

Sunday 3rd March 2019
Sunday next before Lent
Quinquagesima
Green



Collect

Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 English Standard Version (ESV)

Ministers of the New Covenant

3¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like 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. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one^[a] turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord^[b] 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,^[c] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.^[d] For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

The Light of the Gospel

4¹ Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God,^[e] we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice^[f] 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.

Footnotes: a. Greek *he*. b. or *this Lord*. c. or *reflecting the glory of the Lord*. d. Greek *from glory to glory*. e. Greek *having this ministry as we have received mercy*. f. Greek *to walk in*.

COMMENT: Behind this passage stands the OT lesson from Exodus 34. Paul refers directly to the time Moses covered his shining face with a veil in Exodus 34:29-34. Paul saw in this story another interpretation of how the divine presence and truth are authoritatively expressed. Throughout chapters 2 and 3 Paul has been expounding the validity of his apostleship. His confidence in doing so, he claims, is

dependent on the superiority of the new covenant he and other apostles preach. He makes a rather negative reference to the shekinah reflected in Moses' face (verse 7) which is now fading because the old covenant is being set aside. That old covenant simply condemned the Israelites, it did not save them, he claims. Now, however, the new covenant justifies believers; it establishes a right relationship with God which the old covenant failed to do. He goes so far as to liken the veil over Moses' shining face to the veil he claims lies over the minds of the people of Israel because they refuse to believe in Christ. One of the reasons Paul was so fiercely opposed by his fellow Jews was their belief that he had abandoned the sacred tradition that Israel alone was God's chosen people. In fact, Paul was trying to say that the old covenant was not wrong, but that it was incomplete. It was but one step along the way to the full revelation of God's nature and God's saving love as Jesus Christ had made this known. Paul goes on to declare that the relationship of Christians in Corinth with God and God's authority in their lives comes not from the commandments of Moses, but from the risen Christ who is now present with the church through the gift of the Spirit. So the church is able to speak truthfully and authoritatively for God as it proclaims the gospel. What is more, now that they (and by inference, we also) behold the presence of God fully revealed in Jesus Christ and the Spirit, we are being transformed into his likeness. This transformation is not effected by us, but by the Spirit of Jesus Christ himself.

Luke 9:28-36 [37-43A] English Standard Version

The Transfiguration

9²⁸ 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.

Jesus Heals a Boy with an Unclean Spirit

[³⁷ On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him.³⁸ And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child.³⁹ And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him.⁴⁰ And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but

they could not.”⁴¹ Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.”⁴² While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.⁴³ And all were astonished at the majesty of God.]

COMMENT: The emphasis throughout the episode is on the dazzling attestation of Jesus’ identity. We are first given the description of his transformed appearance (verse 29). The change in the appearance of his face is reminiscent of Moses’ face becoming radiant upon experiencing the presence of God in Exodus 34:29-35. But the description of the change in Jesus’ clothes distinguishes him from Moses significantly: Jesus’ clothes become “dazzling white,” words Luke uses to describe the appearance of angelic figures in Luke 24:4 and Acts 1:10. Jesus’ transformed appearance is thus not merely because he is experiencing God’s glory (like Moses) but rather because he is the very source of divine glory. The point is made explicit when the three disciples are said to see Jesus’ glory in verse 32. The appearance of Moses and Elijah in verse 30 adds to the attestation of Jesus’ identity. The two are commonly interpreted as embodying “the Law and the Prophets,” which is no doubt a significant point. The risen Jesus himself will later assert that Moses and the prophets point toward him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-46). Luke tells us in our scene that Moses and Elijah “were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (verse 31), surely meant to anticipate Jesus’ teaching that he is the ultimate fulfilment of scripture. Yet this is not the only significance of Moses and Elijah. That Jesus was the “prophet like Moses” predicted by Moses himself is emphasized throughout Luke and Acts (seen most clearly in Acts 3:22-23, interpreting Deuteronomy 18:15). And Elijah’s appearance was associated with the coming of the day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5). Their appearance thus points to Jesus fulfilling specific prophecies associated with them as well as the more general notion of Jesus as the fulfilment of all of scripture. The source of this passage is the Gospel of Mark (Mark 9:2-13) indicating it is an early tradition.

Psalm 99 *Dominus regnavit* **Grail Psalter**

℟️ You are holy, O Lord our God.

¹ The Lord is king; the peoples tremble.
He is throned on the cherubim; the earth quakes.

² The Lord is great in Zion. **℟️**

He is supreme over all the peoples.

³ Let them praise his name, so terrible and great,
he is holy, ⁴ full of power. **℟️**

You are a king who loves what is right;
you have established equity, justice and right;
you have established them in Jacob. **℟️**

⁵ Exalt the Lord our God;
bow down before Zion, his footstool.
He the Lord is holy.

℟ You are holy, O Lord our God.

⁶ Among his priests were Aaron and Moses,
among those who invoked his name was Samuel.
They invoked the Lord and he answered. **℟**

⁷ To them he spoke in the pillar of cloud.
They did his will; they kept the law,
which he, the Lord, had given. **℟**

⁸ O Lord our God, you answered them.
For them you were a God who forgives;
yet you punished all their offenses. **℟**

⁹ Exalt the Lord our God;
bow down before his holy mountain
for the Lord our God is holy. **℟**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: This is the last of a series of psalms used in the temple ritual, which some scholars believe celebrated the enthronement of God as Israel's ruler at the New Year festival. It focuses on God's justice and praises God for providential and merciful guidance throughout Israel's history from the time of Moses onward.

Post Communion

Holy God, we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ: may we who are partakers at his table reflect his life in word and deed, that all the world may know his power to change and save. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary, fill you with his grace to trust his promises and obey his will; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**