

Epiphany 7-February 27, 2022

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

2 Corinthians 3:12--4:2 and Luke 9:28-36

“Unveiled by Christ” Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

“Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.”

Throughout this season of Epiphany, which comes to a close today, we have heard several ways that Jesus reveals himself to us. The fact that Jesus needs to reveal himself to us, also suggests that there can be barriers even as thin as veils that can prevent us from seeing Jesus clearly.

On the first Sunday in Epiphany, we heard once again the story of the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. People had started to believe that John the Baptist was the messiah. There were many similarities between John and Jesus, so it is not completely surprising for this confusion. They were related to each other. They preached messages of repentance and forgiveness. God’s people had been eagerly waiting for a messiah, so when John the Baptist appeared, they looked to him to deliver them. But John the Baptist was not Jesus. John the Baptist became a veil that was preventing people from turning to Jesus. Time and time again, John tried to lift the veil of what he was doing and directed them toward Jesus who he described as the Lamb of God who would do what he could not by taking away the sins of the world. But people were still fascinated with John the Baptist and his peculiar ways. Even when John the Baptist was put to death, people were fascinated with the idea that maybe he would come back to life.

On this last Sunday of Epiphany, it is easy for us to turn to Moses as our deliverer. Moses appears in every scripture reading for today. Moses, like John the Baptist, was similar to Jesus in that he was chosen by God to lead his people. Even though his people often turned against him, Moses like Jesus didn’t abandon them. Moses appeared to have miraculous powers like Jesus. Moses seems to play the lead role in the first lesson for today from Deuteronomy. The Israelites were fascinated with Moses and his glowing face when he came down the mountain with the commandments. They thought as many still do today, following the commandments will be your pass for salvation. In this reading for today, the Israelites were captivated by Moses’ shining face. Moses would place a veil over his face when he spoke to his people, but they failed to see beyond the veil and recognize that the glow they saw came from the Lord.

God’s chosen people began to mistake Moses as their deliverer. They started to believe that it was Moses who provided their daily bread of manna in the wilderness. To remove any question about who was the one who delivered the Israelites from their bondage, Moses was put to death. We are told in scripture that it was the Lord who commanded Moses to die, and that Moses’ burial place was never revealed so that God’s chosen people would turn their veiled minds away from Moses and to the Lord.

As the gospel for today begins, we are told that before Jesus had taken Peter, John, and James with him up the mountain to pray, Jesus had told them a secret. A secret about what was going to happen to him. A secret no one else would yet understand so they were to keep this to themselves. Jesus told them that he was going to have to undergo great suffering, be rejected by chief priests, and scribes, and be

killed and on the third day be raised. Up to this point, it must have seemed to these new disciples that things had been going well. But this news about suffering and death was confusing and troubling for these disciples.

Jesus led his disciples to do what everyone should do when they receive confusing or troubling news. Jesus led them up a mountain to pray. While they watched Jesus pray, they noticed that the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. It was also then that they saw Moses and Elijah talking to Jesus. This was the kind of glory that Peter had been waiting for. Peter may have hoped that Jesus was mistaken about what he had just told them, and Moses and Elijah had come to deliver a new way for Jesus to enter glory. Glory that would be surrounded by lights that dazzled. Not glory by suffering and death. Peter wanted this moment to last, but before Peter could get the first tent built, a cloud overshadowed the glorious moment and spoke. The voice from the cloud told Peter and John and James to turn their eyes away from Moses and Elijah and open their ears to what Jesus had to say. Before these three disciples could take a picture of this moment with Moses and Elijah, the moment was gone along with Moses and Elijah. They were left alone with Jesus. The veil was lifted, and Jesus was the only one left to see.

We are in a similar place as these disciples as we enter the Lenten season. The only difference is that we know what Jesus said would happen has already happened. There is no veil to prevent us from believing what Jesus has said. On Ash Wednesday this week, we would like Jesus to take an easier path for our salvation. We would like Moses to reappear and tell us that by keeping the commandments, Jesus might not have to suffer and die. But just like on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah have disappeared and there is only one way for our salvation. It is only through the suffering death and resurrection of Jesus.

This is no longer a secret for us to keep, but a promise to boldly tell everyone.

This past Sunday, Kim and I attended worship with some of our snowbird congregation in Arizona. I was initially interested in what he was preaching about since he based his message on Romans 4 that we had just studied in our evening bible study the previous Monday. But this pastor had a wonderful illustration about seeing with unveiled faces.

He began by saying that he was an avid sports enthusiast. Like many of the congregation, he was retired and his days of playing these sporting activities were behind him, but he still loved watching sporting activities on tv. He said one of the greatest inventions was the DVR to record sporting activities when he couldn't watch them live. But he added an interesting twist to these recordings. Most people who record games usually don't want anyone to let them know the outcome of the game until they watch it for themselves. But not this pastor. He said that he was not afraid of knowing the ending. He said that if he knew that his team won, he wasn't afraid to watch the challenges they faced throughout the game, even if it appeared they were going to lose. When he knew that his team had already won, his faith never wavered despite the challenges they encountered.

As we begin the season of Lent, there is no secret for you and I about who will win on Easter morning. No one is going to be called in to be a substitute for the great suffering and rejection that Jesus will face. Jesus alone must do what he was sent by his Father to do for you. Moses can't save you. Elijah can't help you. You cannot save yourself. That only leaves one place to turn. And Jesus has already done the work. There is no secret. The veil is lifted, salvation is yours. It is good for us to be here. Amen.