

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. It's interesting with the Old Testament and the epistle lesson how Paul uses the same imagery of Moses with the veil over his face to talk about the grace of God and the gospel of God. But first, think of Moses on the mountaintop. He is speaking with God himself. He's up there for 40 days. And in the presence of God, he in essence, it seems like absorbs a portion of the glory of God, so much so that his face glowed and shown so brightly that people could not look at it. In fact, when he came down the mountain with the 10 Commandments, everybody's like, "You know what? Just get away from us, please. We can't handle this". Moses had to draw him back, and so the leaders came back, but ever since that point, he had to put a veil over his face to cover the majesty, the reflection of the majesty and might of God.

We have here, Paul, talking about us as Christians, that the veil of Moses has been removed through Jesus Christ because before we see Christ, before we understand the grace and mercy and love of God, the only thing we have is the majesty and the holiness and the power of God. And so when that shows up, that is indeed something to be frightened of, the power and majesty of God on Mount Sinai, giving Moses the 10 Commandments. It's interesting that when we think about God speaking to Moses, when God speaks to the people of the Old Testament, we think of the Father speaking with a majestic voice and glory and majesty. But think about this, how does God speak? How does the Father speak? He speaks through the Word. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

So in the gospel lesson, we have Jesus going up on a mountaintop and the glory of God shines through. Again, this is the same glory, the same glory that Moses saw on Mount Sinai when he received the 10 Commandments. This is the same word of God speaking with Moses and Elijah who spoke with Moses some couple thousand years earlier and gave him the 10 Commandments. Gave him the law of God. The Word of God gave the law of God to his people knowing that he would eventually have to come and become flesh and fulfill that word that nobody else could. So the Word who gave the 10 Commandments to Moses and the people of Israel then came to Earth and lived the 10 Commandments and obeyed the 10 Commandments, which they failed to do because they have a veil over their eyes, as do all of us.

When we read the word of God, when we read the law of God and we think that that is the means by which God is pleased with us or that we are saved, "Well, I am a good person. I have obeyed, or at least I've tried my hardest to obey the 10 Commandments. That should be enough, right?" We try and justify ourselves

based on what we have done or we tend to think, "Well, God loves me. Yes, he died for my sins, but he did that because he saw something good in me. I try and do good and therefore I deserve this."

But the fact of the matter is not a single one of us deserve the grace of God. The only thing that we deserve is his wrath and his judgment, punishment and hell. That is what we deserve because we have rebelled against God. Adam and Eve saw the glory of God in the garden, and they weren't afraid, at least until they ate the fruit. Then suddenly they couldn't look at God anymore because his glory was too judging. His majesty was too holy, and we as sinners could not face it. And until that veil is removed, none of us can have any hope of salvation. And as I said, none of us deserve salvation. We are dead in our sins and trespasses.

And yet this is the amazing thing. God has declared that he loves us and that he has forgiven us and that he gives salvation to all of us as a free gift. Again, not because we deserve it, not because we have earned it, not because we have proved ourselves simply because he has created us and he loves us, and for that reason alone are we worthy to receive salvation. That is the veil that is lifted up, that we, unworthy, dead in our sins and trespasses people, are still loved by God and still redeemed by His grace. Through the word of God made flesh. Through the same mighty power of God who humbled himself, who humiliated himself to become like us so that he could fulfill the law, which was his to give. And yet he lived under it, for us, for our sake.

But now he's on the mountain. Now he is getting ready to enter into the passion. This is right before the triumphal entry on Palm Sunday and of course that holy week that leads to the culmination of history, his death on the cross. And so before all of this, before he enters into the ultimate humiliation of death, his glory shines forth just once more in all of its might and splendor, and along with Moses and Elijah, the law and the prophets, Moses representing the law, Elijah representing the prophets and everything in between. In other words, the whole Old Testament is about to be fulfilled, is about to be, the old covenant is finally to be fulfilled, and a new covenant is to be given through the same word, dying on the cross for us.

Now, even while they're on the mountaintop, Peter and James and John cannot look at Jesus in his glorified holy self. They coward. They close their eyes, but of course, Peter being Peter, needing to say something at any given time. That's why I love Peter. He is always got something to say. Maybe not always the best thing to say, but he's always got something, so he gives me hope when I open mouth and insert foot, he gives me hope because he does it so many times and he does it so well,

But Peter speaks, he's on the mountaintop and he sees the glory. Well, he cowers because he sees the majesty of God and he, Elijah and Moses, he says, "Oh, let's stay here where it's nice and safe and glorious and beautiful. Let's build a couple of tents and we'll just reside here. We don't need to go back down to the mountain. We don't need to go to your suffering or your death. We don't need to go to a place where there's pain and sorrow. Let's just stay up on the mountain."

Now, we understand that, don't we? Wouldn't we love to just be in a place of peace and tranquility our entire lives. Let's not deal with the chaos of that irritating neighbor or that frustrating situation or the job that I don't want to be at or the money problems that I have, or the family problems that I have, or the news that I just don't want to turn on and listen to anymore or this war or that war or this disease or that disease or this problem or that problem. There is tribulation in this world and I'd much rather be up on the mountaintop where it's nice and peaceful.

But God doesn't call us to stay in our rest. Not yet. Not yet. Today, we are called to leave the mountain and to join in the fray of this world. To deal with our problems and our trials and the tribulations that we have in this world. He has said "We will have tribulation in this world, but take heart, I have overcome the world," he says. He overcame it on the cross. In his great humiliation, the power of majesty and glory of God was shown in the most unique way. He forgave our sins. He gave us hope, a sure and certain hope of everlasting life in him.

In the meantime, as we deal in the valleys and the trials and the shadow of death, we can rejoice even then. We're not on the mountain exactly, but we have the presence of God with us all the same. That power and majesty of God has been given to us in His word, in our baptisms, and so we carry him with us wherever we go, and He works in and through us in the midst of our trials, in the midst of our tribulations, so that we might be comforted, so that we might have peace, so that we might be certain that what we face in this world is only temporary. It will not last.

There is a place where we will rest for all eternity, just not yet. While we are here, while we have not fully received the full benefit, though much of it we already have, we have not received the full benefit of our rest yet. We have not seen it. But we are called now to live in the valley so that others might see the peace that we have so that others might know the hope of everlasting life so that others might be able to think about the glory of God and not be afraid because they will know what we know, that God loves them and has forgiven them and desires for them to be part of the family as well.

That is why we don't stay on the mountain. That is why we don't just stay there where it's nice and peaceful. We go to be with others who don't have the hope that

we do so that they might hear about it and know it and receive it for themselves so that we might rejoice as our family gets bigger day by day. As he brings more and more into the presence of His will and His glory and His grace and His mercy and His forgiveness. Then on that last day, we will rejoice. This is why we are not afraid. This is why we can deal with the temporary struggles of this world because they are just that temporary.

There will come a day and what a glorious day that will be when we will come into the kingdom of God and receive our rest and see the glory and majesty of God, Elijah and Moses and all of the company of heaven, and rejoice with Him for all eternity, for His great love for us. May His grace, His mercy, and His peace be and abide with you always now and forevermore, unto life everlasting.