

Unveiled

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Epiphany / Transfiguration; Covenant in the Old Testament; Covenant in the New Testament; Jesus / 2 Kings 2:1–12; Exodus 34:29–35; Psalm 50:1–6; 2 Corinthians 3:12–13; 2 Corinthians 3:14–18; 2 Corinthians 4:1–6; Mark 9:2–9

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Transfigured King. Amen.

12 years ago today was an amazing day! 12 years ago today I was standing at the altar at Pilgrim Lutheran Church. It was a Saturday and I can tell you I was nervous all morning. I paced around the little vicarage house which was known as the Little White House. I was nervous because it was the day I was going to say, “I do.” It was the day I was going to say, “I will with the help of God.” I was there at the Altar waiting, waiting to see my bride. For she was veiled from me. We did the traditional thing and did not see each other until the church doors were opened and she was led down the aisle by her father and grandfather. It’s a day I will never forget. I will never forget that time that I laid my eyes on her for the first time that day. When I laid my eyes on her, she was unveiled to me.

Today, is not just my 12th Anniversary, it’s also our celebration of the Transfiguration of Our Lord and we remember how three of Jesus’ disciples were given a glimpse of Christ’s unveiled glory. Therefore, in today’s Epistle, St. Paul will help us understand what truly was taking place at this transfiguration. Essentially, the veiled version was giving way to the unveiled version. Moses and Elijah—The Torah and the Prophets—are veiled, they are the old covenant. Christ is the real thing. Christ is unveiled for us to see in all glory.

The Old Covenant, the veiled Moses and Elijah find fulfillment in Christ, the New Covenant, the real thing.

The Old Testament Torah and the Prophets point to Jesus Christ. They never were an end to themselves, but merely served Israel as a teacher and guardian until Christ came. Well, that time has come, so here, on the Mount of Transfiguration, whom do we see with Jesus in his unveiled glory but Moses and Elijah?—there to point us to Jesus’ “exodus,” his death for the life of the world.

Leading up to our text, Paul has been comparing the old covenant with the new. He concludes that the old is being brought to an end, for the old covenant cannot save, but leads only to death.

To be sure, the old covenant came with glory also, but it was a “reflected” glory. Paul compares the fading glory of the old covenant to Moses coming down from Mt. Sinai:

English Standard Version Chapter 3

the Israelites could not gaze at Moses’ face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end,

So here in our , we see that

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Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

That’s teaching us that the Law cannot save us. It can only show us our sin and our need for something more permanent. Our Torah-keeping will never reach the perfection God demands. In fact, in [Galatians 3](#), Paul reminds us that the Law of Moses had merely a teaching function. The Law was a guardian or teacher instructing Israel on how sins would be truly atoned. With each animal that was sacrificed, Israel was being taught that without shedding of blood, there could be no atonement. Each year, on the Day of Atonement, when the sins of Israel were transferred to the innocent “scapegoat,” Israel would be learning how God would redeem the world, by transforming our sins to another. With every Passover celebration, Israel would be taught to look to the “Lamb of God,” who would once and for all take away the sins of the world.

That was the old covenant—a glorious truth, but veiled, not fully revealed, and intended to fade away.

Sadly, to this day, many have never seen beyond that old covenant; a veil essentially remains. Only when the Holy Spirit reveals the truth to us—only as he “calls, gathers, enlightens”—is the veil removed. Otherwise, the Scriptures remain a closed book, and we miss seeing the one behind the veil: Christ...on every page!

Our Gospel, the transfiguration event, follows some other events in which Christ revealed who he is. [Mark 8](#) relates the miraculous feeding of the 4000 and the healing of the blind man. We also hear Jesus’ questions to the disciples: “Who do people say that I am?” Their answers: John the Baptist, Elijah (who we see today), or one of the other prophets. In other words, people were equating Jesus with other *Old Covenant* figures. Peter, however was given to recognize Jesus as the Christ. This leads Jesus to predict his crucifixion and death, for that is truly what it means to be the Christ!

But then you know what happened? Peter was unhappy at that word of Jesus’ death. HE would prevent it. Even after his absolutely true confession of Jesus, the veil remains! Still

more to be learned. And so, Jesus takes Peter, with James and John, up the mountain for a lesson.

Paul, and the Corinthians to whom he writes, have true hope in the Gospel. God had, indeed, chosen them in Christ as he's chosen us—and in time, through His Means of Grace, He's worked it out in our lives. This makes St. Paul bold to speak of salvation in Christ Jesus, for he wishes to be an instrument by which the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed. The Lord desires the same for us!

And yet, to this day, a veil remains for many. Because of our sinful condition, we came into the world turned from God. St. Paul had previously written to these Corinthians that:

English Standard Version Chapter 2

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

In fact, it's this veil that kept many in Israel from receiving Jesus. St. John reminds us in his Gospel:

English Standard Version Chapter 1

11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

All because of what Peter would have prevented. Christ did travel on to Jerusalem for the purpose of being “glorified”—glorified by being lifted up on the cross. And as Christ was lifted up, the old covenant was being fulfilled, and the veil was being lifted. As Jesus draws his dying breath and commends himself into the hands of the heavenly Father, as Jesus cries out from the cross, “It is finished,” the “Veil” is not only being lifted, but it is also being torn in two from top to bottom!

Some, then, *are* converted (brought to repentance)—always solely by the grace of God. The veil is taken away. We can then see Jesus for who he truly is—our Savior from sin, death, and the power of the Law. In fact, we, by God's grace, with “unveiled faces,” also begin to reflect the glory of Christ as the Gospel has its way with us. The Law could never produce such a change, because we cannot keep it perfectly. The Gospel can, because it's all about Christ and what he accomplishes for us on the cross!

God continues his transforming (transfiguring) work in us as we continue to hear the Gospel and as we make frequent use of the Sacraments—His Means of Grace. It is never complete in our lifetime...but only brought to completion at our “exodus.”

This is why St. Paul can carry out his apostolic ministry and not lose heart—because it isn't about Paul, it isn't about Moses or Elijah, and it isn't about me as your pastor or about any of you and it never has been. It's only about Jesus - Crucified and Risen from the dead. Paul is free and so are you! Free to use the opportunities God gives to you to Confess Christ, knowing that the results are up to God alone.

St. Paul doesn't have to resort to "disgraceful, underhanded ways". He doesn't have to resort to deception, and he doesn't have to sugarcoat the Word of God to make it more palatable. There were certainly those in St. Paul's day who were doing so, just as there are in ours.

We simply confess Christ and where God gives opportunity. If the message is received in grateful hearts, to God be the glory! If it's rejected, and at times it will be, it's only because

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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.

We don't lose heart, because the results isn't our responsibility. That always rests solely with God!

We baptized believers, those for whom the Holy Spirit has lifted the veil, can be bold confessors of the new covenant, Christ - "the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

In the name of Jesus. Amen.