

## **Sermon followed by Service** - March 2, 2025 - 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

I'm a whiner. I hear voices in my head: "I'm getting old. I can't see like I used to. I can't hear like I used to. I can't remember like I used to. I can't move like I used to. I can't do like I used to. I go for a walk and I feel it. I move and I feel twinges. I move wood for the wood stove and I hurt for days. I'm not what I used to be.

Truth be told - what I used to be was never all that great. So what did I do? What do we all do when we see our faults and failures? We put on veils. We veil ourselves, we cover ourselves with false truths. We see ourselves smarter than we really are. We see ourselves stronger than we really are. We see ourselves better than we really are. And if that doesn't work, then what? We might try this - "I'm stupid, I'm weak, I'm no good, I can't do anything right." Either way, we look at ourselves covered with our false truths; we look at our world through our false truths; we even look at God through false truths.

Why? What do those veils, those masks, those false truths do for us? They make us bold and free, bold and free to think and feel the way we want to think and feel. Our false truths give us a glory, a self-made, self-defined glory. Let me put it another way. We put on our veils, our masks, our false truths - why? - to satisfy our need to feel good about ourselves.

Our lesson today has better for us - better truth, better boldness, better freedom, better glory, no, a better and better glory.

Our lesson takes us to the mountains, glorious mountains. First, Paul takes us to the glory of Mount Sinai where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. After 40 days on the top of Mount Sinai with the LORD, when Moses came down the mountain and told his people what God had said up on the mountain, and not just then, but also when God would meet with Moses in the Tent of Meeting and Moses would tell his people what God had said there, Moses' face would shine with the glory of God. The glory of God was so bright on Moses' face the people couldn't look at his face; they had to close their eyes, look away, cover their eyes; they had to do something because the glory of God was too bright to look at. Then, when Moses was done relaying God's message, Moses would veil his face, cover his face. Why? Not so people could look at him, but so the people wouldn't see the glory on his face fade away. You see, the shining glory of God on Moses' face would fade away until the next time Moses would meet with God. Moses didn't want his people distracted by the fading, focused on the fading instead of focused on the message. Perhaps more importantly, Moses didn't want the people focused on the fading and thinking God's message would fade away. So Moses wore a veil.

The truth is - the glory of God's message at Mount Sinai was meant to fade away. Why? Because God's plan was that his Mount Sinai message, his old covenant message, would be eclipsed, out-shone, out-shined by the glory of his new covenant message. God's old covenant message, carved into the stone tablets at Mount Sinai was simple and impossible: "If you do what I command, I will bless you." Because it was impossible, God's old covenant ministry was a ministry of judgment,

crushing condemnation - “You’re not good enough, and you can never make yourself good enough.”

“You’re not good enough, and you can never make yourself good enough.” Sounds harsh and hopeless, doesn’t it? And it was meant to ... to drive us to realize - we need God, not just a just and fair God, but we need a gracious and merciful God. And God showed himself to be gracious and merciful. In his old covenant, God gave clues to his grace and mercy - daily sacrifices to pay for sin, weekly Sabbath Days to offer rest, an every year Yom Kippur Day of Atonement, an every year Passover to celebrate - “we have a God who saves.” But even with those clues to God’s grace and mercy, what was the old covenant? - a message and ministry of harsh and hopeless condemnation - “You’re not good enough, and you can never make yourself good enough.”

So what did God’s people do? Moses wasn’t the only one in our lesson wearing a veil. God’s people put on a veil, they put on a false truth. When God spoke his truth: “You’re not good enough; you can never make yourself good enough,” instead of answering “God, have mercy on me a sinner,” they covered their hearts with their own truth, their false truth: “Yes, I can; yes, I am; I’m fine just the way I am.” When God’s true prophets announced God’s judgment on the people’s sin, the people’s false prophets answered back with their own truth, their false truth: “God loves you just the way you are.” We hear that same thing today. God calls us to repent, and what happens? Out come the veils, the eye patches, and ear plugs - “I see no evil; I hear no

evil.” God calls us to repent, and our veiled world waves its false truth: “God made me this way. God loves me just the way I am.”

“God made me this way. God loves me just the way I am.” The devil loves that kind of talk. There’s just enough God-talk there, just enough truth there to make those false truths sound godly and true. If I’m talking about my eye color, fine. If I’m talking about my complete lack of coordination, perhaps. But if “God made me this way; God loves me just the way I am” is my answer to God’s call to repent, that’s neither true nor godly. Because God loves me he wants better for me than to continue a life of sin, because God loves me he calls me to repent, because God loves me he wants better for me than to be just the way I am. Because the way I am ... the way God made me when I was conceived; the way God made me when I was born; the way God made me ... I am not a finished product. God is at work today and will be at work the rest of my life making me, re-making me, re-creating me, making me more and more to be like him until he takes me to heaven. Then and only then, will I be right to say: “God made me this way, and God loves me just the way I am.”

