**Reflecting Glory**

**5-31-20**

Moses saw God

* Or, maybe better said, Moses caught a glimpse of the glory of God on Mount Sinai.
  + God had called him up there to give him His law.
    - But during the entire time he was receiving the law, he had only heard God’s voice.
    - But as they were wrapping things up, Moses was emboldened to make a request.
  + We read it in Exodus 33:18:

*18 Moses said, “Please show me your glory.”*

* + - To which God replied:

*19 And [God] said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name, ‘the LORD’. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. 20 But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” 21 And the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”*

* + - And so, in Exodus 34 beginning with verse 6 God does exactly this.
      * And Moses catches a fleeting glimpse of the glory of God as He moves out of sight.
      * And Moses is overwhelmed.
* But as striking as this passage is, what is amazing to me is not only that Moses was given a glimpse of God’s glory, but that everyone in Israel could tell that he had – because seeing God’s glory visibly changed Him.
  + Exodus 34:29 tells us,

*29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai…Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. 30 Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.*

* + - So, we are told in vs. 33 that

*33…[Moses] put a veil over his face.*

* + - He would take it off when he went into the tent of meeting to speak with God.
    - And he would leave it off while he spoke God’s words to the people.
    - But then,

*35 Moses would put a veil over his face again…*

Now I bring this up this Pentecost Sunday, not because Moses was wearing a mask, but because not since the time of Moses had all of Israel seen anyone shine with the glory of God until the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

* We know that Jesus bore God’s glory – in fact, John tells us that He was, himself, the glory of God. John 1:14 tells us,

*14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

* + This is why John continually refers to Jesus as the Light that shines in darkness and the Light of life.
    - He is the living glory of God, at one point telling Thomas that “if you have seen me, you have seen the Father”.
    - And referring to Himself as “the light of the world.”
  + In his Pentecost sermon, Peter explains it this way in Acts 2:33:

*33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.*

* What is it were they seeing and hearing?
  + Well we focus on the gift of tongues – that manifestation of the Holy Spirit poured out on the day of Pentecost.
    - Where people from all over the Roman world were simultaneously hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed in their own languages – languages the speakers had never learned.
      * A miracle to be sure.
    - But if we focus only on the miracle of the medium of the communication, then we can miss out on the content of the communication itself.
  + For what they were SEEING and HEARING was the manifestation of the very glory of God.
    - Where those who had seen God’s glory were now filled with God’s glory in the person of the Holy Spirit of Christ.
  + Tongues were but one manifestation of that glory exhibited that day in the “shining of faces” of God’s people.
    - What of the other miracles?
      * Like the boldness and fearlessness of a group of people who just hours earlier were cowering in fear in an upper room.
      * Or the miracle of regeneration from death to life of 3,000 people, who in one felled swoop were transferred from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of Light?
      * Then there was the conveying of the Holy Spirit of God into the lives of all those new believers, granting them not just the glimpse of glory that Moses experienced…
      * But a life-long gaze into the very face of our eternal God and Father.
  + Jesus predicted it all in John 17:22-23:

*22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*

* + Friends, Pentecost is so much more than just the gift of tongues.
    - It is the first salvo of the glory of God spreading across the face of the whole earth through God’s children – His church.
    - The impact of Pentecost is so much grander than anything we have ever imagined.

Let’s look to the Apostle Paul to tie this all together and to describe what was happening at Pentecost and how impacts all of us who are in the Church of Christ Jesus today.

* In 2 Corinthians 3:12 and following we read:

*12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 13 not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. 14 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. 15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. 16 But when one 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. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

* Paul begins, as we did today, with Moses, who caught a glimpse of God’s glory and it changed him.
  + But Paul points out that this change for Moses was temporary, as the glory of God that was reflected on his face was slowly fading away (*the outcome was being brought to an end*).
    - Not that it would have made any difference anyway, since even when he spoke God’s words to them with an unveiled face it had no impact.

*14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted…*

* + - For in the end, it was their hearts that were veiled, not just Moses’ face.
  + This explains how some can reject the glory of God in Christ Jesus as well.
    - Even if it is accompanied by glorious manifestations of the Holy Spirit, be they miracles of healing or miracles of transformed lives.
    - If a heart is veiled, there is nothing we can say or do that will lift that veil.
    - Paul says in vs. 14 that only Christ can lift it by means of His Holy Spirit.
* But what if He does? In vs. 16 Paul focuses on those who do turn to the Lord Jesus and allow Him to lift the veil.
  + Literally, these people who turn, “repent”.

