

Transfiguration
February 26/27, 2022

The shikinah glory frightens people. It is the proof of God. That literally is what the word *shikinah* means. It is that which others witness and that is, in the one who is shining the light of the Lord. The world may say, "Prove that God exists," but we are to show them by shining His light. Is this not the testimony of Job? "I know that my Redeemer lives." This is what happened to Moses – he knew God – and what was witnessed when he came down the mountain. The people knew that the light of the Lord was upon him, but now it was in him. Some believed and many did not. They reacted to the light with fear. Not fear of the Lord, but sinful fear.

Do not think this so unusual, for in your baptism, the words, "Let your light so shine that others may see your good works and glorify the Lord." You have been given the light of the Lord. Does it shine? But the world is afraid that just maybe, God really is and that fear of recompense is true. It is, but that is why the gift of the grace and the offering of salvation become the true Good News.

This world is filled with hardened criminals and such were some of us. Hardened from the truth that this world did not just happen, but is the creation of the One who even holds all things together. He made us. We are His creation, but something has gone wrong. Or has it? We each have been given the ability to do what we will do. We are, in simple terms, free agents. What will we do with this ability we have been given? Will we seek for ourselves, or for the sake of that for which we have been created? Is this not the question of this age?

The call of the Gospel upon our lives is not just to move from one spot to another. We are not unsaved one moment and then saved in another moment of our choosing. Look at the journey of Moses. Even from birth, the Lord was lining up the circumstances so that he would be the one who led the Israelites out of bondage. It was not Moses who set these things up, but the Lord. Even with the ten plagues, it was not the power of Moses, but the power of the Lord who produced them. Without the Lord, Moses was just an ordinary man in ordinary circumstances. For him, it was the giving up of his will to live and do the will of the Lord that made the difference. It is no different for you or me.

Listen carefully to the proclamation of Paul. The Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit is, there is freedom. This is not freedom to do as we please. That is what is wrong with the world, each person uses their will, calling it freedom to do as they please. The evil around us is the culmination of all of the individuals who daily exercise their will against the will of the Lord. From simple disobedience to the grand schemes that go on around us, it all has the same root – that of us each living our own wills. But when one is abiding in the Holy Spirit, there is a true liberty because now we are united with the One who is holy and true. No longer do we have to figure everything out, but we live knowing that the Lord is leading us to fulfill His will. His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

When Jesus told the three Apostles to not share what they had seen until the resurrection had taken place, they obeyed. Many healed who were told by Jesus to tell no one disobeyed and what He had done, the miraculous healing, became known. It may have seemed right to them at the time, but is it every okay to disobey? To obey is better than sacrifice. We are now free to obey or disobey, but this produces bondage, not freedom. Will we listen to the instruction of the Lord, or *do* what we think is right in our own mind? If the Lord knows how all things will work, is not the better portion to walk according to His instruction?

What was the terror as the apostles entered into the cloud of light? Yes, there is always the fear of the unknown, but I often wonder how much the holiness of the Lord is truly a terror to the sinner? I do not fear, nor even grieve when I have done the right thing. There is always fear when I have discovered that I have done the wrong thing. In this sense, we do well to begin again with fear of the Lord as our beginning. Sometimes I suspect we are all a little too cavalier with the things of the Lord. We think to ourselves how wonderful being in the presence of the Lord would be. And to be so is wonderful. But, do we think in terms of our unholiness coming into the presence of complete and total holiness. In this moment, if we think about it, we begin to understand the plea of Isaiah when he said, "I am a man of unclean lips."

On the one hand, we are free to do things as we will. On the other, there is good reason as to why some are so offended if a child swings from the altar rail. Which is it? The child is being a child, so do we instill fear? This world does that often. We live in an age ruled by fear. But this is not fear of the Lord. To begin to understand, to respect who the Lord is, is to walk in a different kind of fear.

I often see this in simple terms of officials in our society who are there to keep the peace. If I am obeying the law, doing as I ought, I do not have anything to fear. If I am not obeying, I am thinking in terms of not getting caught. With the Lord, any thoughts of not being caught should be forever dismissed. Not only does He know what we are doing, He knows our very thoughts. For one who is still in their sin, this ought to and does create terror and rightly so. The wages of sin is death. Not just death of the body, but eternal death. Absolute and complete separation from God. This is serious business and sometimes we seem to be a little too cavalier about the whole thing.

But God is always merciful and kind, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He showed up intentionally to provide His means of grace to give us the ability to journey with Him, to Him, and for His purpose. Realizing this, we meet head on the reality that we really have been acting as our own free agents.

The ordinary Jesus who looked like every other man was transformed and the disciples saw Him for who He is. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. He has come to bring true life to the dead. Follow the whole story, for the second part is no less important than the first part. He casts out the demon which is seeking the destruction of the young boy. We are terrorized by the evil in this world, but we have, so to speak, seen the rest of the story. Yes, Jesus showed up as one of us, but He has come to not only show us how to live life, but removes the evil within so that we can become holy even as He is holy. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living and just as He has animated us with real life, so also, we are to let that real life shine out of us for others to see. It is His glory which shines through all of creation which is also shining in all who believe.

Like Peter, we may be tempted to respond with our own thoughts and efforts. But through this, we hear the most important part, "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him." It is this very thing which I pray, each week, will be accomplished as a part of our gathering here together, that we would hear a word from Jesus. Sometimes it is for our encouragement and sometimes it is for our chastisement, but always for God's glory to be revealed. You and I have been lovingly invited into the journey with Christ. He will reveal what He will reveal and all for the sake of the Father's will being done on earth as it is done in heaven.

Be astonished by God, delight in the surprises He grants and know, yes know, that our good and Great God is with and in us. Shine the proof of God through all you do. Amen.