

Our second text this morning offers a lot of hidden connections to events in the Old Testament. There are four observations that I invite you to pay attention to as we begin to read this text. First observation: pay attention to what happens to the face of Jesus.

As we read about what happens to Jesus' face try to recall our first story that we read today. Remember how in our first reading from Exodus 34:29-35 that the face of Moses shone brightly after he encountered God and received the two tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them. So what happens to the face of Jesus is important in this story that we are reading.

The second observation I invite you to pay attention to is what day this event occurs that we are about to read. When does the gospel writer Luke say this event happens?

The third observation that I invite you to pay attention to concerns who makes an appearance in this story that we are about to read from the New Testament gospel of Luke. Why do these particular characters appear in this story? What is so special about them?

The fourth observation is a question that I invite you to ask yourself. Many people who read this story in a worship service will cut off the reading at verse 36. Most Bibles if they have subheadings will end this section after verse 36. But we are also going to read the next part of the story that begins at verse 37.

So I am going to ask you if you think we should end the reading at verse 36 or continue reading into the next event that Luke records. So with these 4 observations in front of us I invite us into the next reading this morning.

Read Luke 9:28-43

In our first reading this morning we read about how the face of Moses shone after encountering God. When Luke describes the event we just read, Luke says that the face of Jesus changed. Interestingly, the gospel of Matthew says that Jesus' face lit up but Luke in our reading simply says the face of Jesus was changed.

But it is clear in all three gospels that include this story that the writers want to connect this transfiguration of Jesus with a similar event that happened to Moses when he received the Ten Commandments. So one observation in this story is how the face of Moses and Jesus changed after encountering God.

Moses and Jesus were visibly different after they had an encounter with God. The people around them could look at them and see that God had changed their appearance as they reflected the glory of God. A true encounter with God changes how one looks. It happened to Moses. It happened to Jesus. It happens to us.

The second observation that I invited you to notice was when this event occurred. Notice that Luke says that this event happens 8 days after the previous event that he describes. If we were to read the account found in Mark and Matthew, these other two gospels say that this event happened 6 days later whereas Luke says 8 days. Is this difference important? It may be.

We know that a week is 7 days. The number 7 is an important number in the Bible. The number seven represents completeness. So when the Bible describes the world being created in seven days the number 7 is a symbol of completeness.

So why does Luke say that this event happened after 8 days while the other gospels say it was 6 days? One explanation is that the number 8 represents a new beginning. So Jesus encountering God on the 8th day is a sign of Jesus starting something new.

The third observation I invited you to notice was who makes an appearance in this story. When Jesus goes up the mountain to pray, 2 characters make an appearance. Those two characters are Moses and Elijah. These are two Old Testament characters. Why them?

Many folks explain the presence of Moses being there with Jesus as a sign of the law. Moses received the law from God in the form of two tablets. The laws of God are passed along through Jesus. The second character, Elijah, represents prophecy. Elijah represents those Old Testament characters who spoke for God and interpreted God's activity for the people. This role of prophet is passed along to Jesus as well. Jesus takes on both the role of law interpreter and prophet.

The fourth observation that I invited you to think about as we read this passage was whether or not to include the second part of this story. Should we include in our reading this morning the story of Jesus healing the boy with the demon or does that story not fit with the transfiguration of Jesus?

When Peter, James, and John have this experience with Jesus in which they catch a glimpse of his glory, they want to build huts for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. They want to savor this glorious event and stay on the mountain. They want to continue to have a mountain top experience. But Jesus does not allow them to build those huts.

Jesus wants them to know that faith in God is not about staying on the mountaintop. Seeing the glory of God means coming down off the mountain and doing the important work of healing the sick and confronting the demons of the world. Peter, James, and John have the blessing of seeing the glory of God revealed through Jesus. They were able to catch a glimpse of the glory of God but now they needed to get back to kingdom work.

Many of us in reading this scripture may wish that we were in the shoes of Peter, James, or John. Many of us wish that could say that we have caught a glimpse of the glory of God. Many of us wish that we could see a shining face of Jesus.

Well, the truth is, that shining face is out there if we just keep our eyes open to it. It doesn't have to be on a mountaintop. Sometimes, many times, it occurs in the valley.

The glory of God is shown in the person of Jesus who will embrace suffering and a cross. The glory of God is not shown in royalty but through a humble servant. If we look for the glory of God in fancy places and through powerful people then we may miss what the glory of God looks like. The glory of God is revealed in the darkest and scariest of places. God's light shines in the darkness.

I'm going to share an experience this week that for me is what it means to see the glory of God. And where I encountered the glory of God this week was in one of the darkest places that most folks here can imagine having to be.

On Thursday afternoon I went to visit Josh Pylant and his Mom, Joanne, at CMC Hospital. Josh is a 21 year old member of this church who was involved in a single car accident last week. He has been in the ICU at CMC over the past 2 weeks. Josh has been in a very, very, very serious medical condition resulting from strokes that he has had since the accident. A stroke may have caused the car accident.

Josh is Joanne's only child. His father died when he was very young. On Thursday when I was in Josh's hospital room I offered to read scripture to Josh and his Mom. I picked up my phone and opened the Bible app that I use for reading scripture in a hospital setting. The Bible app allows one to look up any verse but it also posts a Scripture for the day.

When I opened up the app the verse of the day popped up. I scanned this Scripture quickly and thought it was a perfect scripture to read at that moment. It was Philippians 4:4-7. I want to read that Scripture now.

Read Philippians 4:4-7

After reading the Scripture Joanne asked me to walk out of the room with her. She then shared with me her journal that she has been keeping while Josh has been in the hospital. Earlier that day she wrote down in her journal the Scripture which had been very important to Josh and her.

The Scripture she wrote down in her journal that morning is the Scripture which they have turned to for comfort and direction when they have faced trying times as a family. And what was this Scripture that she had written down? It was Philippians 4:4-7. The very same Scripture that I randomly read to them while I was in the room.

What does it look like to see the glory of God? We don't have to look in the powerful places.

We may need to look at the darkest and scariest places to see the glory of God. In the darkest and scariest places we may see the glory of God if we are open to seeing it.

I saw once again this week that the light of God through Christ is always stronger than any darkness in this world. AMEN.

Questions to consider: Where do you see the glory of God revealed to you? When have you been in a dark and scary place and seen the glory of God? If you have had an experience where you have seen the glory of God, what are some of the demons you are called to call out in God's name?

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