

"THE GLORIFIED LOOK"

TEXT: And Jesus was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light.
(Matthew: 17: 2.)

Again we have entered the solemn season of Lent during which we shall review with the eyes of faith the meaning of our Lord's life and death. In our Wednesday evening meditations, we shall keep our eyes reverently fixed on the face of Jesus as He goes patiently and steadfastly to Calvary and the cross.

There are few subjects in all the world and in all history more fascinating to contemplate than the face of Jesus. Yet the simple fact is that we have no authentic information regarding the physical features of that beloved face.

The Bible is silent about the features of our Lord.

Early history adds nothing.....

Jesus never had his picture taken.....

Jesus never sat for a portrait painting....

And it seems that none of those who knew him best ever wrote a description of his appearance.....

NEVERTHELESS, the face of Jesus has been more frequently and more variedly painted than any other subject. And there's a familiarity about all the paintings which makes it possible for us to immediately identify the Lord.

We're all familiar with DaVinci's "The Last Supper"

Many of us are well acquainted with Hofman's "Christ in Gethsemane" and "Christ in the Temple"....

We have grown to love Sallman's "Head of Christ" and Holman Hunt's "Light of the World"....

BUT THE FACT REMAINS that in spite of the genius and the inspiration of all the great artists, we do not know what Jesus really looked like. No one can say with certainty whether He was tall or short, whether his skin was light or dark, whether his eyes were brown or blue, and whether his hair was curly or straight. TO LOOK AT A PICTURE OF JESUS IS TO LOOK THROUGH THE EYES OF THE ARTIST WHO PAINTED IT.

I think it is apparent to anyone who has observed the different painting of Jesus, that all the artists have put something of themselves and something of their own environment into the picture. For instance, the Christ of the brilliant Italian painters usually resembles an Italian. The Christ of the Scandinavians usually has light hair and blue eyes. The Christ of the Ethiopians as seen in the painting, "The Babe of Bethlehem" is pictured as a negro. This brings us to the wonderful truth that Jesus belongs to all humanity. That his appeal is universal. No two artists paint an identical Christ. And no two Christians, as they think of Jesus, see exactly the same face.

HOW DO YOU PICTURE JESUS? HOW DO YOU VISUALIZE HIM IN YOUR OWN MIND? We would differ widely as to the general features of that face. But we might be in common agreement when it comes to the expression of those features.....

His were eyes that must have blazed with anger at injustice...
that must have glistened with sympathy at the misfortune of others.
that must have beamed with joy at the return of a lost sheep..
that must have sparkled with confidence when others were frightened...

His were lips that denounced the hypocrisy of the Pharisees....
that spoke out against the greed of the money changers..

His were ears that listened to the endless tales of human misery...

His was a face with a glorified look...
a compassionate look...
an understanding look...
a steadfast look...
an agonized look...
a sorrowful look..
a triumphant look...

Some of these expressions we shall attempt to capture ~~for you~~ in our Lenten services as we look up at the face of our Lord.

The people who had the privilege of looking into the face of Jesus as he preached on the mountain side, and as he counseled with the perplexed, often saw no more than the face of a good man. Usually his divine majesty and glory were hidden under the cloak of his humble humanity. On one occasion his divinity burst through to his disciples. It came at an unexpected moment. Jesus had for the very first time stated clearly and emphatically to his disciples the rather startling information that he was going south to Jerusalem, to probably suffer at the hands of the leaders of the nation, and to eventually be crucified. For several days the disciples had been puzzling over this strange and shocking announcement which was so contrary to all their expectations. And it's at this point that the story of our text sets in....

It was probably at the decline of another day that Jesus took with him away from the crowds and the heat of Galilee to the solitude of a mountain, the three disciples, Peter, James, and his brother John. The idea was to find a quiet place where they could commune with God. We don't know for sure how long Jesus had been praying in the peaceful darkness of the night, gaining strength for the struggle ahead. It was close to dawn when, we're told, the night was filled with splendor. According to the Gospel account, Jesus, AS HE PRAYED WAS PROFOUNDLY TRANSFIGURED. The Gospel writers seem to be at a loss for words to describe what took place. Matthew reports in his account:

"And he was transfigured before them,
and his face shone like the sun, and
his garments became white as light....."