Until then, what? We have something better to wear and to wave around than veils of false truths. Through Word and Sacrament, the Holy Spirit strips off Satan’s veil of false truths and covers us and connects us with Jesus and his Truth. In baptism, you have the Holy Spirit making you alive and new with God. In the Lord’s Supper, you have Jesus giving you himself, giving you the blood of the new covenant: “I will be your God and you will be my people. I will forgive your sin and remember your transgressions no longer.”

Now, instead of slaving to meet demands written in stone, you have the Spirit re-wiring you with the heart and mind of God. Now, instead of living in fear of judgment and condemnation, you have the righteousness and forgiveness of God - you are forgiven and right by God! Now, instead of living a life of commands and demands, instead of living a life of judgment and condemnation, instead of living a life of guilt and fear, we get to live a life of freedom - with Christ and his Spirit transforming us to be more and more, to live more and more, to think more and more, to love more and more like Jesus - not because we have a club over our heads, but because we have Jesus and his Spirit in our hearts.

With Jesus, we don't have to hide behind false truths. With Jesus, we don't have to put a veil over our hearts and hide from the life God has for us. With Jesus, we don't have to cover ourselves with some fake and fading glory. With Jesus and his Spirit, we get to live boldly. We get to live a life of ever increasing glory - more and more like Jesus. Amen.

March 1 & 2, 2025

## THE SERVICE

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** we are surrounded by a culture that seeks the glory of “self” (either individually or collectively) over the glory of God. (We have some of that same culture inbred in us.) We live in a world (with some of that world inside ourselves) that thinks we get to impose our thinking on God as what God should think.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...**we see the better glory of God in Jesus, a glory that not only wows us, but by the Spirit, gets to shine in and through us!

### OPENING HYMN

*“Beautiful Savior”*

**Hymn 522**

Beautiful Savior, King of creation, Son of God and Son of Man!  
Truly I’d love thee, truly I’d serve thee, light of my soul, my joy, my crown.

Fair are the meadows, fair are the woodlands,  
robed in flow’rs of blooming spring;  
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer, he makes our sorr’wing spirit sing.

Fair is the sunshine, fair is the moonlight,  
bright the sparkling stars on high;  
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer than all the angels in the sky.

Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations, Son of God and Son of Man!  
Glory and honor, praise, adoration now and forevermore be thine!

### INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the  $\mathcal{T}$ Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

**CW 189**

Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.  
**Blessed are they whose sin the Lord does not count against them.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

**Almighty and merciful Father,**  
we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep.  
**We have followed what we have devised and desired in our hearts.**  
**We have offended you and sinned against your holy law.**  
**We have done those things that we should not have done,**  
and we have not done those things that we should have done.  
**Have mercy on us, Lord!**  
**Spare us, forgive us, and restore us,**  
**according to your promises in Christ Jesus.**

*Silence for meditation and reflection*

God, our merciful Father, has forgiven all our sins. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Redeemer and Savior. Jesus paid the penalty for our guilt by his death on the cross and freed us from death by his resurrection from the grave. We have peace with God now and forever. **Amen.**

**LORD, HAVE MERCY - SUNG**

**CW 190**

In peace let us pray to the Lord.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,  
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let  
us pray to the Lord.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.  
**Amen.**

## GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST - SUNG

CW 191

*Refrain:* Glory to God in the highest, glory to God, and peace to his people on earth, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen. *Refrain*

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, in the glorious transfiguration of your only-begotten Son, you confirmed the mysteries of the faith by the testimony of Moses and Elijah, and in the voice that came from the bright cloud, you foreshadowed our adoption as your sons. In your mercy, make us co-heirs of glory with Jesus our King, and bring us at last to heaven; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## FIRST READING

*Exodus 34:29–35*

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai.



When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM OF THE DAY**

*Psalm 2A*

*Refrain*



You are my Son; this day have I be - got - ten you.

*Tone*



Why do the / nations rage?

Why do the peoples / plot in vain?

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers assemble a- / gainst the LORD

and against his A- / noointed One. *Refrain*

He who sits in / heaven laughs;

the Lord / scoffs at them.

Then he addresses them in his anger and frightens them with his fury, / saying,

"I have set my King on Zion, my / holy hill." *Refrain*

I will declare the / LORD's decree:

He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have be- / gotten you."

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son  
and to the / Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the be- / ginning,  
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. Refrain**

**SECOND READING**

*2 Corinthians 3:7–18*

Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN**

*"I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light"*

**Hymn 713 vs. 1-2**

I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus.

God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus.

*Refrain*

In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike.  
The Lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

I want to see the brightness of God. I want to look at Jesus.  
Clear Sun of Righteousness, shine on my path,  
and show me the way to the Father. *Refrain*

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia. A cloud covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" Alleluia.

**GOSPEL**

*Luke 9:28–36*

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

*"Jesus, Take Us to the Mountain"*

Hymn 390

Jesus, take us to the mountain where, with Peter, James, and John,  
we are dazzled by your glory, light as blinding as the sun.  
There prepare us for the night by the vision of that sight.

What do you want us to see there that your close companions saw?  
Your divinity revealed there fills us with the selfsame awe.  
Clothed in flesh like ours you go, matched to meet our deadliest foe.

