

## Let It Shine

Exodus 34:29-35

This morning's text is one of the Biblical passages that I find difficult to interpret. However, I believe that it contains a message that we all need to treasure in our hearts. So, may God add a blessing to the preaching and hearing of his word.

We just read the account of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai carrying the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments. The great leader of the Hebrew people had spent 40 days in solitude with God. And, during that period of time, the Lord gave Moses the terms of the Covenant.

Probably you know the story and remember that this is not the first time Moses was given the Law. Our passage this morning is actually recounting the second time Moses descended from Mount Sinai carrying with him the Ten Commandments. Now, if we put one event next to the other, we realize that both of them are very similar. On both occasions, Moses spent 40 days up on the mountain experiencing God's glory and speaking with the Lord face to face. Why did God have to give Moses the Ten Commandments twice?

You may remember that Moses broke the Tablets of the Law the first time because he found the people worshipping a golden calf that Aaron had made for them. So, full of anger, Moses shattered the Tablets against the ground. That's the reason God asked Moses for a follow-up visit to once again give him the Commandments.

The second time Moses went up on the mountain, he came back to the people with something different. In the second spiritual retreat, Moses was transformed. When Moses made it back to the camp, the people noticed that something had changed in their leader.

Remember, spiritual retreats 1 and 2 were very similar. On both occasions, Moses spoke with God face to face, in the same place, and for the same amount of time (40 days). But the first time, Moses came down the mountain with his natural look, while the second time his appearance was different. His face had become radiant. There was light coming from his countenance. This account reminds me that **the more we encounter God, the more we are formed into his image and the more we reflect his glory**. Can you say amen to that?

Moses' face was glowing and he did not realize it until he perceived that the people did not want to get closer to him. I like to imagine that at first he took it personally. Moses probably thought that the people's reaction had to do with him having been divorced from the shower for 40 days. But soon he discovered that the distance people kept had nothing to do with body odors; it had to do with the radiance of Moses' face. It is at this point that something really interesting happened. Moses covered his face with a veil. Why? Why would anybody hide the glory of God in his/her life? Why did Moses do this?

Theologians have different opinions about the way Moses responded in this specific situation. Some people say that Moses covered his face out of humility. Moses was a meek person and he didn't want to show off how close he was to God. Other people say that peer pressure was the reason why Moses covered his face. Moses didn't want to be seen as different; he didn't want to be put aside by the majority and for that reason he covered his face with a veil. Others give an even more unkind reason. There are folks who believe that Moses covered his face because as time went by, the glow of his face faded and he didn't want people to notice it. So, in a sense, there is a group of people who believe that Moses covered his face because of pride rather than humility.

Anyway, the truth is that Moses covered his face with a veil and that is very puzzling no matter why he did it. Again, why would anybody hide the glory of God in his/her life? Perhaps, the main explanations that I shared with you make sense. However, **we are called to be reflections of God's glory, not to hide it.**

I think that there are many reasons why we often act like undercover Christians and wear a veil to keep our faith private. Perhaps we do it because:

1. We fear rejection and embarrassment
2. We want to behave as others do and don't want people to correlate our "faith" with our actions
3. It is demanding and costly
4. It makes more sense to walk by sight than by faith
5. It is safer and more convenient to live the American dream than God's will. It is safer and more convenient to hate certain people than to love them. It is safer and convenient to have a personal and customized God that caters only to our needs. It is better to not confront and examine ourselves in the light of Jesus.

I don't know the reasons why Moses covered his face with a veil. However, I want to remind you that Jesus is calling us to let his light shine through us. Jesus told his disciples, "**14** *You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. 15* *No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. 16* *In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*" **Matthew 5:14-16 NLT**

### **How can we let Christ's light shine through us?**

First, let me tell you how we overshadow Christ's light in our lives.

1. We minimize Christ's light in our lives when we demonize and antagonize those who think and believe differently than us and then fight them as if they were our worst enemies. Let me quote Paul's letter to Timothy. Here is what the apostle wrote. "*Again I say, don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. A servant of*

*the Lord must not quarrel but must be **kind** to everyone, be able to teach, and be **patient** with difficult people. **Gently** instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts..." 2 Timothy 2:23-35 NLT.*

- a. It is our kindness, patience, humility and gentleness (not our passive-aggressiveness, possessiveness, and stubbornness) that God uses to touch the heart of those around us.
2. We cast a shadow on the light of Christ in our lives when we think that shining the light of Christ is only about believing the right stuff. Ann Spangler wrote, *"God's goal isn't simply to fill the world with people who believe the right things. It is to fill the world with people who shine with the brilliance of Christ."*

When we think that believing is only a matter of the brain, then we minimize the light of Christ in our lives. I want you to see something really interesting in the words of Jesus. The Master said, **"14 You are the light of the world... 15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father"** (Matthew 5:14-16 NLT).

I want you to see that Jesus is talking about light and towards the end he uses the term *"good deeds"* as a synonym for the word light. What Jesus is telling us is that we become reflections of his light through loving and compassionate acts. If our intellectual beliefs and traditions only lead us to be oppositional and confrontational without engaging in acts of love, respect, and mutual consideration, we should evaluate those beliefs.

### **Illustration**

"It was towards the end of World War II when a young Nazi soldier found himself behind Russian lines. He was bleeding from a gunshot wound in one arm. Bewildered and afraid, he found his way into the home of a poor Russian peasant. She welcomed him into her humble home, and offered him food and rest. He did not understand why she was so kind since he was her enemy, but before he departed, he noticed how she would pray to God several times throughout the day. This soldier recalled years later, 'I could see God living in that home, even though I had never known Him before. Before this, I believed that God didn't exist, ... that the State was my god. And this false god taught me to hate those who didn't believe as I believed. Although I had never even seen a Bible in my life, no less read one, from the witness of that woman, I came to realize that God was alive because I saw Him in the life of that poor peasant woman.'"<sup>1</sup>

### **How can we let Christ's light shine through us?**

- When we respond in kindness and compassion, we let the light of Christ shine through

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from <http://schwebster.org/sermons/sermon-archives/2013/shining-the-light-of-christ>

our lives.

- When we give another chance to those who err, we let the light of Christ shine through our lives.
- When we strive to be faithful to God's will rather than successful in the world's point of view, we let the light of Christ shine through our lives.
- When we strive for excellence and service and go the extra mile when others wouldn't, we let the light of Christ shine through our lives.
- When we keep our word in spite of the fact that it costs us dearly to do so, we let the light of Christ shine through our lives.
- When we seek to be contributors and not mere spectators who only want other people's contributions, we let the light of Christ shine through our lives.
- When we use money and love people, instead of using people for the love of money, we let the light of Christ shine through our lives.
- When we do what Jesus would do in the circumstances we face, we reflect his light and his life.

I don't fully understand why Moses hid the light of God glowing in his face. It reminds me that our tendency as broken individuals is to hide the light God has implanted in each of us. Yet, after recognizing our natural inclination, this account challenges us to let the radiance of Christ shine at all times.

The apostle Paul charged the Philippians with living out their salvation in Christ. In his address, he said, "...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling... Do everything without grumbling or arguing... Then you will shine among [people] like stars in the sky..." (Philippians 2:12-15). Dear church, do not cover yourself with a veil, but let the light of Christ shine through you. Let it shine!