

**Sermon: 2019/03/03 (Last Sunday after Epiphany, Year C - "The Transfiguration"), Exodus 34:29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; & Luke 9:28-43a\_BTR**

[Invite children to the front.]

Have you ever seen my watch?

I wear it every, single day.

And I have done for almost *twenty* years!

It has *never* let me down;

I've only had to change the battery once - and that was last year!

It's so reliable because it's Swiss-made.

And one of my favorite features is this:

(Come closer to see.)

*Look!* - where the big numbers should be on the clock-face are bright yellowy-green oblongs.

(You've probably seen these before.)

Well, when you expose them to a very bright, warm light source - like a flashlight or a lamp, they absorb some of that energy.

*Then*, when it is dark, the oblongs glow!

(So, that you can tell the time even at night.)

*Isn't that cool?!*

But why am I telling you this?

Because, today, in (the Book of) *Exodus*, we hear that Moses - after helping God rescue the Jewish people from slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt - climbs the Mountain of Sinai to speak to God, who appeared to him like a wonderful ball of light sheathed in clouds.

This was the light of God's holiness - his wonderfulness - and it almost blinded Moses.

Well, he spent forty days in God's company,

and when he came down (again) from the mountain he had been changed - now *his* face glowed with some of the light from God:

Moses had absorbed and was now reflecting the beauty of God.

And his face was so bright that Moses had to cover it with a 'veil' to protect the eyes of the people he led (because sunglasses hadn't been invented yet).

Let's pray: Father God, ..., in Jesus' name, amen.

[Ask children to leave.]

The Feast of the Transfiguration - an important commemorative day in the Church - is normally celebrated in late summer.

But today - in Year "C" - 2019 - when we focus on Luke's gospel - the traditional Bible readings that we would hear on that occasion are brought forward so that they occupy a more properly historical/chronological place within the narrative; which is a turning point:

Essentially, you see, *Luke* splits Jesus' ministry between just two places - the province of Galilee in the north and then Jerusalem in the south.

And everything significant that takes place in the gospel - the miracles, the sermons, etc. - occur in one of those two places.

And chapter 9 is the "bridge."

It is like that moment when you've packed your bags and the car is warming up for a long vacation, and you stop to check that the air is off (in the house), that the backdoor is locked, and that the cat has some water in its bowl.

You're ready to go, but you look back just once more to make sure that everything is "ship-shape."

For Christ, He does this *spiritually* on a very tall hill called, "Tabor."

Like the 'Lonely Mountain' in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, it stands apart from any "chain" or range.

And it is at the very southernmost point of the region in which our Savior had had His childhood, with a great view toward the capital city and its dangers.

What an appropriate place to "take stock;" for some preparatory meditation.

And then this miraculous, unexpected episode happens:

The innermost group of Apostles - Peter, James and John - see Jesus - and the whole mountaintop around them - glowing with a strange, 'dazzling white' light and enveloped in cloud - and in the midst of this Spielberg-een *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* moment, they see, speaking with Him, calmly as if friends, like it is coffee hour after church, Moses and Elijah, both of whom are supposed to be dead(!) - the two very *greatest* heroes of the Judaic tradition.

Now, notice the two elements of 'glory' mentioned - 'light' and 'cloud'.

These are evidence of Jesus' divinity because they are signs straight from the Old Testament story I was telling the kids about - from Moses' conversation with God when he went to fetch the Ten Commandments.

The similarity is unmistakable; undeniable.

But one small detail is *drastically* different:

On Sinai, Moses was unable to witness God *directly*:

The Lord had 'wrapped' Himself in great *clouds* of dense, dark smoke: [Ex.

19:9,18].

Like a thick fog.

The day seemed light night.

And Moses could hardly see a thing!

But that was the point.

God was protecting Moses, His servant, from death.

God, you see, was is sooo holy; sooo perfect; sooo magnificent that an ordinary human person - like you and me - couldn't get too close.

Even the rocks of the mountain where God came down to rest were destroyed, we're told; they *melted*, and became like glass - 'like a pavement of sapphire.'

(That's a quote, by the way: Ex. 24:10])

Consequently, Moses spoke to God from a distance, whilst hiding in a cleft; and even then God turned away so that it was His "back" facing in Moses' direction:

[Ex. 33:22].

Because the *astounding, overwhelming* reality of the Creator was terrifying to the point of lethal.

And so we find that everywhere in the Old Testament, people tremble and cower: for God - and we forget this - is *fearsomely* pure.

He is the '*lion* of Judah'. [See: Hos. 5:14 & Rev. 5:5]

Not the teddy-bear;

not the gerbil.

He is a matchless *warrior* that tamed prehistoric, monstrous Sea-creatures: [Ps. 74:14].

How, then, can I hope - as a sinner - as a thing made from dust - as a Christian and yet as Jesus' promises - to enjoy His company in Heaven?

And forever?

It is as if God is a radioactive isotope, right?

I'm going to need some sort of special HazMat suit if I'm going to go anywhere near the heart of the reactor - near the source of all that is good and just and right.

And Jesus - He *is* that HazMat suit:

Saint Paul tells us in the Epistles that we must 'clothe yourselves with [a] new self' - the "new self" that comes with being a justified, redeemed disciple: Eph. 4:24.

'[P]ut on the Lord Jesus Christ', we're told [in *Romans*, 13:14].

By putting our trust in Him - by having faith that He "closes the gap;" "bridges the unbridgeable."

Moses did.

And so, on Tabor, he can stare his Maker in the very face.

What a powerful, emotional thing that must have been - after all those difficulties in the Wilderness; forty *long*, hard years of wandering;

of dealing with disputes and bickering and challenges to his leadership.  
And to die without ever actually entering or enjoying Canaan - the land that would be Israel

Now, *many* centuries later, it is *all* made worthwhile:  
he's finally made it (to the promised land).  
You know, I'm surprised that we don't hear that Moses broke down in tears!  
I would've done: the relief; *the sheer ecstasy*.  
And how powerful for that little group of mesmerized onlookers.  
No wonder they are left dumbfounded; speechless: [Lk. 9:36b].

And we too will one day share an intimate moment like this.  
When, like the servants with the talents in *Matthew's* gospel, we will stand before the Master.  
I wonder what we will hear, see and feel on that day...  
Will it be a sense of relief like Moses?

Let's take a moment to reflect.