

Sunday, February 7th, 2016

The pastor will have a word of prayer with the choir at 10:40am after which he will meet the liturgist will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am. The liturgist and pastor will enter together. The Pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make announcements....

The preacher will then ask...

“Are there any other announcements or concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.”

The preacher will take a seat.

PRELUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

The Choir

After the Choral Call, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 99 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 99)

The Lord is king; let the peoples tremble!

He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples.

Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is he!

Mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity;

You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.

Extol the Lord our God; worship at his footstool. Holy is he!

Extol the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Lord Jesus, we come to this time of worship to turn our eyes upon you, to be led into that high and holy place of worship where glory streams from the Eternal Light, endowing us with spiritual power, transforming us in ever-increasing measure into your likeness and image. Accept our worship, O God, and move us toward the glory, now veiled, which will one day be revealed in us through the mercy and power of Christ, in whose strong name we pray. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Shine, Jesus, Shine”, number 2173 in our *Sing the Faith* Hymnal supplement.

The liturgist should step back from the microphone for the hymn.

*HYMN OF PRAISE

“Shine, Jesus, Shine”

Sing the Faith #2173

After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say...

*CALL TO CONFESSION

God’s law, which was given to free us from chaos and anarchy, now serves to veil our faces and cloud our vision with the terrible knowledge of our own sins. So let us confess our sins that we may experience the glory of God’s forgiveness and be transformed by it. Let us pray together the prayer of confession as it's printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of Glory, we confess that we long for your presence in our lives even as we seek to hide from you. We both fear and crave your nearness. Too often we look upon worship as an just another option in our lives, rather than as a duty to you and to ourselves. We pray too little and whine too much. When we lack vision and power as a result of neglecting spiritual disciplines intended to strengthen us our relationship with you, we complain about the distance that has grown between us. Forgive us for seeking thrills on the mountaintop at the expense of the everyday loving service needed here in the valley where we live. Transform our lives so that we may reflect your glory into every dark place. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION (*Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.*)

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

From stable and mountain, from the cross and the empty tomb, God's glory has shone forth in love, that we might know ourselves forgiven, and be transformed over time from sinners to saints... Friends believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

*GLORIA PATRI

The Hymnal #579

Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, World without end. Amen, Amen.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Having been made right with God, let us share our new found peace with one another. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, the liturgist will step into the lectern and say...

“Please be seated. At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a Word from the Lord brought to them by Ms. Karen.”

The liturgist will take a seat.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

(All Singing)

Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;

Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;

Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.

As the children begin to leave the front, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Our offerings meet the needs of those in valleys of despair even as they lift others to new heights by making it possible for them to encounter Jesus. Let us give as we have been blessed, and continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

The liturgist will take a seat until the Doxology.

THE OFFERTORY

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

*DOXOLOGY (In Unison)

The Hymnal #592

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;

Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray... Thank you Lord, for revealing the glory of your face, and for equipping and sending us into the valley of others' need. These gifts we offer in response, and we pray that you will bless all that is offered that our love for you may illuminate the darkness of the world in Christ's name. Amen.

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith as it is expressed in the traditional version of the Apostles’ Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe. . .

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Invite the congregation to... “Be seated,” and take a seat.

THE ANTHEM

The Choir

After the Anthem, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from Exodus, the thirty-fourth chapter, beginning with the twenty-ninth verse. You are encouraged to follow along as we read from the passage on page #77 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tables of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. And when Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai.

And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, the people of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone; and Moses would put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

The liturgist will return to her seat on the chancel.

When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our second lesson today is taken from Paul's Second Letter to the Church at Corinth, the third chapter beginning at the twelfth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1005 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Leader: ... This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Removing the Mask”

Humankind has always had a lot of trouble dealing face to face with God. They have trouble looking upon God's glory, Moses asked to see God face to face, and God, knowing Moses would never be able to handle it, placed him in the crevice of a rock and passed by allowing Moses to see his back. No ordinary human has ever seen the face of God and lived.

