

Text: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.

Transfiguration.

March 3, 2019.

God's love is yours in the face of Jesus. Amen.

How do you describe light to a blind person? Well, you can't really. If someone has never seen light, how can you describe it? Wouldn't it be a lot easier, and better, if it were possible, to perform a surgery and give that person sight. Then that person could see the light and experience the light way better than you trying to describe the light. Or picture a magician. He has a rabbit in his hat. I know that's cliché. But you can picture that. He could describe the rabbit. He can tell you about the rabbit. But the best and easiest thing is when he pulls the rabbit out. Now you can see the rabbit. Now the rabbit isn't hidden anymore. Now the oohs and aahs come over the crowd.

God's Word proclaims the good news about Jesus in much the same way. Try to describe the comfort you have from Christ to someone who doesn't have that comfort and it's like trying to describe light to a blind person. Try to describe your joy in Jesus, the strength in sickness, the deep desire you have to die and be with Jesus and people will look at you funny. But when Jesus shines on a heart, it all becomes clear. When Jesus gives the light of faith, the oohs and aahs begin. You see, you don't first see Jesus and then you believe. First, you believe in Jesus and then you see his glory. First God takes away your blindness, brings you to faith, then you see. Then you see his glory in suffering. Then you see his good news is about eternal life, not just a better life now. First you believe, then you see. First you believe, then you see.

We are kind of jumping into the middle of something here with this part of the Bible. People had been saying about Paul, the man whom God used to write these words, "He's a deceiver. He preaches for profit. He's more concerned about himself than about Jesus. If he's so great, why do so few people believe." Can you see how these words answer those objections? Yes! There may be few people who believe. Still today. Our community has 10,000 people. How many people are in church on a typical weekend? But no, we aren't deceiving people. The church doesn't just want your money. There's a deeper problem, one that all of us have, naturally.

The gospel is veiled. The good news about Jesus is covered up. Why cover up good news? Because that's what our natural sinfulness does. The problem is not with God. The problem is with us. It's not that the good news doesn't exist. It's that we can't naturally see it, because we are naturally sinful. We are naturally blind. We are naturally God's enemies. We are naturally angry at God and he has plenty of reason to be angry at us. Do I need to go on and quote some more Bible verses or do we get the picture? I suppose we will never get the picture, on our own, because of the natural blindness of our sin. But here's the great irony, that good news, that Gospel that is veiled, is the very good news that lifts the veil. There's some magic. There's the greatest miracle. There is some good news. Jesus lived a perfect life in your place. That good news pulls back the veil. Jesus died on the cross to take away your sins. When Jesus died, a thick veil was split in two. The separation of sin is gone. There is no more separation between God and people. Only Christ takes away the veil. Jesus rose from the covering of the grave. The dirt of the ground won't cover you. Christ will resurrect you, from your grave, for perfect life, eternal life, with him. Wow! There's good news. Wow! That's some powerful good news. I mean, wow, who doesn't want to travel the county, travel the world, go next door to spread that good news? Have you really stopped to think what life would be like without this good news? And let's be clear,

when it's called, "our" Gospel, it's not like the modern term, "our" truth. Our Gospel just means, "The Gospel we have been preaching, as opposed to the false message others are preaching." What would life be like without this gospel, this good news, "Jesus lived. Jesus died. Jesus rose."? A life without the good news is a perishing life. It's hell. Think about that. Before we knew the good news, we were going to hell. Before God brought us to faith in Jesus, we were perishing. I wish there were a nicer way to say this, but there really isn't. People without Jesus are going to hell. Can you really make it any worse for that person who is perishing? Can not having the entire Bible memorized make someone dying more, more dead? No! We have the good news that makes alive. We have the good news that gives eternal life.

