

EPIPHANY: IN FAITH WE PROCLAIM GOD'S LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE

The Transfiguration of Our Lord
Last Sunday after the Epiphany
February 18, 2007

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3:12—4:2

Luke 9:28-36 [37-43]

Shining Faces

Upon Moses' descent from Mount Sinai, after receiving the Ten Commandments, "his face was shining brightly because the LORD had been speaking to him" (Exodus 34:29, *CEV*). His countenance reflected the glory of God, a sight that caused the Israelites to fear going near him.

Luke's Gospel records that, while Jesus was praying, "his face changed" (9:29, *CEV*). While he was speaking with God, a change came over him; his face became luminous "and his clothes became shining white" (9:29, *CEV*). The disciples – Peter James, and John – awoke to see Jesus in his glory. And they, too, became frightened when a shadow from a cloud passed over them and they heard a voice speaking from the cloud (9:34, 35).

Both accounts point to the human reaction of fear in the presence of God. Yet, we are assured by our loving God that we have nothing to fear. We are invited "to come bravely before the throne of our merciful God" where "we will be treated with undeserved kindness" (Hebrews 4:16, *CEV*).

Jesus taught us how to pray (Luke 11:1-4) and modeled for us a life of disciplined prayer. When we come to God in prayer, we, too, become transformed. The Holy Spirit fills our hearts with God's love (Romans 5:5). God's grace changes us in a way that enables us to reflect God's glory. An encounter with the living God brings about this transformation – our minds are renewed so that we "will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing" (Romans 12:2, *CEV*).

At the close of the Epiphany season, Jesus' Transfiguration is a climactic manifestation of God's glory. As we prepare to enter the season of Lent and journey with Jesus toward Jerusalem, let us heed the voice that spoke from the cloud and be prepared to listen to what Jesus has to say to us.

While Moses covered his face with a veil, in Jesus' Transfiguration we see the unveiled glory of God. Come to God in prayer, and listen to God's voice. Your face will shine with the love of God and you will reflect the glory of the Lord! "Make your light shine,

so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16, *CEV*). God’s love shines through you!

This Reflection for the Transfiguration of Our Lord was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: West Bank and Gaza Strip – With thanks to God for God’s constant protection, and with prayers for the Palestinian people who find themselves on the verge of civil war, and with prayers for the safety of Bible Society staff and that relief programs would continue unhindered; **Jordan** – With thanks to God for God’s protection during two years of change, and with prayers for the new Bible Society General Secretary and for new opportunities to distribute the Bible and that God will encourage young people to read the Bible; **Israel** – With thanks to God for protecting the staff and their families and for providing funds for the ability to continue operating in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Galilee, and with thanks to God for the distribution of a youth edition of John’s Gospel and for the printing of the Hebrew Gospels with the Psalms, and with prayers for the Hebrew New Testaments that are supplied to the New Tribes Mission in Bolivia, and for the opening of a Christian training center in Nazareth.

Activity Corner: “Smiling Shiny Faces”

Supplies needed: Bible; construction paper (assorted colors); marker; pens or pencils; scissors.

Read together 2 Corinthians 3:18 and discuss what it means to reflect the glory of the Lord. What is the role of the Holy Spirit? Invite members of your household to cut out a circle (approximately 4” in diameter) from construction paper. On one side draw a “smiley face” and on the reverse side, ask each one to write down ways they plan to reflect God’s glory. Gather the “faces” into a basket and incorporate each one’s thoughts into a prayer. Conclude by reading together Psalm 99. After the reading, invite everyone to respond together: HOLY GOD, WE WORSHIP YOU AND REFLECT YOUR GLORY. Sing “Shine Jesus, Shine” or one of your favorite hymns.