

Sermon 2/18/07

Psalms 99 Exodus 34:29-35 Luke 9:28-36 II Corinthians 3:12-18 Colossians 1:23

Shine Baby Shine Christ in us the Hope of Glory

A sweet spirit in this place. God's Spirit... in this place. That's what we're talking about this morning. The Presence of the living God - with us - by the Presence of the Spirit of God.

With Moses - on a mountaintop. With Jesus - on a mountain top. And - with us, in the lives of all those who believe in Jesus Christ, the son of God, Lord and Savior. God with us.

No veils for us. No hidden faces. No secret ceremonies. No special holy men or women who have some special un-shareable connection to God. Not now. Not here. Not for us. Not part of our faith. Not in Christ, Now with Christ.

But... once .. it seemed the best way to act. Protecting people from the heat, the fire, the revealing light of God's presence. How else to approach such an un-approachable force? Such an un-touchable power. Such an un-reachable reality - God. God who is all power and all light and all goodness and all might. The force and fire of life. How else to approach God - except with awe and fear.

I have this image of our last Confirmation Class Retreat last year. An image of the Bon Fire we built. And I can see the scene now. It helps me understand the Scriptures we've heard this morning - Moses veiled, and Jesus transfigured. I can see the confirmation scene.

A roaring bon fire and kids with Marsh Mellow "Roasting sticks ... backing, backing, backing toward the rearing roaring red hot flames.... And then - with Marsh Mellows nicely toasted, or burned black and sometimes ablaze .. The kids would come away from the fire with their faces almost as red as the flames. They got near the fire and it showed on their faces.

That's the image. And that's Moses- when he approached the Living God on a mountain top, the very light of life. And he came away with his face aglow. And the disciples saw it, too, with Jesus, on a mountain top, transfigured in brilliant light - And... yes.... We've seen it, too. Somewhere, sometime, sometimes, in fact - we've found ourselves, strangely, maybe wonderfully, in the presence of God. And there was a light in life we had not seen before.

And in some ways.... This day... every week ... this Sunday.... Is a day and a way we try to see that light again - anew - to be warmed by it, encouraged by it, led by it - into life - that will be better today and tomorrow than it was yesterday. Not because we hide the light - but because we let it shine through our lives.

Please pray with me.

Lord Jesus, we have caught a glimpse of your glory as the son of God... we've seen the light of your love. Now, Lord, down in the daily grind of life, open our eyes that we may see you where you are most of all. Help us to speak, in this hour, and to hear you, and in hearing, to obey your call to be witnesses to your love in our lives. Amen.

Remember the Bon Fire....

Moses on the mountain - close to God - to the force and fire of life. And his face aglow... but veiled - too much for his people to bear. And Jesus - on the mountain, transfigured in light - seen with Moses and Elijah - all of God's truth - in the law and the prophets and in Christ - made known.... But God's truth not veiled, not tucked away in a shrine on the mountain, but, in Paul's words - the light of God's truth should shine through us - Christ in us, the hope of glory. The fire in us.

Paul knew the score. He'd been in the game of life and of faith. He knew the blinding power of the light of God's truth in Jesus Christ. He had seen the light and his life had been changed. And Paul knew, as few others did, what you and I now know to be true. Shine Baby Shine. We see the light of God's great love in Jesus Christ.

We know the story of how Jesus let the light of God shine through his life, through his teaching and healing. And we know how he called disciples, calls them still, not to hide the light of life, but to shine it, and share it, to let it shine through their lives, yes our lives, into a world that needs all the light it can get.

Yes - the sermon title is the meaning of our faith - shine baby shine. It's Christ's call. It's our commission. To let the light of our faith shine. Where have we seen the light of the fire of God's love at work in the world? And where have we, when have we, how have we let the reflection of that light shine, let the light of our faith shine?

It can happen, it does happen, in the most unlikely of places, and some quite likely ones, too. In very surprising ways, and ways not so surprising at all. Sunrises or sunsets. Sometimes. Under a brilliant star spangled sky. At the birth of a child. In a moment of personal defeat - when you sense - never the less- if God is for you nothing that is against you really matters. At a graveside - when - for all your sense of loss and grief, you also sense, you feel, you know, you know, he or she is not there.. but risen, not dust and ashes, but a forever alive child of God ...

And when it happens, when ever, and where ever and how ever we come face to face with the God of our faith, then life gets interesting.

In the face of the light of truth about life - some people simply turn away - Hide from the light in hedonism.... eat, drink and be merry - We see it so clearly in our culture of consumption... Life will last as long as the money lasts, as long as health lasts.... And then - life just winds down and dies out. So dig in and get all the stuff out of life you can get. But - life doesn't just die out. We are part of something that doesn't die out at all.

Life is longer than the lifetimes we know.... And we know it.... And some, some have felt the fire of life up close and personal, they've felt a presence, a power, a warmth, they've been moved by some kindness, some remarkable blessing, some unexpected goodness, some act or gift of love has moved their hearts, and life has never been the same for them - for you? - again.

And at its best - every Sunday should be this kind of experience. Every time we meet here should be a time we know ourselves in the presence of the living God... close to the light and fire of life.