Here, at this very moment, on the mountain top, the three disciples of Jesus glimpsed the glory...the divinity...the majesty of Jesus.....

This isn't all that happened on the mountain top. It's reported that a heavenly delegation appeared....Moses, and Elijah were seen talking to Jesus. And Peter, in the excitement of the moment, suggested that three cabins be built in that blessed place so that they might remain there.

And at that moment we're told that a bright cloud overshadowed them, and the disciples fell on their knees in reverence and amazement and a voice spoke out of the cloud saying, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON. HEAR HIM!"

The disciples were moved by what happened and did not rise until Jesus came and touched them. And with that the little company descended from the mountain and Jesus, strengthened by the experience moved on toward Jerusalem and to the events which he felt would occur.

WHAT DOES ALL
THIS MEAN?

As we tonight look back on what happened on the mount of Transfiguration, we should not concern ourselves with the specific details of this great event. We should look to this event for the great truth which it revealed. And that is that Jesus was the Son of God.

The glorified look which the disciples saw on his face in this instance, speaks to us of his closeness to God. God was more real and near to him than his mother Mary, his brothers and sisters, or the carpenters shop where he worked, or the hills around Nazareth where he often went to watch the sun go down. God was more real to him than anything else.

And Jesus was more like God than any other person who ever walked this earth. From start to finish, God, the love of God, and the will of God were the chief facts of his life. It's little wonder then that as the days went by the conviction dawned and grew upon those early disciples that in seeing Jesus they were seeing more than just a man. They were glimpsing God himself. Imagine how they must have felt as this realization came to them. How their eyes must have stared at him. How their minds must have stretched to take in the wonderful truths he taught. How awestruck they must have been when they first heard him say, "I and the Father are one!"

Here in this carpenter's son from Nazareth was the mighty God,

walking up and down the hot and dusty roads of Palestine by their side. This is what God was like.....

loving.....

tender....

strong....

merciful.....

caring for people.....

suffering and dying with them!

And can you imagine how Peter must have gasped when he answered the question of Jesus, "Who do men say that I am".....and Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God"....

And whatever else the words meant to Peter, or to the millions who have repeated them since that day, they surely carried the conviction that Jesus was as much like God in spirit and in nature as a son can possibly be like his father. That - as one of our modern scholars has said, as much of God was in Jesus as can possibly ever be in a human being.

If people had not found God in him, and continued to find God through him, he would probably have been forgotten long ago. He would be just another prophet, another teacher, another good man. But the Christian faith has seen more in him. It has been unable to imagine anyone better, more noble, or more Godlike than Jesus. And so it has dared to say, "THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD." And this is the very heart of our faith, at its highest and its best.

As we move through another Lenten season, let us stand often and long and in deep devotion before the glorified look on the face of Jesus. It reflects to us his closeness to God.....

It reminds us that He is the Son of God.....

The awful drama of the crucifixion is about to begin. The event which took place on the Mount of transfiguration is a most fitting opening scene. The Mountain of the Transfiguration and Calvary are closely related.

Shined with glory ON the ...

As we think of the face that was kissed by the traitor, Judas.... the face that was STREAKED with perspiration by the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the face that was SPIT upon by the leaders of the nations, the face that was SLAPPED BY the officer of the court, and SMITTEN by the Roman soldiers....let us never forget that this was the face of the Holy Son of God.

torn with agony ON CROSS

LET US PRAY:

Our Heavenly Father, we see in the life and teachings of Thy Son, the true path in which we should walk. We have seen in his suffering and his death that the path of love may lead to the cross, and the reward of faithfulness may be a crown of thorns. Give us the understanding to learn these hard lessons. Give us the strength and patience to follow the example of Jesus in all we do. In Thy name we pray. Amen.