Even more troubling, we can not bring ourselves to look fully upon such glory when it is veiled. Having wrapped his glory in human flesh, God appeared to Peter in the form of his son, Jesus. When Peter saw him for the first time, really saw him-- not as another prophet or rabbi, but as the son of the most high God--- he prostrated himself before Jesus and cried out, “Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!”

But most troubling of all, is that we have trouble looking at or dealing with those who have seen the glory of God themselves. They, like Christ on the mountaintop, are transfigured, changed so that they reflect the glory of God themselves. The only way we can bring ourselves to hear their words is to veil the glory. We cover it up.

Initially at least, we can cover it up to hide it from our view so we won't be distracted. That's why every time Moses went up the mountain to be with God, he would have to veil his face when he returned. He didn't have to do it forever, just until the glory faded. God's glory doesn't fade, but its effects on us do. Have you ever had a "mountaintop experience", some religious awakening that caught you off guard and lifted you up, and that you wished would never end? It was as if you were walking on air, and loved everybody and everything, and life was beautiful. But then on Monday, you returned to work and the petty annoyances of every day ganged up on you and you wondered where all that euphoria went, and thought, perhaps, it wasn't really "real" after all.

But--- and LISTEN TO THIS, IF YOU LISTEN TO NOTHING ELSE THIS MORNING-- it was real! It was the one most real thing you have ever experienced. The power of the experience fades-- first because we are imperfect vessels to hold all that power. Like cheap batteries, we can only hold that charge so long, and it leaks out of us.

God wants us to seek him out, to spend time with him, and he has designed us in such a way that, if we will get away from the world like Moses did, and spend time with God, we can be filled with that glory again-- and again, and again, and again..... we will learn over time what an hour of time spent with him can do for us. We will rise above the mundane, the hum drum, if we will just place ourselves in his presence and let him lift us up.

While Moses started it all by wearing a temporary veil on his face so that people could hear him, over the next thousand years something else happened. We humans began putting veils on our own faces-- today we call them masks-- to help us deal with the world. We are so afraid of being ourselves, of being vulnerable, that, today, we keep our masks on all the time. The people around us can't hurt us, but the tragedy is that God can't help us while we wear them. If we say we have no sin, no problems, no hurt that needs healing, no weakness that needs an infusion of power, we call God a liar and block the power of God from reaching those places in us that need it most.

Take Robin Williams for example, when he was in public or even just with his family, he was America's premier funny man. He could bring us all to the heights of insane laughter-- even as he himself was in the deepest depths of depression. He couldn't bring himself to take off the mask long enough to let those who loved him get close enough to help-- not his fans, not his friends, not his family, and not even his God.

This coming Tuesday is *Mardis Gras*, a celebration begun in a bygone era when social roles were much more strict than they are today. It was a day when servants became masters, masters became slaves, the poor could behave like the rich, and the rich could even cast off the obligations of their class and become ordinary people for a day. To help them all accomplish this they all wore masks, the mask representing who they wanted to be, rather than who they were underneath.

Actors on the Greek stage, wore masks so that they could more effectively hide who they really were. These actors were known as "hypocrites" meaning they pretended to be someone else. Over a period of time, the term was applied with a negative connotation to those who played a role in real life. And in the realm of the church, the name was applied exclusively to those who pretended to be better or more pious than they really were. These were thieves and whoremongers who dressed as priests, extortionists and con men who operated as honest businessmen, greedy or evil women who dressed as ladies.

But the time has come to take off the masks. We are only as sick as the secrets we keep. Take off the mask. Climb the mountain. Draw near to God and God will draw near to you.

Paul declares: "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;..."

What happens when we see? Well, consider Paul himself had a vision of the risen Christ-- transforming him from an enemy of the church of Jesus Christ to its passionate servant. Seeing the

glory of the Lord meant being changed from one degree of glory to another. But maybe we are not Paul.

