

AND THERE IS LIGHT!
I. God shines in Christ
II. Christ shines in the Gospel
III. The Gospel shines in our hearts

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Do you suffer from SAD? Seasonal Affective Disorder... this is a mood disorder that affects folks who have normal mental health. They experience forms of depression, anywhere from mild to severe, but only during the winter months. People who suffer from SAD tend to oversleep, have a lack of energy and binge on foods high in sugar and starch. The cure? Sunlight. The sun provides the necessary nutrients and vitamins to boost the mind and body. That's why Alaskans use their annual \$3,000 check from state (oil pipeline) to fly to California or Hawaii every year, to get some sunshine and boost their spirits.

After seeing all the snow fall last week, it would be nice if all of us could hope up to SDF airport and fly to Hawaii today. Because we have so many gloomy days, not just with the weather, but we have many days when things just don't go right, and it seems that God's love is hidden behind those clouds. Oh, if we could join Peter, James and John on the mountain, and just glimpse a few of those heavenly rays emanating from Christ's body! That would lift our spirits and reenergize us! We know we will see that divine brilliance in heaven some day, but how about a few rays right now to dispel the gloomy clouds?

My friends, the light of our Savior is here now. That is the point that St. Paul makes in our lesson today from 2Corinthians 4. The same divine light that emanated from Jesus at the Transfiguration shines to us in His Gospel - the good news of Jesus crucified and risen for sinners.

Today, let us bask in the light of Christ's Gospel. As surely as God brought light out of darkness at Creation, so He also brings light into our darkness with the message of His Son Jesus. Our theme today is this: **"AND THERE IS LIGHT! Our lesson helps us realize that I. God shines in Christ; II. Christ shines in the Gospel; and III. The Gospel shines in our hearts.**

Okay - Have you put away the umbrella? Have you put the raincoat in the closet? Are you ready to bask in the sunshine of Christ's Gospel? That's great! Because Paul wants you to know

that there is someone who works very hard at keeping the light of the Gospel from shining on us. He works very hard at keeping us in gloom.

St. Paul warns in our lesson: **“If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.”** And then he identifies the one who works so hard, **“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”** The **“god of this age”** is Satan. In other parts of Scripture he is described as the **“prince of this world.”** At times, he **“masquerades as an angel of light.”** He appears to be good, but he is always the prince of darkness. And he works very hard at veiling the light of Christ’s Gospel, because it is the means of salvation for human beings, and as long as the Gospel is shining on the hearts of human beings, God wins. Satan loses. And Satan doesn’t like that so much. No one can take away the power of the Gospel. The Gospel will endure until the end of time. Jesus has promised it. But how does Satan “veil” the light of the Gospel and “blind” the minds of human beings?

Think of the temptation he brought to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He didn’t come right out and tempt them to deny the existence of God. He tempted them to deny that God is the God of mercy and love and to think of Him as an oppressive god, a god who was keeping them back from all that they could be. That’s how Satan works. He veils the light of the Gospel by convincing humans that the true God is not who He truly is. Don’t you see Satan at work in your own life? When your prayers are not answered, when spouses constantly fight, when children are rebellious, when friends gossip, when loved ones die, when life is dark and cloudy... Satan uses those life circumstances to convince you that God is not who he says he is. He is not a God of love and mercy and compassion, but a god who is demanding or maybe is angry with you or is too busy for you.

But what happens when we listen to Satan? What happened to Adam and Eve? Darkness ensued. Sin and death followed. Yet, in His mercy and love God promised them a Savior. An offspring of the woman would crush Satan’s deceiving power. Adam and Eve believed that promise and pushed Satan aside. The light of God’s mercy and love was restored to them. And ever since that day this eternal truth has been declared to the world: **“God shines in Christ!”** When we listen to the promises of God, those lies that Satan whispers in our ears about God hold no influence over our thoughts and attitudes towards God. When we listen to the promises of God we know that God is not those things that Satan claims. The true God is the God that shines in Christ! There in his Son Jesus we see God’s love and mercy and compassion; God kept his promise of a Savior! When we believe the promise of Jesus, the light of God’s love chases away the gloom of our hardships and the darkness of our distrust of God, and we see God for who he really is. The truth that we bask in today is this: **God shines in Christ!**

And **Christ shines in the Gospel.** St. Paul writes **“God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”** It would be nice to bask in the light that shone from Christ at the Transfiguration! My dear friends, that same divine light shines to us in the Gospel – the good news of Jesus is the glory of God Himself.

Perhaps you could use some good news today. Perhaps you are feeling gloomy today. Maybe

there are things that you would like to hide from God... as did Adam and Eve, when they tried to hide from God, or tried to hide their shame with those pitiful umbrellas they fashioned. Or like King David did, when he tried to cover up his marital infidelity with murder. Because He is God, we know that He is omniscient, that he sees even our darkest and most secret sins. This is another way that Satan tries to veil the light of the Gospel. He tries to convince us that because our past sins are so great and so disgusting, that God could never love us, that he could never forgive us. He wants us to doubt the truth of the Gospel, that in Christ, God forgives, yes, that God forgives you and me of our great and many sins that we would like to hide from him. And that is good news we all could stand to hear. That is the light we all would like to bask in. And we are... right now...

Listen to Christ shine in the Gospel from the Apostle Peter, **“For Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”** (1P 3:18) Christ died once for all people, for all sins, yes, even your sins that you would like to hide from God. Christ Jesus received your due punishment of death for those sins so that you might be brought to God. For God does not allow darkness to enter his presence. With the darkness of our many sins, we would never be able to stand before God in heaven. But because Christ died for you, in your place, for all of your sins, you shine before God with the light of Christ covering your sins. This is the confidence we have because Christ shines in the Gospel. We can say, “Satan, take your accusations and your lies and go away! Sin, disturb my soul no longer! For Christ will stand me before his Father’s throne as he is, holy, without sin, perfect and righteous.... for the forgiveness of sins is mine through Christ, an empty grave is mine through Christ, heaven is mine through Christ, and Christ is mine through the Gospel!

And **the Gospel shines in our hearts.** Do you know people who just suck the life out of you when you’re around them? You know not to ask, “How are you doing?” because you’ll hear the same depressing answer. Maybe there’s truth to their answer: their life isn’t so good. But do you know people who have the same hardships, the same sufferings in their life, yet they usually have a smile on their face? Why is that? I can’t peer into their hearts, but more often than not I would guess that they have the light of the gospel shining in their hearts. Because Christ shines in our hearts, we are able to move through life’s many shadows of disappointment, periods of darkness, without losing our way. Guided by the light of Christ in the Gospel, even in the midst of difficulties and suffering, our life has direction, and purpose and a joyful destination: to join Christ in the eternal glories of heaven. Look at the Old Testament believer Job. He suffered so much in his life, lost everything, yet his life had purpose, and he had direction. He joyfully proclaimed, **“I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth, and after my flesh has been destroyed, I myself will see him with my own eyes, I and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”** (Job 19:25-27) The good news of Jesus is also why the Apostle Paul wrote, **“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”** (Romans 8:18)

Perhaps those folks who are perpetually gloomy need to have the Gospel of Jesus shine in their hearts, and that can only happen if you allow the light of the Gospel to shine on their hearts. When we share his light, his light will dispel their spiritual gloom. For what Christ has done for us, he has also done for them. For Christ shines in the Gospel, and **the Gospel shines in your hearts.**

It was after the Transfiguration that Jesus began His final journey to the city of Jerusalem. He came down from the mountain only to climb another, Calvary, and there to die. The next time you come to this church, the bright white of Transfiguration Sunday will be replaced with the solemn purple and black of Lent. But even as we follow Jesus to His cross during Lent, Christ's Gospel will emanate its rays. The cross is the message of our salvation. God makes light shine out of darkness. There is light. God shines in Christ. Christ shines in the Gospel. And the Gospel shines in your hearts. Amen.