

SERMON: Sunday – 27 February 2022 – Rev Alistair Cowper

Unveiling Love

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36

Unveiling love. That is the primary condition under which we all live - one in which love has been unveiled, is being continually unveiled and will be unveiled to us, within us, and within all creation. That is the essence of the good news Jesus gave his life to, the unveiling of Divine love in creation. All things were created through Christ, for Christ.

The story of the transfiguration is a shining light on the glory of this good news. It is a story deliberately placed at this time of year as the reading chosen for the first Sunday before the start of the season of Lent leading up to Easter. I suppose the compilers of the lectionary were thinking that it was good to speak of the glimpsing glorification of Jesus before going on to dwell on his passion, his suffering, his cross and his death.

Peter, James and John were with Jesus when he was transfigured, much like, but more than, the way the skin of Moses' face was shining when he met with the Lord on the mountain, as described in Exodus 34.

And in this encounter we can see Peter's earthly desire to want to retain what he's seeing. But we also see that there is something beyond a cloud of unknowing that is over the whole scene.

What Peter and John witnessed was Moses and Elijah, the two most revered leaders and prophets of Israel, the epitome of the Law and the Prophets. Here were these two giants of the faith together with the One who might just be the Messiah. Peter might have thought, what more could anyone want? Surely there could be nothing better than this? Did he think he'd died and gone to heaven?

No wonder he wanted to freeze the scene and build three shelters; as if to entomb the three giants where they were, and have them forever in his gaze.

But that wasn't or isn't God's way it seems. While Peter was hatching his plan, a cloud appeared on the scene to blur Peter's vision, a cloud of unknowing, a cloud of overshadowing.

Luke writes, "and they were terrified as they entered the cloud" (34).

(SLIDE)

But in the cloud there was a voice, a firm, commanding voice, with a clear directive, "this is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him" (35).

Not, 'these are my favourite prophets, or these are my chosen leaders'. No. This is my Son, listen to him.

Years later, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that it is only in Christ that their lives make any sense. It is only by listening to Christ, that the veil over their minds is removed (14). They can only understand things, or make sense of life, in Christ.

The Hebrew people would have understood the imagery of the veil. They knew the ancient stories of Moses who had to veil his face because the skin of his face shone so brightly when in the presence of God and when Moses then relayed the word of God to the people. In those moments, Moses was in Christ or at least what theologians describe as a type of Christ. And by extension, the people in those shining moments of brilliance were in Christ.

Because the law of God, which Moses carried and channelled, was intended to bring people to glory, pointing to the Christ, in whom is the channel for that unveiling of glory and love to humanity. Christ was and is the Way.

Moses received a foretaste, through the Spirit of God at work in him. Now, in Christ, believers receive a foretaste of glory through that same Holy Spirit.

As Paul says, “the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (17).

Freedom to see the unveiling glorious love which transforms all into the image of the Lord, for whenever one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed, and things begins to make sense.

Here then is the good news, that we are all being transfigured into Christ by the same Spirit (18).

The Love of God in Christ is even now being unveiled, revealed, unfolded, disclosed, in the very core of our being, by the gracious free gift of God.

(SLIDE)

Jett Psaris and Marlena S. Lyons, *Undefended Love* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2000)

“To reach the unveiled part of ourselves that is deep enough to express the most profound and untamed aspects of our being means learning how to love and be loved without defenses and without obstructions. It means cultivating the capacity to be emotionally present even when we feel exposed or vulnerable; learning to relinquish the many strategies we have employed to feel safe and in control; and finding the courage to love without guarantees or requirements. Through developing the capacity for intimacy in this way, we discover love as an abiding presence in the emotional center of our being, our heart, and from that moment on, we will never again feel emotionally disconnected, incomplete, or unloved”.

They go on to say that when we are able to do this then we will find greater

levels of freedom that we hadn't seen before.

Wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

May we know that continual unveiling of freedom and love in our own lives and in the lives of those around us and far from us. In Jesus name.