

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, dear friends,

Have you ever wondered about the purpose of the veil that sometimes hides the bride's face at wedding? It turns out that wedding veils have a long history. Even back in Roman times, a veil was worn. The Roman wedding veil was a deep yellow, signifying the light of a candle. It was considered a good omen for a lasting marriage and lifelong faithfulness to one man.

In the past, it was believed that the wedding veil concealed the bride from demons, keeping her pure for her husband. Today there is still something left of the old superstition that it was considered bad luck to see the bride before the wedding day. Some say that goes back to the days of arranged marriages where the prospective husband and wife had perhaps never even met before the ceremony!

Some today see the veil as a symbol of a bride's innocence and modesty. But mostly when a wedding veil is used to cover a bride's head and face today it's simply because it looks pretty or because the bride values that particular wedding tradition, maybe even borrowing her mother's wedding veil.

In God's Word this morning, we find the Apostle Paul talking about a veil, but it's not a wedding veil. And it's not a veil associated with a joyful occasion like a wedding. This veil is a covering of the very worst kind. It is a veil of darkness. It is worn by every person and it's one that no person can remove themselves. When you understand how bad and darkening this veil is, you can appreciate what your God has done for you in his Son Jesus. Today, on this Transfiguration Sunday, we get to see how

CHRIST'S GLORY SHINES *In You and Through You*

1. In You (v.3-6)

Do you ever get discouraged about being a Christian in a world that doesn't seem to care about Jesus and his Word? You wouldn't be unusual if you sometimes feel that way. You might imagine that being a pastor—someone whose life's work it is to share the gospel—I too might get a little down about that from time to time. You and I both, as God's people and his representatives in this sinful world, might be caught off guard to hear Paul say that he didn't really get discouraged by that. The apostle who went through more persecution and harassment and difficulty because of his faith than you and I will ever see in our lives, says just before the words of our text today, **“since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart (4:1).”** He was always encouraged in his service to God despite what he says just a couple verses after that here in our text: **And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

Instead of being thrown off-track by the way people rejected Jesus and opposed the Word of God when he shared the gospel, Paul knew why it happened. Please understand that he didn't WANT it to happen, but he knew what was going on. The fault lay with the people who rejected Christ. They were perishing—spiritually speaking—because they rejected the gospel—the good news of salvation in Jesus. For them it was as if there was a veil hanging over their faces so that they did not see Jesus as the Savior. Picture not the see-through type veil of a bride, but a thick, dark veil—more like a blindfold. In addition to their sinful nature rejecting the Savior, Satan—the god of this age—has also put a blindfold-like veil on those who do not trust in Jesus.

Paul certainly did not like that this was happening. It was his life's work to share the light of salvation with those wearing this "veil" that separated them from Jesus. But he knew why it was happening. In fact, he knew it from personal experience.

Many of you will recall that the Apostle Paul had formerly been a persecutor of Christians. He actually travelled around looking for Christians and handing them over to be killed. That is, until God used literal light and darkness along with the light of the gospel. As Paul—who was called Saul at the time—was heading into a town, God sent a brilliant flash of light that literally knocked Paul down to the ground and the Lord caused his vision to go dark. He was blind for three days. Jesus himself spoke to Paul and after those three days had passed, he had a man named Ananias lay his hands on Paul, filling him with the Holy Spirit and restoring his sight. Not only was the veil of darkness lifted from his eyes, but the dark spiritual veil that masked both his mind and his heart was also removed!

From violent persecutor of Jesus, his Word and his followers to perhaps the greatest missionary and author of Scripture—that was the transformation that took place in Paul's life! But except for the details, Paul's story is your story and mine. God is clear in his Word and our experience in life shows it to be true also—every person is imperfect. We do things that are wrong; we sin. And human imperfection begins not just when we're old enough to know right from wrong. It goes back to the very first breath of our first day. Actually, it goes back even to the moment we were conceived. To be human is to be sinful. It's as if we have a dark veil hanging in front of us, prohibiting us from knowing or seeing God.

But Christian friends, we have had a conversion too! The Holy Spirit has visited our veiled hearts and minds and changed them to minds that know him as the Savior and hearts that love him for living and dying for us. It happened when we were little and the cleansing waters of baptism washed over our heads. Our sins were washed away and we believed. Or it happened before we were baptized when we heard the powerful, saving message of sins forgiven by Christ's blood spilled on the cross and we believed. Of course we give God all the glory for the faith we enjoy to this day, but we also give thanks to the people who were the instruments of his grace. Someone loved us

enough to have us baptized—probably your parents. Some pastor had the privilege of conducting that baptism. Perhaps it was a pastor or maybe a friend that told you about Jesus first and then you were later baptized by water and the Spirit. Someone did for us what Ananias did for Paul and what Paul then did for so many.

