



ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SERMON
2-10-13

Some of you may remember that in ages past there was a moment in a wedding when the bride removed her veil and revealed herself to the groom. I only have my imagining about why this was done – but one guess I have for that action is that the unveiling of the bride's face can be wonderful symbolism for marriage. I am thinking about the verses we hear today from Corinthians – when one turns to the Lord the veil is removed...and all of us, with unveiled faces, behold the glory of God. The curtains will part, the veil will be lifted and we see God.

So, the bride lifts her veil and says to her groom – now you can see me. And that is a wondrous hope of marriage – that two people are promising to look at each other for the rest of their lives and to be looked at by each other for the rest of their lives – looked at lovingly, faithfully truly and honestly. They are willing to open both their eyes and hearts and let another person in. And when they do – what they will find will be glorious – the glory of God.

Yet, for some people that is a fearful, perhaps impossible thing for them to do – to reveal themselves fully and honestly to anyone else.

The Israelites were frightened by the shining glory of God. They asked Moses to cover himself and not let them be too close to God's presence. So Moses obliged and they let Moses be the go-between between them and God. They chose distance over gazing fearlessly at God themselves.

But I don't think the Israelites are the only ones to fear being in the presence of God's glory. Still today we have folks that would rather rely on a go-between with God – they let another authority tell them about God and they keep distance between themselves and God. They would rather live with a veil in front of their face rather than reveal themselves and gaze on God and be changed by the glory of what they would see and learn.

For you see, to be in this glorious relationship does require something from you, from us. There are promises to be made and kept. The bride and groom make ten promises to each other. They make a commitment to live together in a covenant – to love, to comfort, to honor, to keep, to forsake all others, to have and to hold, and to cherish all the rest of their lives.

Similarly, in our relationship with God, we also make promises. Most of the time these promises are made at the time of baptism. And you hear God's words today at the transfiguration as the

same words at the baptism of Jesus. This is my son, my chosen. Those words come to us also at baptism when we are marked as Christ's own forever. And entering into that relationship with Christ – we promise to pray, worship, have fellowship, to care for others, to repent and return when we wander off, to turn from evil and follow a different path. To seek justice and peace for all.

So, both relationships – marriage and with God - have their promises, their boundaries around them. And yet what freedom can be found in those boundaries, in those promises. The freedom to fully share yourself with someone – both joy and sorrows, our burdens and our delight. There is Nothing to hide!! Nothing to hide. Imagine that freedom, that gift.

For both the promises made in a marriage and in our relationship with God are mostly about promising to be vulnerable and truthful. There can be no lasting love without truth. There can be no lasting love without truth – without revealing ourselves. Without a clear and honest sharing of who you are with another person and with God, there will be no trust, no opportunity to comfort and nurture who you were created to be. The promises we make to God both in marriage and in baptism show our commitment to unveil our faces, and our bodies, and our minds, and our spirits. – even in moments of doubt, or fear, or uncertainty – in everything at all times. We promise to offer a love and receive a love that is accepting and faithful, caring and tender, nurturing and strong – able to change us from one degree of glory to another.

What a wonderful, freeing, mysterious sacrament that is. It is a huge and sacred gift to gaze without fear upon God and upon our beloved. For when we lift our veils, what is revealed is the light of Christ that dwells within each of us and all around us. Wherever there is love, there is that light. Wherever there is truth, there is that light. And wherever we may find ourselves, there is that light. May it shine brightly in each and every one of us and bless us all.

Thanks be to God.