I know it's tough. The "god" of this age, that's talking about the devil, he has so much power in this age. The "god" of this age, has blinded the minds of unbelievers. A blind person can't see the sun, not because the sun doesn't exist, but because he can't see it. The fault isn't with the sun, but with the person's blindness. So the fault of unbelief isn't with God. The fault is with the person. And this isn't just an ocular blindness, affecting only the eyes. It's a mental blindness, affecting the mind. The whole way of thinking that the devil brings is different. And so changing. I listen to talk shows where people debate about God and you hear people say, "There can't be a god. That's just common sense." What? What's common sense to one person is not common sense to another. What's common sense in one country is not common sense in another. What's common sense in one time, is being on the wrong side of history in another time. The common sense about race has changed in the last 50 years. As a Christian, very much for the better. The common sense about what marriage is has changed in the last 50 years. As a Christian, very much for the worse. You see, we can't expect to start talking about race or marriage or a bunch of other things without first talking about Jesus. We can't expect someone, not even myself, to see things the way God sees them, until God brings my heart to first see Jesus.

First the light of Jesus' love has to shine on a heart. First the good news that Jesus lived and died and rose has to lodge in a heart and dwell there. First God's glory has to go into a heart before the eyes are opened, the mind changes, the thinking is transformed. First you believe, then you see. First God gives faith, then you see as God sees. First you believe, then you see.

First we preach Jesus Christ. Second we preach Jesus Christ. Third we preach Jesus Christ. Fourth and fifth and sixth and seventh and forever and always we preach Jesus Christ as Lord. I know preach is a naughty word today. "Don't preach at me!" And "spare me the sermon," are common phrases, at least for me. But preaching at that time was an elevated office. The preacher or herald occupied a special place in the king's court. His message had authority. It was to be heard and heeded. It was spoken publicly and in the open. The message of the preacher was seen as the message of the king himself. What a privilege! This message that you hear today, that you hear every week from this preacher or Vicar preacher or Pastor Ewings preacher is the message from the king. It's not our message. We are not preaching ourselves. We are preaching Jesus Christ. This message is to be heard and heeded because it's the message from Jesus Christ, about Jesus Christ, that leads you to faith in Jesus Christ and gives you eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Remember the objections that Paul was answering, "This guy is preaching for profit." Paul said, "No!" Read the rest of 2 Corinthians. Paul didn't get money. He got whipped and beaten and shipwrecked and flogged and stoned for preaching. Paul even offered to go to hell, if that meant the people to whom he preached would go to heaven! Wow! Who would do that? Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ went to hell so you

will go to heaven.

I really don't care if you remember me. I really do care if you remember Jesus Christ. Thirty years from now when Resurrection is celebrating its 50th anniversary, maybe a few people will have a vague recollection of that guy who was around before Pastor Ewings. But I pray everyone will say, "Our preachers didn't matter much. Jesus mattered a whole lot more."

You see, I'm not your boss. Never was. I'm your servant. And yes, the word servant was used even for slaves. Servant implies obedience and devotion. It means I'm not the important person. You are the important people. Resurrection isn't about the Pastor, it's about the people. We don't preach ourselves. We preach Jesus Christ. We serve you for the sake of Jesus.

Looking back it's amazing how God created this church out of nothing. God shined his light in the hearts of a few people. God's love gave those people the desire to preach Jesus Christ to lost souls in Verona. And out of nothing, to the glory of God and to his glory only, God created a church, a group of people who believed in Jesus. And out of nothing and to God's glory and his glory only God continued to create faith out of nothing in the hearts of more people. Then some of those people went to Mt. Horeb and another preacher started preaching Jesus Christ. And God created something out of nothing again. Then God worked in the heart of believers in Verona and Monroe and Monticello and New Glarus to work together and from what seemed like almost nothing, God created something, all to his glory.

You know, it really shouldn't surprise us when God creates something out of nothing. God's been doing that for a while. He made light come out of darkness. He created a world out of nothing. He created seas and plants and trees and fish, out of nothing. And he created faith in our hearts, out of nothing. Actually, we might say less than nothing. Because our hearts weren't just blank slates, our hearts were naturally opposed to God, naturally against him. And yet in those hearts, God shined the light of faith. In those minds, God worked magic. In those eyes, God gave sight. Sight to believe, then to see. Sight to see Jesus. Sight to believe in Jesus. Sight to see the glory of God in the face of Christ. Seeing Christ. There's real seeing. Thinking the way Christ thinks. That's real thinking. Feeling the way Christ feels. That's real feeling. First you believe, then you see. Amen!

Let the light that shines in the darkness continue shining in your hearts. Amen.