

Shining with God's Light, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. E7070218

Exodus 34:29-35 and Luke 9:28-43

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This morning we are going to discuss topic of light. Light travels faster than sound. That's why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

We heard two stories of men who encountered God on mountaintops. The stories are separated by two hundred fifty miles and fifteen hundred years, but there are similarities. Moses encountered God on Sinai in 1500 BCE. Jesus encountered God on Tabor in Galilee in 30 CE. The encounter with God changed each of them. They shined with bright light. We call Jesus' experience the Transfiguration.

This is "Transfiguration Sunday," the last Sunday of the season of Epiphany, the season we celebrate as the whole world coming to the light of Christ. It makes sense that we celebrate this season in the northern hemisphere as season of light. It is nice to notice that the days are getting longer and the sun is coming up earlier. This is a sign of hope. It signals warmer days ahead.

It's a drag for me to get up and jog early on winter mornings. I like to jog before 7:00 a.m. It's still dark out, and that makes it dangerous. I wear reflective strips on my ankles and safety vest with reflective strips on it. Those strips reflect headlights and streetlights to oncoming drivers.

Reflective strips make a good image as we deal with these scripture passages of transfiguration. Both Moses and Jesus shined after they had encountered God. Moses' face shined so brightly, that he had to put on a veil to cover his face. The people of Israel who saw him were frightened by his appearance. He had been transformed by his encounter with God.

When Jesus went up on Mt. Tabor with James, Peter and John, he encountered God and turned a brilliant white. When a person is close to God, they shine with God's presence. Have you known anyone like that? Someone who virtually shines because they're close to God? My mother-in-law is a woman of deep faith. She gets depressed once in a while, yes. She has suffered a lot in her lifetime, but she prays each day and that prayer, that closeness to God gives her strength, and she shines with a radiance to those who know her.

There is a potential in each of us. We can reflect the light of God's presence. Jesus said, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."¹ A young woman Sue and I know was facing quarreling among some friends of hers. It was discouraging, but we suggested to her that she knows what is right and good and kind, because of her exposure to God and the teachings of Jesus. We said, "Remember those things, and God will shine through you as you stand up for what you believe and for what you've learned." She has experienced the light of God, and she can let it shine to others, and that reflected light would eventually light her friends' ways. As Christians, we are called to reflect God's light from our faces and from our words and from our actions.

Think for a moment about your coming week. Are you anticipating a difficult encounter with a co-worker or a family member? Will you reflect God's light or will you simply add to the darkness?

Call upon God. Stay close to God, so you can reflect God's light in each encounter. By the same token, we can see the light of God in the faces, words, and actions of others.

¹Matthew 5:6

There once was a little boy who decided he wanted to go find God. He knew it would probably be a long trip to find God, so he decided to pack a lunch: four packs of Twinkies and two cans of root beer. He set out on his journey and went a few blocks until he came to a park. In this park on a bench, sat an old woman looking at the pigeons.

The little boy sat down beside her and he watched the pigeons too. After a while he grew hungry and so he pulled out some Twinkies. As he ate, he noticed the woman watching him, so he offered her a Twinkie. She gratefully accepted it and smiled at him.

There was something about her smile that fascinated the boy. He thought it was the most beautiful smile he had ever seen, and he wanted to see it again. So he brought out the cans of root beer, opened one and offered her the other one. Once again she smiled that beautiful smile.

For a long time the two sat on that park bench, eating Twinkies, drinking root beer, smiling at each other, and watching the pigeons, but neither said a word. Finally, the little boy realized that it was getting late and that it was time to go home. He started to leave, took a few steps, then turned back and gave the woman a big hug. Her smile was brighter than ever before.

When he arrived back home, his mother noticed that he was happy, yet somehow strangely quiet. "What did you do today?" she asked, trying to figure out what was going on.

"Oh, I had lunch in the park with God," he said. Before his mother could reply he added, "You know she has the most beautiful smile I have ever seen."

Meanwhile, the woman had left the park and returned to her home. Her son noticed something different about her. "What did you do today, Mom?" he asked.

"Oh, I ate Twinkies and drank root beer in the park with God," she said. And before her son could say anything, she added. "You know he is a lot younger than I had imagined."

Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.