If not Paul, how about Martin Luther King Jr.? Not too many folks know that his father whipped him regularly until he was fifteen. A neighbor reported hearing the elder King telling his son "he would make something of him even if he had to beat him to death."

He suffered from depression throughout much of his life. In his adolescent years, he felt bitter resentment against whites due to the "racial humiliation" that he, his family, and his neighbors often had to endure in the segregated South. At age 12, shortly after his maternal grandmother died, King blamed himself and jumped out of a second story window, but survived.

As a boy, he was skeptical of many of Christianity's claims. At the age of thirteen, he denied the bodily resurrection of Jesus during Sunday school. From this point, he stated, "doubts began to spring forth unrelentingly".

But as Martin matured and grew in wisdom as he studied, he grew closer to Christ, until the summer before his last year at Morehouse an eighteen-year-old Martin made the choice to enter the ministry believing that the church offered the most assuring way to work for justice and to answer his "inner urge to serve humanity".

He became a leader, a black Moses for a people long held back by Jim Crow laws, segregated schools, and a lack of any real voting power. On April 3, 1968, he went to Memphis, Tennessee to address a rally and to stress once more the rightness of non-violence. His flight to Memphis had been delayed by a bomb threat against his plane. In the close of the last speech of his career, in reference to the bomb threat, King said the following:

"I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. So I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

Less than 24 hours later, he would be dead on motel porch in Memphis. But Martin Luther King said he been to mountaintop. He no longer was afraid... he just wanted to do God's will. He was being transformed from one degree of glory to another. Maybe we are not Paul... maybe we are not Martin Luther King.

However ordinary you think you are, you can be great! However much you may be ashamed of your past, you may leave it behind and embrace the glory that awaits you in Christ. Your mask may keep others from seeing you as you are, but it also keeps you from seeing what God has planned for you.

Lift the veil. Remove the mask.

And all of us, with unveiled faces, will see the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are be transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another. THIS is the word of the Lord.

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

O Christ, who upon the mountaintop was transfigured before amazed disciples, show us your glory. We have come here this morning seeking you because, in numerous ways we have felt you in our lives, seeking us.

We have come to this time of worship, from many different places, but all needing desperately to experience the transformation that can only come from a close encounter with you.

Deliver us from our pride, our fears, our weaknesses, that we may stop hiding from you and others and stand before you and your people as the forgiven sinners we are. Naked before you, clothe us in righteousness. Weak and lonely, let us experience your love and power as never before. Show us your glory, Lord, and transform us into the disciples you would have us to be

Eternal God, let your Holy Spirit move over us and over these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be for us the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Render holy to us this sacrament of the Lord's Supper that we may be filled with your spirit and may have in us that mind which was also in Christ Jesus our Lord. May his coming in glory find us ever watchful in prayer; ever grateful for all your blessings; ever humble before the infinite ocean of the unknown; ever trusting and ever hopeful, knowing that with every tomorrow you draw us closer to that eternal morning when we shall be yours forever and your glory shall wrap all things in peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray saying...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC "Let Us Break Bread Together" **The Handbell Choir**
THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Invitation

The Words of Institution

The Distribution of the Elements

As the bread is passed to the person next to you, please say, "The body of Christ broken for you."

And as the cup is passed to the next person, please say, "The blood of Christ shed for you."

The Prayer After Receiving

O loving God, may this sacrament remind us that to turn away from you is to fall, to turn toward you is to rise, and to stand before you is to abide forever. Grant us, dear God, in all our duties your help; in all our uncertainties your guidance; in all our dangers your protection; and in all our sorrows your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Would all who are able please stand and join in singing our closing hymn, "God of Grace and God of Glory", #420 in our hymnals.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION "God of Grace and God of Glory" *The Hymnal #420*

*THE BENEDICTION

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE "Lord, Be Glorified"

In our lives, Lord, be glorified, be glorified.

In our lives, Lord, be glorified today.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis