

Sunday Thought

27th February 2022 Sunday before Lent

Readings

Exodus 34: 29 - 35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3: 12 - 4: 2

Luke 9: 28 - 36

The Glory Face

There is something very wonderful about the glory face. You may have seen it on a toddler racing towards you – *Mum! We've just seen a real elephant!* - the student on results day, or the successful young driver – *I've passed!* In a wide variety of



circumstances, I have seen faces shining at me from a 'departure bed' with a 'heaven already' glow about them. Best of all I have witnessed the joy of new followers of Jesus. They have been all ages and their story told in different ways, but all shared something of that special glow – *'I really do believe in God!' 'I met Jesus!' 'He's real!'*

Today's Bible readings are all about Glory Faces. They begin with Moses. Another dramatic story. God's people are waiting to embark on their epic journey from their desert survival around Mount Sinai to a promised land flowing with milk and honey. Moses had climbed high on the rugged mountain where he was almost lost in the awesome, dazzling presence of God. In fearful worship he saw the divine glory, heard the Lord's covenant promises and received the ten commandments which would determine his people's unique way of life as God's special community. On his return, Moses was astonished that Aaron and those assembled ready for his coming, were afraid to approach him. It was only when they heard his voice assuring them it was really him came recognition. He did not know how the glory of God, radiant and glowing in his face, terrified them! Only with his face veiled could he tell them the words he had received from God.

Moses of the shining face appears again briefly in the gospel story today, together with Elijah who was representing God's prophets. When Jesus was transfigured with the glory light of his Father, these two returned to confirm the coming events of his suffering – his crucifixion and resurrection. He had called Peter, James, and young John to join him on a retreat near to the snowline of mount Hermon. They had prayed together, and Jesus started to prepare them for what was to come. These three were privileged to see something of a 'heaven on earth' experience, although they nearly missed it. They had dropped off to sleep in the prayers!

Writing to Corinth, Paul takes up a similar theme. He tells his readers how living the life of the Spirit of Jesus brings moments of being so close to God which involve sharing his glory – even visibly. The life of Christ in us makes us the people of the shiny faces! *'You don't put this life on like a special suit or clerical robes,'* he explains. *'When a person is joined to Christ, it is like being plugged in to him and the light of his glory shines through us.'* Growing in the likeness of Jesus, the light intensifies. It may be seen in the way we speak and act equally as much as in our whole personality. As Charles Wesley put it, we are *'changed from glory into glory till in heaven we see his face.'*

There is an important connection between these readings. They all involve the Word of God – God speaking. At Jesus' Transfiguration a voice from the enveloping cloud says *'This is my Son, my chosen One. Listen to him!'* That's our Christian mission. That's our reason for having the glory glow – to help others to know Jesus and hear what God is saying now. Peter nearly falls into the buildings trap. He wants to erect shrines. God wants him to work and witness with Jesus – to work on the 'glow' before the structures I look at the daily news in that light. The threats of armed conflict, the destruction of the natural world, hunger, disease, genocide and I hear the word from the cloud, *'Listen to Jesus!'* The task of his people is to so glow with Jesus in life and word that the whole world will listen to him and work to see his heavenly kingdom come here just as he taught us pray for it.

Three words of caution though. First, don't go to sleep when Jesus calls us to pray with him – we will miss something of his glory. Then, don't get all hung up with shrines and buildings- they may be brushed aside when God is heard speaking. And, thirdly, don't look in the mirror to see if you have the Jesus glow. Like Moses, you won't see it. But other people will!

A Prayer of Worship (with Psalm 99 in mind)

Lord God, when storm winds rage and shake the house to its foundations, let it remind us of your powerful, cosmic glory.
You are the King of Glory,
resplendent above all others in majesty.
The nations will tremble before your mighty wonders and the sound of your voice.
All Evil cringes with fear before your holiness, equity and justice, truth and love.
These are the tokens of your glory.
These are the truth which draws people to tremble before you in worship and praise.
Lord, let the wind of your Spirit rock our 'life foundations' and cause us to worship and adore you in all our living, speaking and being.

