

LUKE 9:28-36
REFLECTED GLORY

For a moment, the curtain is pulled back. For a moment, Jesus' three best friends see something of His glory. On the top of the mountain, in this event we call the transfiguration, Jesus is changed and the glory, that for the rest of His life was hidden, is revealed. Peter, James, and John see His glory; they see that their friend has the glory of God in Him and God speaks about His Son, the chosen One. Moses and Elijah bear witness to Jesus: all the story that has gone before is leading up to this day and to the day when Jesus will complete the work God gave Him to do, His exodus, His departure, His death and resurrection. His friends see His glory and are amazed. Peter doesn't know what to say; "should we build some huts and stay here forever?" They kept it to themselves and only later told this story to others. The glory of God is made known; a great dazzling light!

Some 1500 years before, and for forty years, Moses was the leader of God's Old Testament people. He is the one to whom God gave the ten commandments, the one who had the responsibility of leading the people of God on their journey to the Promised Land. There were times when Moses clearly stood between God and His people, the mediator; he kept the peace when the people had wandered off and rebelled; he prayed for the people and he took their needs and concerns into God's presence. There was clearly some kind of special relationship between God and Moses: when Moses came out from God's presence, it was said that his face was radiant "*because he had spoken with Lord.*" (*Exodus 34:29*) Something of the glory of God had rubbed off on Moses and he was reflecting that glory to the people around him. Time and again into the presence of the Lord Moses would go and come out reflecting God, so much so that he would cover his face with a veil. The glory of God is seen in the face of Moses.

Jesus and Moses reflect God's glory. That's what these stories are all about. In different ways and for different reasons, both Jesus and Moses reflect God's glory, and in both cases there is something radiant about them. Jesus becomes dazzling white, bright as lightning; Moses' face radiates the light so much that he covers his face to hide something of that light. Both reflect God's glory for others to see; for both of them this reflection of glory makes an impact on other people, in Jesus' case on His friends, in Moses' case on the whole people. Again, in both cases, it is like God's seal of approval: for Jesus, "*This is my Son... listen to Him*" and for Moses God is saying to His people "*This is my chosen leader, listen to him.*" That was not always the case!

We live and move and breathe and God is with us; He is with us everywhere we go, every moment of day; we don't always see that reality. There are times when we do things that draw us deliberately to think about God: we read the Bible, we pray, we come to worship, times when we consider God and what He is like and what He has done for us and how He loves us. We sit in this building today and make the bold claim that God is here; we can't see Him but He has promised to be with us and we come in that hope. Our hope is that He will accept our worship as we sing, pray and listen; we hope that He will be with us as we sit together round the communion table. Being here and being in God's presence we hope will be good for us, will help us, encourage us, guide us and lead us, so that we go from here in a better frame of mind than when we came in. We need to practice that sense of God's presence, to make ourselves more aware that God is with us here.

God also promises to be with us everywhere we go. We live and move and breathe and God is with us. God is with us not only when we do things that practice our faith, but we live and move and breathe and God is with us. The danger of events like the transfiguration (if we can say that!) is that we may think that only for special occasions and only for special people is God present. But He is present with us everywhere we go; He is with us on the days when the sun shines and our hearts are bright; He is with us on the days when our hearts are filled with

gloom and despair. That is true whether we see it or not! What impact does “God with us” make on us? None? Does that sense help us when we’re weak? Does that sense guide us when we’re confused? Do we see that God is patient with us when we’re angry? Can we learn to trust Him when the way ahead is uncertain?

“We who...” (2 Corinthians 3:18) This is the impact on us of spending time with God! We will not have a radiant face like Moses; we will not have a dazzling face like Jesus; we will not wear a veil, but we reflect the Lord’s glory – how? By being changed people; by being changed to be like Jesus. Our glory is in becoming more and more like Jesus in the kind of people we are; that’s the impact on us of spending time with God in worship, in reading the Bible, in prayer; that’s the impact of God with us at other times too. We take to heart what we hear and read and we become more and more like Jesus as we go. We sense God’s love and patience and we are challenged to be loving and patient to others. The Spirit goes to work on us and takes what we hear and read and experience, and the Spirit helps us put it into practice and our lives are changed; we put off the old ways and put on the qualities and the character of Jesus. So we grow in our patience, love, and compassion, and in the sense of what is holy and right. This is the impact of “God with us”, no dazzling faces, no shining lights, but changed people.

What impact will this communion service make on us? “That was a nice service, minister”? Well, I hope that there is more to it than that. Will we leave knowing that we are loved so much: the bread and wine show us in this tangible way the lengths to which Jesus was prepared to go to because He loves us? Jesus who went to the cross knows the hard things that we face and loves us in midst of them. Will we leave knowing that we need to love others more because we are loved? Will we go out determined to be more like Jesus, more compassionate, more humble, more ready to share this story with others, or whatever it may be? Is that the kind of impact this communion service will make on us? That’s what happens when the Spirit is at work and when our hearts are open! *“Transformed into Jesus’s likeness with ever-increasing glory”*? No dazzling faces, no shining lights, but changed people. This is the glory of God in us. Pray that God may work in us like this!