

"Light Hearted"

Text: 2 Corinthians 4:1-10

May the light of the glorified Christ, once seen through the eyes of his chosen disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, fill your heart with wonder and excitement, for a similar transformation has even now begun in each one of us – a change that is visible to God, but invisible to man until the coming of our Lord Jesus on Judgment Day. Amen.

Dear Fellow Bondservants of that same Lord Jesus:

Since it is Transfiguration Sunday, we know that we stand at the threshold of the Lenten season. The Transfiguration of our Lord was the special strengthening that Jesus received from his Father before he began the final leg of his tortured journey to the cross. (The full account of this event is recorded in our Gospel Lesson in Luke 9:28-36.) We are mistaken if we imagine that Jesus – since he was true God as well as true man – did not have many of the same needs as a normal human being. This is simply not true. Perhaps the greatest difference between Jesus and us (aside from the fact that Jesus had no sinful "Old Adam" to tempt him from within) was the fact that Jesus tended to his spiritual needs *before* he found himself in spiritual crisis.

The Bible tells us, for example, how Jesus spent even an entire night in prayer. He himself studied the Old Testament from his childhood, and then used that Word that he had committed to memory to answer the temptations of Satan. Already at the age of 12 he was **"about his Father's business."** Jesus practiced what he preached when it came to **"seeking first the kingdom of God."**

The Transfiguration was a special strengthening for Jesus, but it was also intended for you and me. We know that this is true since Jesus invited witnesses. Jesus could just as well have left all of his men behind, but he didn't. Why? Because he wanted that glorified picture of himself to help sustain them in the long dark days that lay ahead. Through their witness, Jesus wanted this spectacular vision *to sustain you and me as well*. This glorified image would temper and offset the terrible, debilitating spectacle of his trial and crucifixion. It would serve to brighten the mood of Jesus' disciples and to help direct their focus toward the spectacular events that lay in their future. He wants it to do the same for each one of us.

All of which tells us that we would do well to meditate on this event from time to time. The light that shone from our Savior at the Transfiguration

was intended to make us *light hearted* – in the most positive sense of the term - and to fill us with comfort and eager expectation even in the midst of darkness and despair.

With these thoughts and this vision fresh in our minds, we turn to our text for this morning. There Paul takes this same image of the glorified Christ and uses it to thrill, encourage, and comfort Christians of all generations. That text is found in the Book of 2 Corinthians, the Fourth Chapter:

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 4:1-10** *Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ ¶ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ ¶ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.*

These are the verbally inspired words of our God. Allow no doubt or uncertainty to taint that fact. These words are true and right altogether. With unwavering confidence in these words from our God we pray, **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, ever hear about the farmer who was so preoccupied with the feeding of his livestock that he forgot to feed himself, and died? Me neither. None of the farmers I know tend to miss all that many meals.

Neither do the rest of us – unless we're talking about spiritual food. That we do, don't we? We over-feed our bodies and under-feed our souls. In fact we can deprive ourselves even when we're sitting in front

of a banquet of God's Word, even here at church. We do that when we're in the proximity of the Word, but fail to really take it in. We do it when we apply that Word only to others – both the threats of the law and the sweet consolation of the gospel.

Not so this morning. This morning the light of the Transfiguration shines on *you*, God's children. What is more, that light shine *in* you. This morning our text seeks to gladden your heart, to fill it with the light of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. This morning God in his Word seeks to make you *light hearted*.

We begin with an observation concerning the context of our text. Every once in awhile the text chosen for a particular Sunday is sandwiched between bits of Scripture that almost make the text itself pale in comparison (if, indeed, it were possible for any part of God's Word to "pale.") We arguably have just such an example this morning. What is more, the words just before and just after our text speak directly to the heart of the event we celebrate on this day, our Lord's Transfiguration.

