Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

March 3, 2019

Old Testament Reading; Exodus 34: 29-35

Responsive Reading; Psalm 99

Epistle Reading; 2 Corinthians 3:12 – 4: 2

Gospel Reading; Luke 9: 28-36

Sermon Title: TAKE OFF THE VEIL

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Do not be afraid to let God’s love shine through your face.

For those of you who may be reading this message on our website and have not had the opportunity to hear the scriptures, let me recap.

The Old Testament lesson is the account of Moses coming down off Mt Sinai with the Ten Commandments, and his face shone from his experience talking with the Lord. This frightened his brother and the priests so Moses would cover his face with a veil when talking to the Israelites, and then take off the veil when he went back to speaking with God.

In the Epistle lesson Paul refers to this Old Testament passage and goes on to say, “we use great boldness of speech, unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away [only] in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.”

The gospel lesson is the transfiguration of Christ in which when on the mountain with Peter, James and John Jesus prayed and, “As he prayed the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.”

It seems that when people or even Jesus get close to God it shows.

I was made aware of this when in that period of my life I combined being a minister and a truck driver. I was made aware of it but I did not accept it till just recently.

I always wore a clerical collar when I drove truck to let other drivers and warehouse workers know they could speak to me about my faith. At that time the company I drove for had another ordained pastor driving for them. This woman was a very large African American. She drove truck in ankle length dresses that were totally suitable for the pulpit.

When I explained why I wore the collar she told me, “You do not need a collar. You are a man of God and anyone that sees you will know that.” Wow!

Well I just thought she had something against the collar so I did not bother to pay any attention to it.

A few months later I was picking up bailed cardboard at a Waste Management in Connecticut. The scale master there asked me if I knew this woman. He then told me of an incident in which he and some of his fellow employees had expressed doubt in God and miracles to her and she responded. She called them each by name, without the benefit of name tags, and told them each of problems they were going through then. One with marital trouble, one with financial problems and another who was worried sick that his child was into drugs. She gave each one encouragement and advice and her personal phone number. From that point on they were believers and regular callers.

I continued to wear the collar and was not sure that it had not had some influence in my getting to hear the story. My bad!

To totally understate this whole thing, the Old Testament seems to portray God as this fearsome judge and creator, while the New Testament acknowledges that he is supreme but also that he is a loving, forgiving God who is not only not above having a personal relationship with each and every one of us, he actively seeks that closeness.

In the Old Testament it was common belief that if one saw the face of God they would die. In the New Testament Jesus WAS the face of God. The apostle Philip said to Jesus, “Show us the Father and we will be satisfied.” To which Jesus replied, “Philip, how long have you been with me and still you do not know that if you have seen me you have seen the Father. I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”

Not only you would not die if you saw the face of Jesus, you were made part of him.

Today we can’t walk the roads of Galilee with Jesus but through his word and our faith in that word we too can see his face.

In this church you have three pastors that have had very different, but very real, walks with Jesus. You have one that was released from a lifetime of bondage and can now love Jesus without shame or guilt. Another has pursued not only a personal but also an academic relationship with our savior. He is the one that can explain Greek and Hebrew and the sincere but often flawed study of Theologians throughout history. Then there is me.

I hope that my walk is like many of yours. I love Jesus and I know that Jesus loves me. I walk with him and I talk with him all the time. I know that he will always love me but I would really like him to be proud of me. I am not seeking salvation, he has already given me that, I would just like him to be able to say of me, “Have you considered my friend Jim? He has tried to keep my commandments and love others as I have loved him.”

If you share that walk that I have with our Lord then you do not need a preacher up here pointing a finger at you and saying that you should do this or not do that. You just need to let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and glorify your Father that is in Heaven. Don’t cover your face with a veil. Let everyone that sees you know that you are a man or a woman of God.

Evangelize 24/7 and if you absolutely have to, use words.

Hallelujah and Amen