What do you want us to hear there that your dear disciples heard?  
Once again the voice from heaven says of the incarnate Word:  
"Listen, listen, ev'ryone; this is my beloved Son!"

Take us to that other mountain where we see you glorified,  
where you shouted, "It is finished!" where for all the world you died.  
Hear the stunned centurion: "Truly this was God's own Son!"

We who have beheld your glory, risen and ascended Lord,  
cannot help but tell the story, all that we have seen and heard,  
say with Peter, James, and John: "You are God's beloved Son!"

SERMON

*2 Corinthians 3:7-18*

NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**OFFERING**

*If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.*



**CHOIR**

***"His Eye Is On the Sparrow"**  
Civilla D. Martin & Charles H. Gabriel*

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

Eternal God and Father, we pray for the Church around the world. Always keep your people faithful to you. Lift the veil from our eyes and guide us to see Christ in the Word and sacraments. During all the distractions of life, help us set our sights on Jesus. Keep us safe and protect us from the tricks and treachery of the devil. Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray that you move us to have compassion on those stumbling in the darkness and empower us to proclaim Christ to all who have no faith.

Give us courage to be unashamed of the light you have given us and to carry it willingly with joy wherever we go and whatever we do. Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Hear our prayers for Christians everywhere who are being persecuted because of the light they bear. Give them the strength to endure the hardships they are undergoing and give them the peace and hope of Christ as they battle on. [We pray especially for...*here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray that Christ reveals his gracious presence to all who suffer. We pray especially for our families and those in our circle of friends who are sick or in need and for everyone whose needs we hold in our hearts. Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Be with us, Lord, as we think about the coming days of Lent. Let your law convince us that we indeed deserve your punishment and would be lost forever without Christ. As our hearts fill with sorrow and regret, lift us up to see the Savior's sacrifice on the cross and give us hearts full of faith in him. Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

*Silent prayer*

Lord God, hear the prayers we offer and let your grace and mercy flow to us and all for whom we pray. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, the Light of the world. **Amen.**

#### **LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

## THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)  
(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

### PREFACE - SUNG

CW 199

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lived among us as a human being and revealed his glory as your only Son, full of grace and truth. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

### HOLY, HOLY, HOLY - SUNG

CW 200

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full, full of your glory. Hosanna, hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna, hosanna in the highest. Hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

### WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my *T*body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **Amen.**

**JESUS, LAMB OF GOD - SUNG**

**CW 202**

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us, grant us peace.

**DISTRIBUTION HYMN**

*“Down from the Mount of Glory”*

**Hymn 388**

Down from the mount of glory came Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Recall the wondrous story, rich gem in sacred Word.

Again your faith will view him in double glory here;

the greater homage due him will in your life appear.

Transfigured, Christ, the lowly, stood radiant in the light,

light found in Godhead solely, for human eyes too bright.

Then came a voice from heaven, confirmed what here we see;

the words “my Son” were given to seal his deity.

Yet mark this glory hidden! See him the mount descend

and, by the Father bidden, his willing footsteps bend

to seek humiliation in deepest depths of woe,

to suffer degradation no mind can probe or know.

Strange how his journey ended! In love that is his fame

our Lord again ascended a mount—the hill of shame.

Upon the cross he proffered himself to agony;

his holy soul he offered to set the guilty free.



Then hail the double glory of Jesus Christ, our Lord,  
and let the wondrous story full peace and joy afford!  
The holy mount acclaims him the majesty divine;  
Mount Calvary proclaims him Redeemer—yours and mine.

#### CLOSING PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
**his mercy endures forever.**

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
**we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving-kindness you sent your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that through him you have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament. We also pray that you will not forsake us but will rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit so that we willingly serve you day after day; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

#### CLOSING HYMN

*"How Good, Lord, to Be Here"*

**Hymn 389**

How good, Lord, to be here! Your glory fills the night;  
your face and garments, like the sun, shine with unborrowed light.

How good, Lord, to be here your beauty to behold,  
where Moses and Elijah stand, your messengers of old.

Fulfiller of the past, and hope of things to be,  
we hail your body glorified and our redemption see.

Before we taste of death, we see your kingdom come;  
we long to hold the vision bright and make this hill our home.

But you, Lord, do not stay. With mercy resolute  
you leave this glorious hill to die— our perfect substitute.

How good, Lord, to be here! Yet we may not remain;  
but since you bid us leave the mount, come with us to the plain.

## FAREWELL TO ALLELUIA

Brothers and sisters in Christ, when we next gather for worship, it will be Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. On that day we will begin our solemn journey to the Savior's cross. While the joy of faith remains undiminished throughout the year, our rejoicing during Lent is muted and quiet. For centuries, therefore, Christian churches have omitted their most jubilant songs during this season, including the word *alleluia*, which means, "praise the Lord."

Now for a time we say farewell to *alleluia*. We do this to prepare ourselves for the quieter days of Lent. The *alleluias* will return on Easter dawn as we gather to shout our praise to the risen Lord.

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