window. The light that is meant to shine through us is blocked by our failure to love God with our whole heart, soul, strength and mind, blocked by our failure to love others with mercy and compassion, blocked by our fear of revealing ourselves and telling how Jesus has helped transfigure my life, blocked by our shyness and hesitancy to invite others to come with us to worship, blocked by the dimness of our knowledge and participation in God’s joy, blocked by all the ways we let the world get between us and the abundant life God invites us to live as his people in the world.

The light isn't blocked by our humanness. Paul goes on to write that our human failings and shortcomings make Christ's light all the more evident. Paul continued in verse 7, "*But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.*" In those moments or to the degree that we really love God, that we love and treat others with compassion, that we tell our stories, that we invite a friend or neighbor or family member to come worship with us, that we let his forgiveness, his love, his passion, his mercy rule our hearts, then it will be all the more apparent that there is a power beyond us doing those things. We're not called to be perfect; far from it. We're called to love God as we are and so, to let Christ's light shine in our hearts.

The *glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* is not only supposed to shine in us as individual Christians, it is also supposed to shine in us as his Church, Christ's living Body. The same challenge lies before us as a church as it does for us as individuals, to let Christ's glory shine through us.

- That light shines through our fellowship of love.
- That light shines in the welcome we give to a stranger.
- That light shines in the ways we help new people find a place of support and friendship within our community.
- That light shines through our reaching out to help those in need (both the hurting people within the congregation and those outside the congregation).
- That light shines as we learn in faith, growing deeper in our spiritual journeys.
- That light shines as we act and speak for justice.
- That light shines as we worship God in the beauty of holiness through the riches of our Anglican worship and in glorious music.

The same degree and intensity which Christ's glory shines in our corporate life and worship is the intensity it can shine through us for others to see.

There are plenty of barriers that can block the light from shining through us for others to see. The accumulation of the years – the "*we've always done it that way*" traditions – can create a film blocking some of the light. There is always a need to bring new life and freshness into our communal life – even if it's only to re-discover the meaning and power of our ancient liturgy. Another one of those barriers is simply being recognized and known. It is amazing how many people do not even realize that there is a church – let alone a church of astounding beauty, vibrant life and glorious worship – at the corner of Main and Grove streets. We need to find more ways to let Christ's light shine out as well as to let the light shine in.

When we do clean up that beautiful Tiffany window and install a clear glaze instead of an opaque Plexiglas outside it, will be our golden opportunity to reveal to the world both the glory of God in that transfigured face of Christ in our Tiffany window and that there is indeed a church at the corner of Grove and Main. Back lighting the window in the early evening and pre-dawn morning hours will let the transfigured face of Christ shine out on Grove Street for all to see. We couldn't buy more effective advertising.

The good news is not that Peter, James and John got to see Christ in all his glory; the good news is that Christ's glory shines in us. Christ's glory shines in us as individuals who receive new life through his grace. Christ's glory shines in us as a Church community as we worship, as we pray, as we study and as we serve.

When Peter, James and John witnessed Jesus transfigured before them in all his glory, they didn't understand it. They couldn't yet understand it. Jesus himself told them to keep quiet about until his death and resurrection. But in the context of Jesus' death and resurrection and in the context of the astounding new life their crucified and risen Lord gave them, the disciples could share that beautiful image of Christ shining in glory. It is meaningful not because Peter, James and John witnessed it; it is meaningful because the whole Church and you and I still today can experience that glory.

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.

"This little light of mine," the old Gospel hymn goes, "I'm going to let it shine. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine." May the light of Christ shine gloriously both ways through this beautiful Tiffany window. May the light of Christ shine in our deeds, in our prayers, in the life of this community, in our worship and in our hearts. Amen.