

*In the name of God, who makes us, lives us, and keeps us. Amen.*

Moses is revered as the great liberator of the Old Testament, the Old Covenant. But when we read between the lines, we find that Moses is a reluctant leader. He complains to God that there must be a mistake, that he is not up to the challenge, that he is a poor speaker, a poor leader, and that God must seriously be making a mistake. But God, by definition, never makes mistakes, and in establishing this important covenant with God, Moses will be supported. His assignment, to liberate and lead the Hebrew people at this crucial time in their history, will be an essential part of God's dream, and God will instruct Moses just what to do. In his arguments and negotiation with the Egyptian Pharaoh, God will be there. In the flight across the Sea of Reeds, God will tell Moses just what to do. When the people clamor for food and water, God will tell Moses how to access those needs. Moses doesn't want to take on this responsibility, but God insists that he is the right person, in the right time and place to achieve freedom for his people. Have faith, God insists, and God will provide. Just ask, okay?

But this whole experience of being a liberator is, for Moses, on-the-job-training. He leads the escaping Hebrews on this journey for a long, long time, sometimes even seeming to go in circles through the uncharted desert, continuing his conversation with God to provide for the needs of his people. Whatever historical significance this journey might have, it certainly is an extended metaphor for the patience and perseverance of our own journeys through the endurance of faithfulness. And it was such a remarkable metaphor, that its story was repeated over and over again in the folklore and scripture of the Jewish people. It is repeated in the hymns of the Psalms, by the prophets and scribes and priests, by festivals and liturgy, and has made its way to us, that we might hear its message of Exodus from the that which enslaves us. And, ultimately, it brought them, and us, to the foothills of Mt. Sinai. Following his calling, Moses goes up the mountain, despite his fear and trembling, despite his feeling of inadequacy, in a spiritual practice the likes of which we can only imagine, and meets God there face-to-face.

Now, we try out *our* own spiritual practices, too, with the hope of meeting God and God's Spirit face-to-face: we walk the labyrinth, we chant, we linger over scripture, we participate in Sunday services, we attend Lenten programs, and we consider our own spiritual autobiographies, but imagine Moses' experience on that particular mountain! Through all the drama he experiences, of terrifying fire and blinding black smoke, if you remember the story, and he emerges transfigured, physically changed by the proximity of God and the teachings he has received! His countenance, his face, actually seems to glow! How frightening is that! Following the 'extended metaphor', how awesome is it that, at the climax of our own spiritual journey, of our own spiritual practice, that the presence of God is so close, so intimate, that it might transfigure us, too, in the presence of our family and friends. Moses finds it prudent to wear a veil, covering his deformation, or re-formation, so as not to scare the people each time he returns from conversing with God.

All this is what's known to us Christians as the "Old Covenant". And it is a beautiful thing! The Biblical fact that God's presence, so close and significant, made these ancient, ancient people glow with the epiphany, the realization, of what God's dream for them was all about. Now, St. Paul in his second letter to the new church in Corinth, as we heard today, is pretty dismissive of that glow. He take this opportunity to make the judgement that those ancient peoples drew the veil across the true meaning of their experiences with God, and that, in fact, the Jewish people even in his own time, had distorted God's scriptures by veiling the truth. Personally, I think that his attitude is a bit too pejorative. Yet there is one particular line in his letter which is especially worth hearing: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the

Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. “ This is the dream of liberation, of which Moses was God’s agent. With persistence and endurance, Moses worked steadfastly to bring his people into conversation with God.

So, now, in our gospel reading from Luke, Jesus, the author of the New, refreshed Covenant, is in conversation with these great heroes from the past, Moses and Elijah, who represent all the law and the prophets. Exactly what that conversation is about, we, and Peter, James, and John, can only guess. God only knows! But, here’s a clue: they are surrounded by the light of epiphany, by the light which pierces the darkness, by the light which guides us on our pathway, by the glorious light of proximity to God. True, the teachings, the laws, of the Old Covenant, have probably been distorted by the sands of time, and maybe by the practices of Pharisees and Sadducees and scribes and chief priests and false prophets and magicians of all sorts, but the fundamental light, the miraculous glow, has been there since the days of creation, and has been planted as seedlings in the hearts and minds of God’s creatures. In our hearts and minds. And when we find the light of God, of Christ, in the darkness of our lives, whether by specific spiritual practice, or just randomly on our journey of discovery, we may find ourselves glowing with a godly radiance.

Have you ever seen people glowing like this because of God’s presence? There is the old adage that pregnant women glow, and to tell you the truth, I have seen that first hand. So, here is a woman who is so close to the almighty power of creation that she can’t help feeling the miracle of God’s presence (even if she doesn’t recognize it in that way), and there is a discernable glow in her appearance. Now, personally, I think I have seen that glow in expectant fathers as well, and grandmothers! ...And in the past, it was common for brides to wear a veil, lifting it at the moment of marriage to reveal the unmistakable glow of fulfilled romance. What an extraordinary moment that was for the new husband, the priest, and all the witnesses! The glowing of God, for all to see, and before which all marveled! ...And who hasn’t seen the sparkle in another’s eyes when they are touched by God’s Holy Spirit, and discover some new thought or idea, some gift of insight or a new perspective! That spark is a true gift from God, something which can change everything, and transfigure the whole world in the blink of an eye.

Our church tradition has a special way to signify such epiphanies, a way to represent the glow of God’s real presence around an individual. It surrounds the face and brain of the one who is so gifted. Do you know what it is? (wait for response, soliciting as necessary). That’s absolutely right: the halo! Look at the images from our tradition as shown in our stained glass windows. Think of the artistic representations in Christian artwork. All who recognize God’s hand in their lives have such a halo. As Paul writes: “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.” I will share this with you: when each of you comes forward to receive communion, I swear I can see the haloes around you, an aura of God’s love borne by you as witness of the warmth and spiritual power with which you are entrusted. May this glorious gift of light color your world with deep and mysterious conversations with God. When you are passing the peace, when you are in conversation with your friends and neighbors, even when you are in negotiation or argument with your adversaries, I encourage you to lift that awkward veil, and be ready for a surprise. A glorious and light-bearing surprise, that God’s presence in Christ may be found here, there, and everywhere. Amen