To see what a difference that makes in a person's life, listen again to verse 5 where Paul says: **For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.** Because of the transformation that took place in Paul, he became a servant of others, proclaiming Jesus as the Savior to them. Your parents, your friend, your pastor—someone—became your servant too, proclaiming Jesus as YOUR Savior. And when they did, **God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in your heart to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.** Thank God that he sent someone to you to remove sin's dark veil from your eyes and heart so that you now know that your every sin has been paid for by Jesus and that because you do trust in him, you will be blessed with eternal life with him in heaven!

2. Through You (v.3-5)

But you know some people who are not like you, don't you? You know some people who do not believe that Jesus is their Savior. You know some people who claim the name Christian, but their life and behavior screams that they are not. You know some people who say they are Christians and who may be fine people, but they make no time for their Savior. They do not read his Word and they do not go to his house to worship him. These people, these friends of yours, have dark veils over their hearts. Just because you've heard of Jesus doesn't mean you believe in him. Just because you used to be a faithful follower of Jesus doesn't mean that you are when your life totally says otherwise. You see, you know people just like the Apostle Paul knew people. When writing a letter to Christians in the city of Philippi, he said this: **As I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things (Philippians 3:18-19).**

But you are not like that. You are God's people. The bright and cleansing light of the gospel has shined into your heart. There is no veil keeping the light out of you...and there is no veil to keep it only inside of you. No, **CHRIST'S GLORY SHINES IN YOU AND THROUGH YOU!**

You and I now do what Paul did. We proclaim nothing but Jesus as Lord and make ourselves servants of others in order to do it. We were reminded of this last Sunday on Mission Festival. The point was not that we must do Hispanic outreach like Pastor Haakenson is doing in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, but that we see whatever unique opportunities are around us—not just as a congregation, but as individual Christians in whom the light of Christ's glory shines and through whom the light of Christ's glory shines!

And if you feel reluctant to share Jesus with others, I want you to ask yourself the following questions: Who else is equipped to share the gospel? Who else loves souls enough to do it? Who else has been called to do it? No one but you and me. And what an awesome privilege it is! There is nothing so satisfying, so rewarding, as telling someone about Jesus' love for them and witnessing the light of faith go on in that person and then shine through that believer.

Peter, James and John, three of Jesus' disciples, are a good example on this Transfiguration Sunday. As we heard in the gospel today, they witnessed the divine glory of Christ on that mountain. It was so bright, so amazing, so miraculous that it even scared them. What an undeserved honor it was for them to see the true-God part of Jesus that was often veiled by his humanity! At that time, Jesus told them not to share with anyone what they had just seen. They were to wait until after Jesus had risen from the dead. And once he did, they became outstanding missionaries of the gospel. The light of Christ's love lived in their hearts and showed in their lives and leapt from their lips as the gospel they proclaimed lifted the thick veil of sin and Satan that plagued people.

In the book of Acts you can read about how James, a leader of Christ's church, was the first disciple put to death for proclaiming Jesus as Savior. King Herod had him beheaded and then Herod went after Peter, but I'll save the details of Peter's miraculous escape and his light-bearing ministry for you to read about in the book of Acts. John went on to preach and lead God's people to a ripe old age and recorded for us the Gospel of John, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John and the book of Revelation. Just try to imagine the thousands of veiled souls their preaching of the gospel affected and how many millions more have had their souls enlightened through the words of Scripture they recorded by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What they saw on the Mount of Transfiguration and what they saw on the Cross of Calvary and in the Upper Room on Easter made the gospel's light shine brightly not just in them, but through them. They saw the glory of God in the face of Christ and they shared it.

It may seem like Paul and Peter and James and John, men who were impacted by the light of Christ's glory and then spent their lives letting that light shine through them to others are like the Mt. Rushmore of Christians. "How could I ever be like them?" we might think. But they were, at first, sin-veiled people, just like we were. The light of Christ's love has shined in us, just like it did in them. And we have been given the same mission—to not proclaim our selves, but Jesus Christ as Lord as we serve others with the gospel. May it always be—until the day we leave this world for heaven—that CHRIST'S GLORY SHINES IN US AND THROUGH US for the salvation of our souls and the souls of many others! May God's grace grant it. Amen.

Please stand as we join to sing "Create In Me" on page 5 of your worship folder.