If our Sundays are n't raging bon fires here, still - there ought to be enough heat and light in our fellowship, and teaching and worship, that there will be a little glow on our faces when we leave this place... as the hymn said - because we've been in the presence of God.

True - These winter mornings, it maybe more the red cheeks of raw temperatures we see.... Then faces aglow with the reflection of God presence. But - truth be said - that's what our worship is ... or should be. Being in the presence of the living God.

It is our seeing a bit of God's truth up close and personal.... Its sensing the spirit - the holy fire and force of God - present... in the hymns, the scriptures, the prayers and preaching, the sacraments and the fellowship and spirit of this place.

Let's be honest - this is not the easiest thing for us to understand. We Presbyterians in particular. You don't see much fire in our faith or in our worship. We don't stomp our feet, we don't shout amen - sadly we hardly sing. We don't raise our hands or jump up and down - we don't laugh or cry much. Our preachers don't work up a sweat - though we may sweat over our sermons. And so - we have long been called - we Presbyterians - God's Frozen Chosen...

We are always just a bit, maybe even a way bit, too calm cool and collected. But - we've never given up on the fact of our faith - that it moves us, inspires us. Enlivens us, as much as we ever let ourselves be enlivened. And - If you can't see a glow on our faces, or sense the fire of our faith from the stomping of our feet or the shouting of our voices... You can know the power of God's presence in our lives by the way we live and give and serve and care. The passion of our faith, the fire, will show in the presence of God in the practices of our Christ-like living. Not up on the mountain - but down in the mess and hurry and worry of daily life.

That's Paul's instruction - Christ in us the hope of Glory. Not just faces aglow - but lives on fire with faithful obedience to Christ's call.

It was the mark more noted in our past when we were a larger part of a smaller whole. We Presbyterians - quietly steadily faithfully on fire - for example - leading the struggle for freedom in the middle ages from the legalistic layers of the Roman Catholic Church's power...

Presbyterians leading in the struggle for freedom of faith in America... And in the battle to end slavery - Claiming the dignity and worth of every person as God's persons. Fighting for free public education, and hospitals, and founding more colleges than almost any other Church - leading the encouragement of men and women to seek the truth of God in the wonder of God's creation.

And we live it still – here - exposed to the wonder of God's love in Christ, we care, we care for Christ and that his Spirit come more alive in us, in our Church and in our Community.

But the expression of faith in faithful lives and fruitful actions is grounded always in the experience of sensing and knowing the power of the presence of God in our lives. And it ought to happen - here.... Over and over again here.

Here we try to see and to hear the deepest truth in life. And that's no easy thing. It was part of the reason Moses veiled his face. He brought down from the mountain God's word - 10 simple commandments - that could and still can guide us to life on earth more nearly according to God's will.

And the light of God's truth was more than God's people could or wanted to bear. So Moses veiled his face - and the people struggled to obey a God they could not see or hear. Like kids backing up to the fire to roast their marsh mellows... they were working a bit in the dark.

And that may be why Peter and James and John wanted to build those huts on the Mountain, for Moses and Elijah and Jesus - to shield folk a bit from the power of the light and fire of faith - in the law and the prophets and in Jesus. They did not yet know they were in God's presence.

But Jesus came to make God's will and God's way of love known in new and very personal ways. Not veiled or hidden, but clear and near. In the very midst of human life - in the wonder of birth, and in the terror of death. And he came to call those who would receive him as their lord and savior to become, not veiled messengers, but light bearing disciples of his way and his truth and his love.

Here in worship and in study and in prayer we seek to draw closer to God. It is the special reason we celebrate the season of Lent... 40 days modeled after Jesus own time of searching to know God's will.

Are we willing to draw near to the presence of God - to - yes - get closer to the fire that is at the heart of our faith. Are we willing to listen more closely to Jesus the next seven weeks. To walk then even through the valley of the shadow of death where he takes us.

Are we willing to be light in a world dark with the sins of greed and lust and prejudice and pride and privilege and poverty? Are we willing to - yes - shine baby shine -

Blessed by the signs of God's presence in our lives, the amazing Grace of God's forgiving new life giving love for us in Christ, feeling Christ's spirit at work in us - we can become little Christs in the world... shining and showing and sharing God's word and God's love.

Paul said it all neatly in one verse in Colossians.... Christ in you the hope of glory. Paul said we act with great boldness, not like Moses who put a veil over his face.. Rather - all of us, with unveiled faces, are being transformed into the same image, the image of Christ ...

Christ came. Christ called. Christ lived and died and lives by the power of his spirit. So Christ still calls, calls people to see in him the glory of God at work in the world... and seeing it, and believing it - to let the light of his life, the fire of his faith, shine through us.

And it happens, it happens... When ever someone lets their little light of faith shine - it can brighten and change other lives. You know the some ones whose light of faith changed your life - the teacher, or parent, or preacher or friend, who helped you feel the warmth of God's presence in your life.

You know the time of prayers answered, of the strange wonder of a need you had met in some unexpected way. You know, you know, that life is not nearly so much in our hands, as it is in the hands, the ever lasting arms of God, who cares for you, and calls you, to let your faith show, to shine, and let others see Christ in you.

You do believe, you do. Just let it show. Let it shine - in all that you do. Yes - Christ in you - the hope of Glory. Amen.

David W. Robertson, Pastor