

Grace and peace are yours, dear friends, from God our Father
and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; Amen.

Today is a celebration, the church is adorned in white, and the season of Epiphany comes to a close as we approach a time of reflection. It is not a coincidence that a Sunday of this magnitude is followed by a season that calls us to accept our rightful place before God because of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Nothing is as powerful as the truth and God has revealed to us the truth of His love, commitment, and faithfulness (and His promises) in His only Son.

To offer a new image of why today is so special (when you have [again] heard the texts every year at this same time), consider the people who were seen with Jesus at the time of the transfiguration: Moses and Elijah. Of all the people in the history of the Hebrews, Israel, and the Jewish tradition, why these two? The great Kings – David, Solomon, and Saul are not on the mountain with Jesus. For this matter, even Abraham is not on the mount, whom God made His covenant with.

God calls us to ask why so we might learn His story, expand our understanding, and grow in grace to know the love He has for us and all people through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, all too often, the answers are not simply handed to us, but we seek with the guidance of God to come to experience the wisdom of His works.

My seminary experience offered a possible explanation to the individuals present on the mount of transfiguration; Moses was the greatest lawgiver and Elijah was the greatest prophet. This sounded plausible, but I was not satisfied or convinced. So I asked again for the sake of those around me. The answer that came to me was; read their stories. And so I did; again.

The Old Testament reading reveals that Moses face was shining... 'beaming', so that all who saw his face became afraid to the point where Moses concealed his face with a veil. Moses would remove the veil when he spoke to the people so they would see an image (reflection) of God's glory and know that God was the God of all. However, there is more to this story and I invite you to hear the words that immediately precede the Old Testament text:

¹⁷ The LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." ¹⁸ Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray." ¹⁹ And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." ²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live." ²¹ And the LORD continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; ²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; ²³ then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

You see, Moses ASKED to see God's face, but it could not be. "For no one shall see the face of God and live."

The LORD said to Moses, "Cut two tablets of stone like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets, which you broke. ² Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai and present yourself there to me, on the top of the mountain. ³ No one shall come up with you, and do not let anyone be seen throughout all the mountain; and do not let flocks or herds graze in front of that mountain." ⁴ So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the former ones; and

he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tablets of stone. ⁵ The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name, “The LORD.”^[a] ⁶ The LORD passed before him...

Moses sees the back of God and it changes his image, his face. So this is Moses we see on the mount of Transfiguration with Jesus. Now hear Elijah’s story.

He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. ⁹ At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁰ He answered, “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.”

¹¹ He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, *for the LORD is about to pass by.*” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

God passes in front of Elijah and in front of Moses; the only two recorded accounts where the Lord passed before them and their faces were protected; lest they die.

Today, the Gospel records the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ, His only Son and both Moses and Elijah are alive! Yes, they live and their faces are NOT covered; lest they could not be recognized. In fact, they are indeed looking upon the glory of Jesus Christ as fully divine and talking with Him face-to-face about the events that will come to pass in Jerusalem.

My dear friends...the very good news and truth to always keep in your heart today is that Christ has indeed shared His glory with Moses and Elijah, who are still living despite death. You too will share the glory of our Lord and Savior because we will also endure death, which is not the end, but the life that continues forever.

This is the final Sunday in Epiphany and we have seen the face of God in the lives of His precious people around us. We are servants in the Kingdom just like Moses and Elijah who have been called to faithful service so others might know the power, truth, hope, and joy in God’s Holy Word that will indeed remain forever!

We need not fear for the Light of Christ is come into the world; and the darkness has not overcome the Light. The Light of Christ will shine forever and you will shine forever because of Christ in your life! Your light will shine today for people to see that the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Community of the Holy Spirit is alive in this world. We will no longer die to see God face, but will beam and shine with light and life to provide our friends, neighbors, and visitors with the peace that passes all understanding to keep all our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen!