

A lot of people wanted to see me come back from vacation with a tan. Now I'm all for a healthy glow. But I think people today are more aware of what constant tanning or too much sun can do. What surprised me the most about people wanting to see me come back tan is what they missed. This red hair means no tanning for me, only shade. This red hair means I go from lily white to beat red and back white again. No stopping at tan. No glow for me.

We can't be completely sure what Moses looked like when he came down the mountain. What I mean is the Bible says he had a radiant face, but exactly what the Israelites saw I don't know that we can describe fully. Ancient Christians had the thought it may have been horns coming from Moses' head. There's even a famous sculpture by Michelangelo where Moses has horns. But that's because another acceptable translation used horns instead of light. Certainly it was more than a good tan or healthy glow that made Moses' face radiant. No matter what, the Israelites were afraid.

It's a strange account before us this morning in the first lesson. But on this Transfiguration Sunday, this account is exactly what God wants us to study. He wants us to...

Look into the Radiant Face
Reflecting fading glory
Projecting lasting glory

Moses had been on the mountain forty days and nights. During that time a number of important things happened to him. First, upon his request, God gave him a glimpse of glory. God put Moses into the space between some rocks, put his hand over the opening while he walked by, removing his hand when Moses could only look and see the back of God. The back of God was as much glory as any human being could safely see. Second, Moses chiseled out two more stone tablets to receive the Law. These two replaced the first two that Moses broke when he threw them down in anger at the sinful actions of the people of Israel. God himself inscribed his Law on those two stone tablets. It was the agreement God made with the people of Israel.

Spending that much time in the presence of the glory of God warmed Moses' face and light radiated from it. **"He was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD."** As soon as the people saw him they became afraid. Even Aaron, his closest friend, was afraid. The fear wasn't because his face had beams of light shining from it unnaturally. That light was God's glory reflected in Moses. Glory from the time spent receiving the Law. The fear was because that Law and God's glory were in their presence. Their hearts and consciences became afraid. The Law listed all the reasons they couldn't be in God's presence. God was holy. He expected them to be holy and perfect. A history of sinfulness and broken promises brought about their separation from God.

Do you make lists? When something is really important it gets put on my running to do list. When it's accomplished I feel pride in being able to put that check mark and see it crossed off. If you get that feeling with daily tasks you might also feel the same about the 10 Commandments. You might treat them as a task list you can check things off of and when you do they essentially get scratched out as complete. Many people figure if they can live up to that list of to do items from God then God will be happy. They'll have kept the Law of God and there won't be need to worry about eternity. You might even have moments where you pat yourself on the back for keeping some of them. Didn't hurt anyone today. Didn't steal from someone today. Called my parents, paid my taxes, and helped out my neighbor. Before you know it we feel pride. Pride leads to figuring we brought glory to ourselves.

Look again at the radiant face of Moses. He openly showed the glory shining from his face. As he spoke God's Word the Israelites saw reflected glory. **"When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face."** Why? It seems to me that if they were afraid of seeing the glory reflecting from his face the veil would make sense when he was speaking to them. Yet he only veiled his face when he finished speaking. Moses brought the Law of God down the mountain to the people. The Law of God was good and glorious because it was given by God. Moses' face reflected that glory. But with all its glory the Law only accuses. It only holds people accountable bringing the sentence of death on every person. People need to hear that. We need to hear that. Moses covered his face with the veil because the glory of the Law is fading. It can't save anyone. The radiant face was reflecting fading glory.

How many of the 10 Commandments do you think you can keep? What glory do you deserve for keeping any? The Law of God can't help you. No amount of you keeping God's Law will get you one step, one inch closer to God. The apostle Paul said in the second lesson about that glory of the Law, **"For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!"** There is a better glory, a glory that needs no veil. The only place the veil can be removed and the glory of God seen perfectly is in Christ. God's glory and what he gives to us as a gift is on display. Read the Scriptures and see the Savior who kept the Law perfectly. Every commandment, the ten and every other command God gave, Jesus kept perfectly. He didn't fail. With that perfection he left the relative comfort of his life to suffer and die. Christ's death brought the people of God back to God. And there's glory. Glory to God for bringing us into a close relationship with him. A message of glory stating the forgiveness we have in Christ. That's a message of glory that is better and long lasting. Glory found in the gospel, the good news that Jesus saves us.

Moses went up onto the mountain of the Lord and spoke with God. He was in God's presence and therefore received reflected glory. It was a transfiguration of sorts for Moses who came down reflecting the glory of God. It was glory that couldn't last forever, eventually it faded. Moses wasn't the permanent savior. In Christ's transfiguration on the mountain we see a glimpse of the glory that lasts. Christ is the Savior. His glory went far beyond any glory Moses reflected. Jesus was projecting lasting glory.

Don't be surprised that Moses was one of those with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses represented the Law, a glory that couldn't last because it couldn't save people. The partial glimpse Moses received of God's glory gave him a radiant face. Still, standing with Jesus the fading glory of the Law reflected in Moses couldn't compare. Jesus showed his glory as God. He projected lasting glory. Jesus' glorious light as God shines into the world and brings glory to those it shines on. But just as quickly as it appeared on that mountain Jesus once again put it under wraps. He left the mountain, seemingly left the glory, and went the way of suffering. There was a time for glory and a time for the cross. Jesus veiled his glory to go to the cross. In that way he achieved glory by pardoning people of their sins, sins committed against the Law and the 10 Commandments Moses received from God. Christ demonstrated the agreement God made with human beings by providing a Savior; a Savior to save them permanently.

As you stare into the Radiant Face of Jesus being transfigured on the mountain you have no reason to fear. It isn't meant to repel you but draw you closer. It isn't the radiance of fading glory in the Law which ultimately can't save you. Rather it's a glory based on the gospel which does save you. Jesus left his mountain to face a mountain of suffering. The suffering he faced should have been yours and mine. Our sins deserve punishment, they deserve suffering. Jesus took it all. Took all our suffering and punishment and gave us forgiveness. Willingly and freely Jesus forgave our sins and freed us before God to receive glory.

Right now we get only glimpses of the glory that's ours in Christ. It comes out, not in lives that go smoothly with little problems. Rather the glory of Jesus shines in our worst moments. When we suffer it is the Radiant Face of Jesus that we long for and treasure. Christ renews us and strengthens us to live according to his ways. We reflect Christ's glorious light in our relationships. A father gets up before dawn to go to work to support his family. A mother diligently works to provide for her children. Young people give their full attention at work to do the best they can. Couples shower each other with love, not love that takes without giving commitment, but love that serves first. Citizens smile and share resources with fellow citizens. Everything you do as a Christian projects the lasting glory of Christ. It is giving God the glory.

You'll notice I didn't come back tan. Sunblock and red hair made sure of that. Looking at me you wouldn't see the beach reflected. You might not even know I was at the beach. Those who saw Moses knew he had been in the presence of God. They saw the glory reflected in his face. But it was fading because it was attached to the Law of God. Jesus' glory never fades. It's forever because Christ's victory is forever, his cross is empty, his glory complete. That's the glory radiating from your faces this morning. The permanent glory of Christ shining in you from the gospel message of sins forgiven you hear and know. Always look to that Radiant Face of Christ.