

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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God's Word to a Hesitating Church

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (7:1)

“Things are Not What They Look Like”

Sept 7, 2014

Sermon Text: 2 Cor 3-4

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11

Introduction-

A vital lesson for every Christian to learn is this - *things are not what they look like.*

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory

beyond all comparison, (18) as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

A Chicago mom of two was killed when pieces of a gargoyle fell off a historic city church and plummeted three stories to the sidewalk below, striking the woman where she stood with her fiancé. The couple's lunchtime date Thursday turned to tragedy when the heavy ornamental piece hit Sarah Bean, 34, directly on the head.

The pipe organ at Second Presbyterian Church has four manuals, and 43 ranks, or sets, of pipes totaling 2,524 pipes. The majority of the pipes are located behind the large organ case. Several ranks of pipes are located in a room off the balcony. These pipes are intended to produce a celestial “echo” effect, so that section of the organ is appropriately called the “Echo Division.” A tonal opening in the

wall can be seen on the south wall of the balcony. . A set of Deagan tubular chimes is also located in the balcony on the south side. These chimes are played from the organ console, and were most likely installed in the late 1940s or early 1950s. The console of the organ is located in the south end of the choir loft.

Reverend Dr. David M. Neff

David Neff has served as our interim pastor since 2010. He grew up in western Oklahoma and graduated with honors from the University of Oklahoma in philosophy. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School in 1985. Since then, he has served interim pastorates in Malta, Argyle, Downers Grove and Burbank; and called positions at Clarendon Hills, North Riverside and Morgan Park. He received his Doctor of Ministry degree from Chicago Theological Seminary in 1998. His passions include spirituality, creativity, mysticism, comparative world religions and travel, as well as art, theater and music. He is a popular lecturer, serving as an adjunct professor of religious studies at St. Xavier University.

Sample Heresy Preached:

The Day Jesus Was Converted

AUGUST 22, 2014

Matthew 15: 21-28; Ephesians 2:11-22

Second Presbyterian Church
Reverend Dr. David M. Neff

Jesus had just been speaking to the Pharisees and the scribes about the matters that defile a person. He told the religious leaders and multitudes that it is not the foods we take into our body that make us impure or unclean; but our own words and actions that harm others; deeds which spring from bad thoughts and hurtful attitudes. Adopting a reform position, Jesus spiritualized the law and called on individuals to focus on the ethics of being part of the community, not merely strict observances of rituals prescribed by the law.

Then he went to the districts of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite women sought him out, seeking healing for her daughter. She plead and plead and plead, begging him. "Lord, help me." But he turned his visage away. In that day, holy religious leaders did not consort with women, let alone converse

with women from another faith. The disciples said Jesus, "Send her away, she is disrupting our mission." Jesus said, in effect, "My hands are tied. I can't assist her. I was sent only to minister to the house of Israel".

It was clear, at that point in Matthew (which is the most Jewish of all the gospels) that Jesus understood his ministry was only to those who were like him, not to the Canaanites, which, in that day, was a term for Israel's ancient pagan enemies.

But she knelt before him and implored, "Lord help me. Lord, pity me." Jesus said sternly: "Is it right to take the bread for the children and feed it to the dogs?" With even more hope, she said "Even dogs can eat the crumbs from the master's table."

Jesus was moved. He saw the woman's deep faith, he saw her humanity and felt her love for her daughter. Marcus Borg says that in that moment that Jesus had a crisis. He knew rules are rules, laws are laws. The truth was prescribed, set in stone. The covenant is strict. By upholding it, a

person is clearly is in the right, enforcing the distinctions between what is holy and what is unholy.

But could not this woman be just as important as everything else the whole message of scripture commanded? Could not this woman be God's messenger of change to illustrate just what Jesus had been teaching?

I believe that, in that moment, Jesus was converted from thinking his message was for one group of people only— into thinking his message was for all the people, especially those who had been excluded. Excluded; kept out; prohibited from belonging. Keeping her out on the basis of an ethnic category was wrong. Withholding God's blessing from her and her family because of a social condition was wrong.

So this "thing" that parades itself as a beautiful, historic, loving Christian church, through rank negligence and dismissal of many warnings and violation citations from the city, killed this poor lady. Just as it has been killing the souls of people for many years by preaching a false gospel and presenting a false Jesus. Things are not as they appear and it is vital that we

learn not to make judgments in worldly, temporal terms.

That, you will remember, is what had gotten these Corinthians into so much trouble. Paul did not appear to be great in their estimation. He suffered. He was hated. He did not use fancy oratory to impress people. And his message? Well, it just didn't seem to be accepted very widely. So here they were being swayed by false teachers who appeared to be "great."

But what was really true? What was reality? It was this:

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (18) And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

You remember – as brilliant and fearful as the shining face of Moses was, so that the people could not bear to look at him – the glory of God revealed to us in the face of Jesus Christ is infinitely greater. And it doesn't fade! The Spirit of Christ in us is transforming us into increasing glory – increasing likeness of Christ – AND our faces are unveiled! That is to say,

we are seeing Jesus more and more clearly as He sanctifies us, and this is very glory of God. Yet we do not fear.

Glory and Excellence

These things are largely unseen. Your face is not literally shining – yet. But what we do see happening in every Christian is this work of sanctification, this changing more and more into the character and likeness and mind of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:13-15 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, (14) so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (15) Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

One day, this likeness of Christ in us is going to break out into visible glory –

1 John 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Colossians 3:4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Glory. Blinding, brilliant, shining glory.

