

## eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, February 14, 2010

A Ministry of Christ the Redeemer Church, San Marcos, Texas

### Shiny faces

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The Lectionary Readings for the week:

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36, [37-43a]

Happy Valentine's Day on Sunday! I must admit, regretfully, that my memories of Valentine's Day are not all pleasant when I reflect on past events. Once again, the only thing that I can change is MY ATTITUDE and I am attempting to moderate and put into perspective many past experiences that are potentially "bad". Who do you love this Valentine's Day? Have you told them that you love them? Now would be a good time to voice your love while you still can. You are only responsible for telling them that you love them, they are responsible for either accepting it or rejecting it. Call them, write them or speak to them in person. EVERYONE needs to know that they are loved by someone. Nothing changes our world more than "I love you" genuinely spoken to someone who NEEDS to hear it. Roses are nice, cards are good but, the words, I LOVE YOU, have power beyond the sounds of our mouths. Words can cut down the "veil" and penetrate where scalpels cannot. The discussions for this week's scriptures are centered upon the theme of "veils". What does the "bridal veil" signify? What does the "veil" worn by Moses signify? (The stretched and bleached calfskin and skin from other animals, which looks like a "veil" are called "vellum". It was "vellum" upon which many of the earliest Bibles were written.) The bridal veil is lifted by the GROOM, AFTER the wedding ceremony to signify that the bride has consented for the groom to become "intimate" so that they can become ONE. Jesus lifts the "veil" of our hearts so that we can clearly "see" God and learn of God. We cannot KNOW or LOVE someone we do not SEE. Sure, we can have a "crush" on a movie idol or some other "person of our dreams" but that love is superficial and ethereal. To really love someone, you have to KNOW them and experience life with them. The theme of "veils" will lead us down many "rabbit trails". I will only start the journey for you. After that, you are on your own. Lift the veil, scurry down the rabbit trails and LEARN. I'll meet you back here after your mental adventures. As my hero, Roy Rogers once sang, "Happy

trails to you, until we meet again.”

### **Exodus 34:29-35**

***Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.***

Read the passage again. Moses could have stayed on the mountain top with God and avoided life among the people. God gave the Law to Moses so that he could share it with the people waiting at the piedmont. (“Piedmont” means the “foot of the mountain”) When you read this passage, what did you learn that you did not know previously? Did Moses actually “see God face to face” or did he see a “reflection of God”? Remember the Isaiah passage from last week when it was deadly to “see God”? Also note that God continued to speak instructions to Moses AFTER he had descended from Mount Sinai. So, were the Ten Commandments written on the tablets the “complete Law of Moses” OR should we include the verbal commandments that Moses conveyed to the people AFTER the Law had been “chiseled in stone”? What was the significance of the “glowing face” of Moses? Did the “veil” foreshadow the “Temple curtain” that separated the Holy of Holies from the central part of the Temple? Why was only Moses allowed to enter into a conversation directly with God? Was Moses the first “High Priest” of Israel or was Aaron? Was the “shine” a sunburn or something else? Was the “shine” merely a “reflection” of the presence of God? Why the “veil”? Did the veil signify that Moses was the “lawgiver” or the “reflection of God”? Once Moses had delivered the “law” to the people, he would veil his face. Was the “law” veiled or was only Moses “veiled”. We all know what a “veiled threat” means, don’t we? If it is “veiled”, how do we know it is a “threat”? Jesus came to earth as the “un-veiler” of God’s word. Jesus came as the “light of the world” WITHOUT a “veil”. The people said, “We have seen a GREAT LIGHT.” God’s grace was most clearly exemplified by the PERSON of Jesus as he tore away the veil that separated us from God so that we could know the Father. What we thought was the “veiled threat” of an angry God was revealed to be a very loving God and that is most appropriate on this Valentine’s Day devoted to LOVE.

### **Psalm 99 Page 728, BCP**

*Dominus regnavit= “The LORD is King”*

1

**The LORD is King;  
let the people tremble; \*  
he is enthroned upon the cherubim;  
let the earth shake.**

2

**The LORD is great in Zion; \*  
he is high above all peoples.**

3

**Let them confess his Name, which is great and awesome; \*  
he is the Holy One.**

4

**“O mighty King, lover of justice,  
you have established equity; \*  
you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.”**

5

**Proclaim the greatness of the LORD our God  
and fall down before his footstool; \*  
he is the Holy One.**

6

**Moses and Aaron among his priests,  
and Samuel among those who call upon his Name, \*  
they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.**

7

**He spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud; \*  
they kept his testimonies and the decree that he gave them.**

8

**O LORD our God, you answered them indeed; \*  
you were a God who forgave them,  
yet punished them for their evil deeds.**

9

**Proclaim the greatness of the LORD our God  
and worship him upon his holy hill; \*  
for the LORD our God is the Holy One.**

Did the psalmist consider both Moses and Aaron as High Priests? Historically, Aaron is considered the first “High Priest” and became the template for those who followed him. What is a “priest”? Since we are called a “royal priesthood” and later, “a priesthood of all believers”, it behooves us to define just what IS a “priest” if I’m supposed to “be one”. Get out your dictionary and go down the rabbit hole. Yes, you have to work it out for yourself. Do you agree with their “definition”? My definition of “priest” is someone who has ready access to the Father and assumes the responsibility of ministry under the authority of God

from whom all blessings flow. A “priest” is not always someone in clerical garb. A “priest” MAY be cloaked in clerical garb or not. The “priest” who does not SERVE is a priest in name and title only. The most important “aspect” of a “priest” is that they clearly understand WHO they are and WHOSE they are. Jesus tore the veil that separated us from our Father and opened up the DIRECT lines of communication between the Creator and the created. JESUS is my “high priest” and that has made all the difference in the world. Jesus tore the veil. Jesus paid it all.