Listen first to the magnificent words immediately preceding our text: **"Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."** What absolutely breathtaking words, given to us by inspiration of the Holy Spirit! Did you hear and understand just what these words are telling us? They are telling us that the same glory that made the face of Moses shine like the sun – after he had seen only the passing, reflected glory of our God – that same glory is changing each one of us into that same glorified radiance. What is more, this is the very same glory that we see shining from our Transfigured Lord Jesus.

Stop and take a moment to contemplate this sublime mystery, for what we read here is truly special. The Holy Spirit here says quite plainly that **"we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another."** Does this not shed an entirely different light on the Transfiguration of Jesus? It also explains, at least in part, why Jesus insisted on taking Peter, James, and John along as witnesses, and why he then caused a permanent record of that event to be recorded and preserved for all mankind. If we cannot, in contemplating such things, bring ourselves to feel the excitement of what is in store for us, then what

possibly could? When we look through the eyes of those three apostles as they witnessed that remarkable sight, we are now to understand that this same transformation is even now going on within us. Incredible.

With this as our introduction, the words of our text take on even greater depth and meaning. With this background, we then read **"Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ..."** The **"therefore"** refers back to the sublime insight we have just been given concerning what is even now taking place within us – the changing of our likeness to that of our glorified Lord Jesus. With such an understanding, how could we ever become discouraged, no matter what hardship life brings? The very thought is silly.

With these powerful, sublime truths thus established, Paul continues by explaining another way in which God himself wants us to be light hearted, which is to bring the light that has driven the darkness from our own hearts into the lives of others. **"But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God."** It is good and natural that we want to share with others this glorious transformation, and there is, we realize, only one thing on earth that can carry these sublime blessings to human hearts. It is the pure, holy light of the Word of our God. No one can be fooled or tricked into the Christian faith. No one can be persuaded or forced to come to faith. Faith comes by hearing the message of Jesus Christ. Why then would anyone want to alter or falsify that one means of grace, that one means of bringing a human being to faith and thereby beginning in that individual the glorious transformation that we now see in Jesus? Instead, as Paul here says, we lay that powerful word upon the heart by **"openly stating the truth"** and thereby **"commending ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God."**

What we here learn is divine wisdom of the most practical sort. If the clear and pure gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ fails to convince and convert the unbeliever, then what the unbeliever thereby rejects is not only the *best* means to win him over, it is the *only* means to win him over. Puppets and clowns and skits cannot and will not accomplish what the clear and simple Word does not. Clever arguments will not. Only the clear, pure gospel of Jesus Christ can, and that clear, simple gospel is this: God has forgiven your sins for Jesus' sake. He has taken your sins and punished Jesus for them. He has taken Jesus'

perfection and made it your own. In God's eyes, you should have no guilt because you have no sin. Jesus is, in every way, your Savior.

Paul goes on in our text to explain the spiritual phenomenon of unbelief. In short, he tells us that the problem does not lie with the Word of God. **"If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."** The practical application here ought to be obvious to us. No church body fails to grow – to *truly* grow – because they cling to and proclaim the pure, simple Word of God. This is a powerful truth as we struggle to bring Life eternal to unbelieving souls in an ever more silly and shallow society. The world longs to be entertained and distracted from reality, but that is simply not how souls are saved.

At this point perhaps a rather basic question occurs to us. If indeed we are being transformed into the same likeness that was reflected in Moses' countenance and shone forth from the visage of the Savior at his Transfiguration, then why do we look around and see no outward change in ourselves or our fellow Christians? Paul answers in Verse 7 of our text: **"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."** On the *inside* we continue to shine with ever brighter glory, every bit of our perversion and sin having been carried to the cross by our Lord. On the outside, however, we are beaten down and humiliated. Our text uses words like **"afflicted"** and **"perplexed," "persecuted"** and **"struck down."** That's all on the outside. Inside we are full of God's light, and we are winning.

Faith, you will recall, is never based on visible evidence. It is **"the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."** (Hebrews 11) So too the world will never see the glorious radiance that the angels can see. The world sees only our failures, our humble social status, our inconsequential standing. Having seen what his Son has done for you, God sees you much differently.