Let me offer you a bit of speculation. I don't understand it myself. God's being is glorious. God, in Himself, is perfect love, righteousness, holiness, mercy, justice and so on. All in a perfect, infinite degree. And God is light. God is beauty itself. God is...glorious. So that, it seems, God's attributes and being are *so beautiful that this beauty, this glory itself, shines forth from Him*. And the more that He fashions us into His likeness, the more that glory becomes visible in us until one day this glory is going to burst out in us into plain view. Could it be then that this glory of God, a glory that will shine forth from us, is a kind of visible manifestation of the now unseen character of God? What if *beauty, goodness, love, justice, righteousness, patience* and so on could be seen? Not

just the things working themselves out in action, but the things themselves? What if you could SEE love? Or SEE righteousness? To do so would be to see *God*. And it seems that the closest description Scripture gives us of this vision of God, is *glory. Light*.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Well, Paul's point has been that this glory, these attributes of God that we see in Jesus Christ, are being formed in US! And this is glory. It is glorious. Knowing this, he says he does not lose heart despite all the suffering he endures.

Follow as we read then chapter 4 –

2 Corinthians 4:1-18 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. (2) But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. (3) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. (4) In their case the god

of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (5) For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (7) But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. (8) We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (10) always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (11) For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (12) So death is at work in us, but life in you. (13) Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, (14) knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. (15) For it is all for

your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. (16) So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (17) For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, (18) as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

The glory of God, you see, is NOT in some historic cathedral with the most beautiful sanctuary and organ. No, it is the Spirit of Christ in us glorifying us by giving us more and more light of the knowledge of God's glory, as seen in Jesus Christ. This treasure, for now, is in rather non-glorious and plain "jars of clay." By this, Paul means our physical bodies which are mere dust. At the resurrection, that will all change.

Let's look more closely at a couple of points Paul makes here in chapter 4 –

2 Corinthians 4:2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open

statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

We speak quite often here in Christ Reformation Church about wolves and hidden reefs and false teachers who would try to creep in among us and lead us away from Christ. Sometimes it may sound like we emphasize this danger too much. But can you see for yourself that if we preach and teach from Scripture, moving through it like we are moving through 2 Corinthians, *we will necessarily emphasize these things quite often.* Why? Because God's Word does. You have it here in this verse. Paul does not do what these enemies at Corinth did:

- Disgraceful, underhanded ways
- Practice cunning
- Tamper with God's Word

2 Corinthians 2:17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:12 We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about

outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.

2 Corinthians 10:10 For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."

2 Corinthians 11:4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (14) And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (15) So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

2 Corinthians 11:20 For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.

And remember, mark this down well, most often false teachers, false churches, false Christians will present you with a cheap substitute

“glory” that appeals to flesh. This is all nothing less than tampering with God’s word in a cunning, self-serving, deceitful manner.

Now, look at vss 3-6 again:

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. (4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (5) For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

What is the most common mark of “success” in the thinking of most people who claim to be Christians? I mean, how are churches and preachers and ministries measured? In most part it is this:

The measure of ‘success’ is the response of the masses. Tell us what you think of us. Online surveys. Exit polls. Tell us how we can serve you better. Positive poll ratings

mean the thing is a success. Negative ratings mean it is not only unsuccessful, but just plain wrong. I mean, what kind of an idiot would keep preaching a message most people don’t like or want?

We wonder if the false teachers had been telling the Corinthians that Paul’s message and his office as an apostle were defective *because so many people rejected it?* Paul wasn’t popular. But Paul gives us the reality here:

The reason people don’t want or like the gospel is because they are hardened in their hearts against Christ and thus are perishing. The gospel is “veiled” to them because this blindness remains in a person as long as they reject Christ.

We saw it before in chapter 3 –

2 Corinthians 3:14-16 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. (15) Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. (16) But

when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The glory of God is revealed to us in the face of Jesus Christ. But you must be able to see that Face to see the glory! Stephen saw the risen Christ in glory and his face shone. But his murderers could not see Christ because they *would not* see Christ. Thus it was *they*, not Stephen, who were perishing.

How do you see God? How do you see His glory? You must see the face of Jesus Christ. That is to say, you must see Him for who He is – the Son of God who emanates the very glory of God. And that means God must declare: “Let there be light” in your heart.

Now, notice carefully the Satanic element in this blinding (vs 4). Satan is called the god of this world and he is able to darken the understanding (the mind) of the unbeliever so that the perfect divine image of God’s glory in Christ remains unseen. I mean, Christ came into this world and-

And therefore it should NOT surprise us when we see many (most) people rejecting the gospel because they do not see the glory of God in it. They have some other notion of “glory” – like 2nd Presbyterian “Church” in Chicago which, in the end, only kills people. Remember, THIS is the glory of God:

- Was born miraculously in fulfillment of Scripture
- Worked miracles of the New Creation in fulfillment of Scripture
- Rose from the dead

And yet, those who are perishing remained blind to His glory. What has to happen is this:

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (18) And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of

Let’s end by reading once more the last part of this chapter. Notice Paul’s description of the *outward* appearance of the gospel ministry,

and realize that if we judge by outward appearance, that is, if we use *what is seen* to determine what is the glory of God, we will go wrong. I have highlighted all the terms Paul uses to refer to outward appearance in regard to his ministry:

2 Corinthians 4:7-18 But we have this treasure **in jars of clay**, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. (8) **We are afflicted in every way**, but not crushed; **perplexed**, but not driven to despair; (9) **persecuted**, but not forsaken; **struck down**, but not destroyed; (10) **always carrying in the body the death of Jesus**, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (11) For we who live are always being **given over to death** for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (12) So death is at work in us, but life in you. (13) Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, (14) knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. (15) For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may

increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. (16) So we do not lose heart. **Though our outer self is wasting away**, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (17) For this **light momentary affliction** is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, (18) as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Next time we will plan to look more closely at these verses.

In the meantime, consider – what does the glory of God look like?