## **2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2**

**Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. 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. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.**

**Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.**

Can we fully appreciate the deep meaning of this passage from Paul? Christ removed the “veil” that separated us from God by becoming “Immanuel”, God WITH us. In a sense, since Jesus revealed God to us in flesh, we are able to “see God” with the “veil” removed. Because Jesus offered his own body and “tore the veil” from our hearts and minds, we can “see” God and KNOW God and be “intimate” with God like Moses was intimate with God. Jesus tore the veil. Jesus paid the price and opened the door to an intimate relationship for all who claim him as High Priest, sovereign LORD. Jesus, NAME above all names. Jesus, our HIGH PRIEST who opens the door for us to “see” God through grace and to experience the LOVE of the Father as believing, obedient children of God. We fulfill our obligation and become “priests” when we serve our fellow humans. We serve God by serving others and “reflect” the LOVE of God because Jesus removed the veil from our faces and hearts. I can see clearly now, the veil is gone.

## **Luke 9:28-36, [37-43a]**

**About eight days after Peter had acknowledged Jesus as the Christ of God, Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two**

**men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"--not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.**

**[On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astounded at the greatness of God.]**

The passage speaks of the clothes of Jesus as "becoming dazzling white". Was it a new laundry detergent or an act of God? (joke) Notice that "while he was praying", i.e. TALKING TO HIS FATHER, his appearance visibly changed. The same option that was available to Jesus is available to you and me because Jesus "removed the veil" from our path to God? The on-lookers were driven to selfish motivations for self-aggrandizement and, instead of just savoring the moment alone with Jesus, they wanted to start BUILDING SOMETHING as a memorial? How many times have we "seen" God's presence and thought only of OURSELVES? This is why we are to be "in the moment" because the "moment" will never come again. In their sleepy state, they saw two men who they assumed were Elijah and Moses talking to Jesus. Why these two men and not others? Did their minds ASSUME that Jesus would converse with prophets and priests along with the Father? Having been in mountains, it is not unusual for a "cloud" to suddenly appear as the wind changes and meets an updraft. (Look up meteorology and learn of the earliest studies done in the foggy crags of Scotland.) But, this cloud was different because a "voice" came from the "cloud" which affirmed the "sonship" of Jesus and the "voice's" approval of the Son. It also told them to "LISTEN to HIM!" Why do you think this passage is included and why is the appearance of Jesus highlighted? Jesus prayed often, yet, his appearance did not always change. OR, did it change on other occasions and no one noticed? Light in a "foggy cloud" is reflected and refracted to make

things “glow”. What made this episode different? What was the “point” of His appearance’s changing? What does it mean when we say that someone’s face “lit up”? Was it an illusion or was it a “black light” phenomenon on white cloth? We will never know for certain and it does not matter. What matters is that the MEN, Peter, James and John were changed by the episode. What emotion would “dazzling white clothes” suddenly appearing along with a “voice” out of a cloud engender in us? Would it add to our faith in Jesus? Probably, maybe or “no way”? Since we were not there, we ASSUME that it increased the faith of the three witnesses because of what they did afterwards.

The next passage is parenthetical (in parentheses) and is a verbal “aside” as in a play. It’s one of those curious episodes that was inserted to add confirmation that the “change” on the mountain empowered Jesus to heal and to “cast out demons”. Where’s the logic in this? Here is a simple “logical” formula. IF  $A+B=C$ , in logic, it would go like this: If we are intimate with God AND (+) it changes us, THEN (=) we, too, should be able to perform “miracles”. What is a miracle? A miracle is something that defies “logic” or “chance” because of the intervention of a deity. Therefore, we CAN perform “miracles”. Here are a few examples: loving someone not “worthy” of our love, loving someone who does not “return” our love or loving disobedient and disrespectful children. Need more? How about overlooking the faults of others, returning wrath with kindness or believing in a God we cannot “prove”? “Miracles” happen every day in many places but, in our ennui and apathy, we don’t “recognize” a “miracle” when we “see one”. Jesus, remove the “veil” from our eyes and hearts so that we can “see” you all around us performing “miracles” in our lives. Help us to “reflect” the LIGHT of Jesus and LIFT the “veils” from our faith. “I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS WHO STENGTHENS ME.” Believe it, live it and be blessed for believing. The “veil” is lifted. To God be praise and glory for the great things God has done. Tell SOMEONE you LOVE them and MEAN it. Their face will probably “shine” because of seeing “God’s love in reflection”.