*16 But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.*

* + - For the Greek word, “repent” speaks not of confessing our sins, but rather of turning in desperation to the only one who can save us in our sins.
      * To repent is to turn toward God when we finally accept that we have no other place else to turn!
        + When the veil is finally lifted and we realize that all is hopeless and lost if we continue in our own way.
        + So we turn toward God and throw ourselves upon His mercy in Jesus.
        + Receiving from Him forgiveness for our arrogant rebellion and stubborn claim to independence.
      * And ironically, find freedom.
        + For when we throw ourselves upon the mercy of the death and resurrection of Jesus…
        + We receive from Jesus forgiveness of sin AND that very same Spirit Peter references in His sermon at Pentecost.
  + For, Paul says, to receive the Lord Jesus is to receive His Spirit.

*17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.*

* + - And freedom cuts two ways.
      * There is freedom from:
        + From the weight of our sin and the burden of its shame and guilt.
        + From the pressure to achieve or succeed in order to prove your worth.
        + Freedom from needing the approval or the world or family or your spouse in order to have value.
        + From slavery to fear at every hand, right down to the moment of our death.
      * But in freedom, there is also freedom to:
        + Freedom to walk with God, freely receiving His unconditional love and grace.
        + Freedom to shine the light of God’s glorious love and mercy to everyone you know and meet.
        + Freedom to live the life God gave you rather than conforming to someone else’s vision of it.
        + Freedom to know God and to enjoy Him forever.
  + So we are set free when we turn and face God, only to discover that like Moses, when we behold God’s glory, we begin to reflect God’s glory as well.
    - And at long last, we finally begin to fulfill God’s purpose in sending His Son.
      * See here’s the thing that we so often miss in our self-centered, self-serving society.
        + Jesus didn’t come just to save us from our sins.

His ultimate goal was not to make sure that we all were with Him in heaven someday.

That is a blessed consequence of Christ’s passion and resurrection, but it could be said that that was his penultimate goal – not his ultimate goal.

* + - * + Christ’s ultimate goal was to redeem us from our sins SO THAT we would be free to reflect the glory to the God who made us and saved us.

Multiple times in the Gospels, Jesus proclaims that His goal was to bring His Father glory. John 17:1

*When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,*

* + - * + And in Romans 15:8-9 Paul explicitly Christ’s work of salvation for the purpose of bringing glory to His Father.

*8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant…in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.*

* + - * My Mormon neighbor recently told me that according to the LDS, God’s chief aim for us on earth is for us to improve ourselves.
      * But the Bible tells us that as children of God, our chief aim is simply “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”
* Now what’s amazing in this verse is that all of this is wrapped up in one very pregnant word.
  + For it does double duty, speaking of both our beholding and our reflecting all at the same time.
    - And after that, it communicates even more.
  + The Greek word in question is: *katoptrizomenoi* which can be translated with either “behold” or “reflect”.
    - Usually translators will pick one of those and then put the other one in the margin or notes area – because they could both fit here.
      * Like Moses, we turn to **behold** God’s glory – only we do so by looking at the Lord Jesus.
      * And also like Moses, there is a natural (supernatural) consequence to our beholding the glory of God.
        + That glory begins to radiate from our unveiled faces.

First it radiates back to God, as with Moses when he would unveil his face when meeting with God in the tabernacle.

But then it radiates out to anyone else who is looking, as we saw happened with the people of Israel when they would look upon Moses.

* + - * + You see, (Axiom) you don’t get to behold the glory of God without ending up reflecting the glory of God.

