

“Blinded by the light” A sermon by Lee Ireland  
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church  
February 11, 2018 Transfiguration Sunday  
2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Let us pray: **Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.**

Paul the apostle, the writer of this letter to the church at Corinth, shares his concern that the message of the Gospel, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is somehow being distorted so that it's not the story of Christ that Paul knows and proclaims. He states that **the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.** You could say that Paul was concerned that the true story of Christ was not being seen because of worldly distractions – bright, shiny lights that distract from the true light, Christ.

In Paul's day, it looked like that was the case. There were worldly forces that worked to keep the Gospel veiled, the word Paul used to describe the situation. Paul was warning the Corinthian church to be on guard, to watch out, for distractions. Paul didn't want any of the Corinthian church members to be among those who are perishing.

It's interesting in our day and time to read the word veiled. Paul writes that the Gospel is veiled from those who need to hear it. I do remember that some brides wore a veil over their face on their wedding day. Did any of you wear a veil over your face that special day? The groom would stand next to the bride and after the vows were exchanged, the couple kissed each other. The veil was lifted for the kiss.

For the use of the word veil in today's scripture, Paul is probably referring to the veil Moses wore to cover his shining face after he spoke with God. His face glowed which frightened the people. So, Moses put a veil over his face to hide the radiance.

You may remember that the Bible says when Jesus died the curtain or veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple was torn in two. That unveiling allowed all to know God's presence and to have direct access to God.

In today's reading from Mark where the transfiguration of Christ is described, we see Christ's radiance. The disciples that experienced that radiance saw Jesus' divinity in a new way. Their eyes were opened to a new reality.

Paul talks about the radiance of Christ, the light that shines in the darkness. In the last verse of today's reading Paul writes that we see the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The story of Jesus reveals God to us. It is only because of Jesus that we can know God better.

Paul is concerned that 'the god of this world' has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. This is truly a concern today. There are today, many worldly things - let's call them bright, shiny, distracting lights - that keep people from seeing the true light of Christ.

One evening last year Linda and I were in Joshua Tree National Park. I couldn't wait until dark to just stare at the stars. When it finally got dark, the celestial display was amazing. I could actually see the galaxy we live in, the Milky Way. I could have stared at the stars for a long time. But the sky slowly began to brighten. The stars I had admired were fading. I could no longer see the Milky Way. What happened? No, it wasn't the sunrise. We didn't stay up all night. The light was coming from the full

moon that was rising. The light of the moon was obscuring those beautiful stars in God's creation. The view of the night stars wasn't much better than it was in LA where light pollution obscures the beauty of the night sky.

I use this example to illustrate my belief that we are suffering from too much light that keeps us from seeing the Glory of God. You could say that the city lights are so bright, so seductive, that we are blinded to the light of Christ's and God's glory.

The Age of Enlightenment or the Age of Reason is the name of the period in human history when evidence and data took over and were for many more pervasive than faith. People today are more interested in how God and Jesus performed the miracles written about in the Bible than why the miracles were performed. Raising human reason to such a lofty perch is nothing short of idolatry. Faith doesn't discount reason and facts. There's nothing wrong with data and facts, unless they replace faith, for faith often transcends reason. Reason and facts become a distracting light for many people.

In college, I remember writing a philosophy paper about Kierkegaard, the Danish 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher. In my opinion the paper was excellent of course, but the professor pointed out to me I had missed Kierkegaard's point that to have faith you must take a leap of faith. We can't know everything through reason and facts. I learned from that paper that to have faith, I had to, at times, move beyond reason to belief, to take that leap of faith.

Another bright, shiny, distracting light in our world is our society's fascination with self-improvement. Look online at Amazon or go into any book store and you'll find books that tell you all you need to do is read this book and you will become a better person. It would appear the road to happiness involves reading books on the right diet, how to get the perfect mate and how to have a well-organized closet.

Unfortunately, it's difficult to see the glory of God when you are in the spotlight.

I'm sure you can think of more bright, shiny, distracting lights.

All is not lost. Paul tells us how to escape the bright, shiny, distracting lights of modern life. Verse 5 that I read, **For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.** When we move ourselves out of the spotlight, the intensity of today's lights, we are better able to see the glory of God. Moving ourselves out of that spotlight also allows us to remember who serves whom. We serve God. As Paul says we are slaves for Jesus' sake.

One writer says this about God. "God is not some cosmic butler, some omniscient Jeeves sent to cater to our every need. No, God is the one true God, the creator who said, 'Let light shine out of the darkness.' The creator of light is the source of glory found in the person of Jesus Christ." (*Feasting on the Word*, year b, v. 1, p.450)

What do we do as Christ-followers about all these bright, shiny, distracting lights in our world today? We need to make sure that we ourselves are seeing the glory of God in our lives and are not seduced by the bright lights of our world. When we know God through Jesus Christ, the light of the gospel that Paul speaks of is obvious.

We need to share God's light with those who are blinded by the bright, shiny, distracting lights of this world, whose eyes are still veiled as Paul says. How do we do that? We let God's light shine through us. We do that best by living, loving and serving as Jesus did. May God bless your every effort.