We said earlier that this text, as great as it is, is surrounded by words of truth that shine every bit as brightly. Look now at the words that follow our text, verses 16-18: **"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."**

Words like these stand by themselves as a pure and precious gift from our God, reminding us of the temporary nature of the here and now, and the eternal nature of that which is to follow – for every child of God. May God the Holy Spirit lighten your heart with these great truths, and fill you with joy and confidence as you look forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus, and the revelation of the glory that is even now visible to him *in each one of us* because of what he has worked *in us*. God be praised for granting such gifts to those who are so unworthy. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Exodus 34:29-35** When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. ³⁰ Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them. ³² Afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. ³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. ³⁴ Whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, ³⁵ the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

^{ESV} **Luke 9:28-36** Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. ³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³ And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"--not knowing what he said. ³⁴ As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" ³⁶ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

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Transfiguration Sunday – February 15, 2015

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 135 (Red Hymnal)

"'Tis Good Lord to Be Here"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Exodus 34:29-35) One of the most exciting elements of heaven will be existing in the presence of God. We cannot now even imagine what it will be like to witness the unveiled glory of our God, and to live forever in that glory – or what effect that experience will have upon us, both physically and spiritually. The Jews experienced but a small taste of that glory in the wilderness, and it filled them with awe.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 62 (See Bulletin Insert)

The New Testament Lesson: (Luke 9:28-36) This is the account of the event that we celebrate on this day – the transfiguration of our Lord. We can hardly fault Peter for his desire to remain there, in that place, with the glorified Savior of all mankind. How exciting to realize that one day we too will enjoy that same view of our glorified Lord in heaven. God preserve each of us until that day, and fill us with excitement and patience as we carry out the work he has given us to do.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn - 719 (Brown Hymnal)

"Jesus on the Mountain Peak"

The Sermon – Text: 2 Corinthians 4:1-10 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Light Hearted"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn - 761 (Brown Hymnal)

"In You Is Gladness"

The Offering

The Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn - 798 (Verses 1&4) (Brown Hymnal)

"God, We Praise You"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance - Sunday (30) Average (50)

This Week at St. Paul:

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| Today | -9:00 a.m. | – Sunday School and Bible Class |
| | -10:00 a.m. | – Worship Service |
| | -11:00 a.m. | – Fellowship and coffee time |
| Tuesday | -6:00 p.m. | – Confirmation Class |
| Wednesday | -7:00 p.m. | – Ash Wednesday Lenten Service |
| Next Sunday | -9:00 a.m. | – Sunday School and Bible Class |
| | -10:00 a.m. | – Worship Service with Holy Communion |
| | -11:15 a.m. | – Fellowship and coffee time |

CLC News – Pastor David Pfeiffer has returned the call to Redemption of Lynnwood, WA. That congregation has now called Pastor Mark Tiefel. Pastor Michael Gurath is considering the call to Calvary of Marquette, MI. Resurrection of Corpus Christi, TX has called Pastor Michael Roehl. Gethsemane School of Spokane, WA has called Teacher Jeff Karnitz.

Two Calls – As noted in the CLC News, Pastor Roehl now has two calls – one to St. Paul and one to Resurrection of Corpus Christi. Please pray that God's will would be done as Pastor Roehl prayerfully considers where the Lord would have him serve.

Meeting Announcement – Representatives of the CLC, the Wisconsin Synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod met officially in January, and have another meeting planned for April. The purpose of the meetings is to determine the doctrinal position of the various synods on a number of issues. While we certainly pray for fruitful meetings and a positive outcome, the fact that we are meeting should in no way be taken to imply that agreement now exists, or that reconciliation is imminent. The official announcement of these meetings is printed on this morning's bulletin insert. Please address any questions or concerns to the Pastor.

Myanmar Visitation – Pastors Todd Ohlmann and David Koenig are just completing a visitation to Myanmar. Read more about it in this month's Mission News Letter (entry table) or go to: <http://lutheranmissions.org/>