

The Transfiguration of Our Lord: February 5, 2017
“The God Effect”

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Our text for this morning is our Old Testament lesson, Exodus 34.

Shining faces are not a normal, everyday experience. If you were to see someone's face and it was actually shining, you would know something is different. What would you do if you saw someone's face literally shining? I know that when we see someone who is really happy, we say things such as, “They are glowing,” or, “They are radiant,” or “They are just beaming.” But what if you saw someone's face literally shining? It might scare you just a little bit. I mean, isn't the natural thing for many when their telling scary stories around the campfire to take a flashlight, and illumine their face so that there is an added element of not normalness? The point here is that a shining face is not normal, and this what the people of Israel saw in Moses, and what the disciples saw in Jesus.

There is something that seems so ordinary, and yet not so ordinary in both our Old Testament and our Gospel lessons today. Moses was an ordinary man. He went to a seemingly ordinary mountain that was covered with what one would see as a supposedly familiar, normal and commonplace cloud that covered this mountain. Except, this cloud was not your average cloud. God used this cloud to show His very presence with His people, and to cover Moses' from God's awesome glory so that Moses could talk to God face-to-face.

Being in the presence of God has an effect. God uses a seemingly simple building, and average, normal people, to speak God's Word. We come to this place and we enter into God's presence, and as we do, it has an effect. Here we are covered with God's grace and restored in God's peace. Here He feeds and comforts and sustains us. Here we hear God speak through the mouth of sinful, normal (just don't ask Markie about me being normal), human Pastor's. Here we gather to hear, pray, and praise together, and it has an effect.

When we leave, our faces shine. We reflect God to the world, at home, in school, at work, wherever we go this next week when we leave these doors. Just like Moses, we may not be aware of what we do. We simply have no other choice as

God's children. We do what God asks and that will frighten some. Sinners don't want to hear of their sin. We love and we pray and we lead them to God's Word; we lead them to God. As we reflect, some will be frightened, but others will draw near. Like a light in a dark place, they will be drawn to you, rather you will draw them to Christ.

God uses the most ordinary things, to do some of His greatest work. He used the cloud throughout the entire Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to serve as reminder of His presence. Clouds seem so simple, and God continues to use simple, seemingly every day common things to show His presence even today. Loving and teaching our children and grandchildren, seems rather simple, but how much of that truly gives glory to God? A lot! Raising our children to know God's love and to follow His commands, you set them up to never reject by word or deed the free gift of eternal life in Christ. The mother who changes her child's diaper, does a great and wonderful work. It seems simple and necessary. It doesn't seem glorious, but does that not fulfill helping a neighbor in every physical need?

Changing diapers is easy, and they don't talk back yet. They only listen, well mostly. What about others as they get older? They don't listen right away because they may not readily trust you. They cannot see that you truly are looking out for their welfare, for their benefit, for their good. Sometimes being a Christian, reflecting that love of Christ, first means gaining trust. Sometimes wearing the veil of humility is required. Others need to know that you care, before they will hear you when you speak to them the good news. This is one of the challenges a Pastor faces in any congregation. Some trust him right away and are able to talk to him because they respect the office of the ministry. They can see past the person and speak to the office.

Others, take more time to make that distinction. This is the very need for missions and whose work is that? Each and every child of God is given the task of speaking to others. For those that live around here, for those you interact with, for those that have been here forever, for those that may have not been here that long, and for those that have not come for a while, one of you may speak their language. They already trust you and you know how to speak to them. Go! Share the good news with them! You may the missionary that God is waiting to send to them.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, what about moving pictures, what about our actions? In Exodus we see Moses' actions, we see that He continued to speak to God's people. What did Jesus do? Jesus showed many things by His actions, and especially today as we celebrate His Transfiguration, do we recall who He is as He showed His disciples. He was ordinary, and at the same time, He was extraordinary. This showing of who He truly is was for their benefit and their good. Through this action of His Transfiguration, Jesus prepared His disciples for what was to come. He prepared them for His suffering, death, resurrection, and their subsequent persecution. Take stock of your actions. With our actions, we are preparing those whom we teach for their life, death, and suffering in this world until the life to come.

How are we to keep God's name holy? God makes it very simple. Don't have other gods, don't misuse His name, don't despise preaching and His Word, honor authorities, protect life, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't destroy reputations and be content. Very simple, yet we make it so complicated. Oh how many times I have tried to skate around these clear commands. "You mean I can't...?" "No." "Well, what if I just...?" "No." "But you don't understand God, I just wanted..." "No." Simple ordinary commands, but they have heavenly, eternal effects. Ordinary, yet not so ordinary.

Here is yet another ordinary thing that is not really all that ordinary. Normal people, are forever forgiven, children of God and inheritors of God's eternal kingdom. With ordinary water and God's Word, He shows us who He is. He gives His glory, His presence. Through baptism we are brought into the presence of God and it has an effect. Veiled in flesh, we are God's everlasting children with love for all of God's creation. Love so super-abounding we cannot stop speaking of God's love. We can't wait to join with others in praise and prayer. We can't wait to hear Him speak, and we can't stop telling and encouraging others to do the same.

How great and awesome is our God? Ordinary, humble, bread and wine veils Jesus' very crucified and risen body that we get to feast on for our forgiveness. We get to gather around the heavenly banquet and feast on life. With very ordinary things, God's gracious presence shines through. Things aren't always what they seem. God's children seem like normal people, yet they are different. They are in

the presence of God and being in His presence changes them. God's Word, God's presence, has an effect. It has a heavenly, holy, everlasting effect.

“Today, as year by year its light Bathes all the world in radiance bright, One precious truth outshines the sun: Salvation comes from [Jesus] alone. Alleluia!”
Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.