Let me illustrate it this way:

* Most of you know the affinity I have for lighthouses, even though I have never lived on either coast.
  + Still, I love lighthouse lore and design and symbol.
    - In fact, some of you might remember a series I preached using lighthouses as an ever-expanding illustration of the Christian life.
  + Well, the problem with the first lighthouses was that their light was just a fire on top of a tower which, as you well know, can’t be seen from very far away.
    - The solution to that problem initially was to just build a bigger fire on top of the tower.
      * Well, that’s all fine and good, but you need and enormous supply of wood to to that and it was also complicated by the fact that most of the early towers were also made out of wood, creating a significant fire hazard.
      * Plus, even a giant bon-fire couldn’t be seen from very far away because the light created by the fire was defused in all directions.
  + That problem was finally overcome with the development of the Fresnel lens, which was so beautiful that it became known as the jewel of the lighthouse, but was also so effective that it cast the light from a much more contained and smaller light source as far as 20 miles to sea.
    - The genius of the Fresnel lens was that though a first order Fresnel lens would stand about double my height and have the circumference of the drum shield up here, it was made up of hundreds of small glass prisms.
      * Each prism cut precisely to fit into a frame structure formed in relation to the location of the light source in the lighthouse.
      * Eventually, the light source would be surrounded by these glass prisms.
      * As the light was cast in all directions, each of these prisims “absorbed” the light and then bent it and reflected it toward a series giant glass bullseyes on the sides of the lens.
      * Once the reflected light from all of these prisms hit the bullseye, a single concentrated beam was sent out from the tower, so powerful that it could warn ships some 20 miles away of their location and the dangers that lurked ahead.
  + My point is, each of us are like one of those prisms.
    - As we behold the glory of God we also reflect His glory, both back to Him and to the world around us.
      * It is His glory, not ours.
      * But he receives glory as we reflect it.
      * Or as Jesus said:

*22 The glory you have given me I have given them…*

* + But there’s more to this word than just its meaning – in Greek the word also carries its number – and this number is not singular, its plural.
    - And here God is doing a new thing – unlike what he did with Moses.
    - For Paul is not writing this about individual believers, though it is true that of each of us behold and reflect the glory of God.
    - But here he is telling his readers that Christ’s ultimate goal of bringing glory to the Father only happens in its fullness in the plural.
      * You see, a major part of the glory of God is the perfect unity of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
      * And when Jesus prayed to his Father about giving us the glory that the Father had given Him, note how he describes it (Jn 17:22-23)

*22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them,* ***that they may be one even as we are one****, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one…*

* + - * + Earlier in Romans 15 Paul confirms that such unity is exactly what brings glory to God:

*5 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, 6 that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

* + - * God’s glory is best beheld and reflected in the community of the church rather than as a collection of individuals.
        + In many ways, it is just like the Fresnel lens.

A single prism may reflect light, but it is not a light you can see unless you are up close.

But a community of prisms creates a brilliance and intensity that can’t be missed, even miles away.

* + - * + We are meant to reflect the glory of God together.
      * This is what happened at Pentecost.
        + The glory of the Lord was passed on from Christ to the believers by the mediation of the Holy Spirit and broke out upon everyone in the upper room.
        + All of them – men, women, sons, daughters, even servants – exhibited the glory of God, manifested in boldness, wisdom, knowledge and tongues.
      * God could have chosen to do it only through Peter, but that would bring Him limited glory.
        + What got the attention of everyone in Jerusalem was that 120 terrified believers poured out into the streets and began boldly proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus, the Christ, in languages they had never learned.
        + Only then did Peter have a crowd, filled with awe and curiosity, to preach to.
    - A united church – the body of Christ functioning as one – is the glory of God revealed!
* But there’s one more thing I want you to see from 1 Corinthians 3:18 – and it is the Gospel’s crowning achievement.
  + Remember how the glory on Moses’ face was a diminishing glory?
    - That it was fading as more time passed from his encounter with God on Sinai.
  + Well that is not true of Christ’s church.

*18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding/reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

* + - Rather than fade away, this glory is ever increasing.
      * And not just as reflection, but as transformation!
      * In Christ, we continually take on His glory, progressively moving from glory to greater glory.
      * Which, he says, is the work of the Holy Spirit within us.
* This is mind-blowing, life altering stuff.
  + The glory that the Father gave to the Son…
  + The Son now gives to the Spirit who imbeds it in us as we learn to walk in the Spirit.
    - A glory that includes both a changing of our character and attitudes (as demonstrated in the growth of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives).
    - And a glory that manifests itself in empowering us for life and ministry through various spiritual gifts.
* In other words, the glory of God demonstrated at Pentecost and beyond in the early church is also at work in each of us and in all of us.
  + This is what we will be looking at for the next number of weeks.
    - For our desire is not just to know about his glory, but to walk in it – for it is both a gift of the Gospel and the goal of our Savior.
    - Who saved us FOR HIS GLORY.