



NEW HOPE

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Transfiguration Sunday - 14 February 2010  
Exodus 34:29-35  
**Experiencing Our Shine**

Today is Transfiguration Sunday. Usually when we speak of the Transfiguration we are referring to the scripture in Luke 9:28-36 that tells about Jesus going up the mountain with Peter, James, and John and experiencing the change of his appearance.

Gradually from the inside out **his total appearance was transfigured with the brilliance of the glory of God.** But today I want to concentrate on another story from the Old Testament.

In Exodus 34, Moses went up to Mt. Sinai for the second time. You will recall that when Moses brought the first two stone tablets down with the Ten Commandments written on them, that the people had made a golden calf and were partying it up. In Exodus 32:19 he saw the people worshipping the golden calf, and he threw the tablets down smashing them to pieces. At the beginning of Chapter 34 God told Moses to chisel out two more tablets and to go back up to the mountain. God would write the words on them all over again.

Today's scripture takes place on this second trip to the mountain where he spent another 40 days. Let's see what we can get out of today's scripture.

### **The Shine**

When Moses came down the mountain with the new tablets, **"He was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord" (Ex. 34:29).** He had a shine on his face that wouldn't quit. When the people saw him they were afraid to come near him. They backed away from him like he was "radioactive." Even Aaron, his brother, was afraid as well.

On the TV show, "Friends," Ross wanted to impress his new girlfriend with his radiant smile. He applied some tooth whitener but left it on twice as long as he was supposed to. His teeth were "noticeably" whiter as he showed his smile off to his friends. He went over to his girlfriends and asked, "Do you notice anything different about me?" She said, "No, not really." Later on that night they turned the lights down low, and his teeth glowed in the dark. His girlfriend was HORRIFIED!

You can imagine the people's reaction to Moses' shine. After Moses calmed everyone down, he called the people together and gave them the commands that the Lord had given him again on the two tablets of stone. **Moses downplayed the radiant glow he had because he didn't want them to focus on that in itself but rather on what the Lord had to say to them.**

If he made a big deal out of his glowing face, he might have gone up to Aaron and said, "Oh, by the way, Aaron, I noticed you need a little light for your reading and then stand next to him and shine." That would have been prideful. He didn't want people to focus on him and put him on a pedestal. Scripture says he **"put a veil over his face" (v. 33)** in order to focus on what God had to say rather than to call attention to himself.

**Moses wanted them to focus on God—not on the glow.** Sometimes when God does something spectacular for us, we tend to focus on the experience rather than on God who did it. Sometimes it causes us to lose our focus. We think too much of ourselves and become a little self righteous and arrogant.

**What could a mysterious event on the top of a mountain far away and long ago possibly have to do with us today?** Is Moses' experience in the presence of God a totally foreign concept to us today? I don't think so. Here's why.

## **What's On Your Face?**

When you stop to think about it, the look on our faces sometimes really does tell it all. Some people's faces you can read like a book. For instance was there ever a time when your parents took one look at you and asked, "What did you do? You look guilty." Other times people will say, "You look like you've seen a ghost!" Or "You look like the cat that swallowed the canary." A mother looks at her teenage daughter and says, "I'd recognize that look anywhere. What's his name?"

**Facial expressions reveal a lot of things.** Moses' shine revealed that he had been with the Lord. Sometimes our expressions reveal things we would rather not reveal—irritation, anger, hate, plain old meanness.

**What does your face communicate to others about your faith?** Years from now will anyone have a memory of the way your face looked after you had been in the presence of God? How will people remember the daily ordinary look on your face—stressed, irritated, pouting, angry—always on the verge of a "hissy fit?"

Moses was completely oblivious to the look on his face—the shine—the radiance. We probably are, too, most of the time. Good or bad we are what we are inside. Moses didn't put on a pious religious face. He wasn't trying to look "holy." **The genuine shine was there because he had been in the presence of God.** It just rubbed off on him.

## **Experiencing Our Shine**

We are standing at the doorway of the season of Lent. Lent is about changing. It goes back to the time when the early church monitored the changes taking place in the new Christians. This time of change got them ready for baptism. Are we allowing God's Spirit more freedom to effect changes in our life? How can we experience our shine? **That look comes to us when we, too, spend time with God.**

It comes in talking to the Lord daily about all kinds of things. It comes about when soaking up the Scripture so that it says something to us personally. We have to be committed to following the Lord enough that he can work out these "shine" experiences in our life. **It's a work of God over a period of time.**

His dealings in our life might be uncomfortable, maybe even inconvenient...sometimes even painful. We might have to put ourselves out a little bit. **Luke 9:23** Jesus said, *"If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."* This is when we often say, "Whoa now! You're asking a little too much of me, Lord, don't you think?"

Scripture tells us that **both Jesus and Moses go up to their mountain of transfiguration not for their own benefit but to help others.**

First of all don't seek a spectacular shine experience for yourself. **Seek the Lord in order to bring God's light to those in darkness.**

Once you have soaked up the light of God by being in his presence, you need to go into the darkness where the needs are. You can't glow in the presence of God because God will always outshine you. **You need to go into the world where it is dark and let God's light radiate from you.**

It was a cold bitter evening in Northern Virginia many years ago. The old man's beard was glazed by winter's frost while he waited for a ride across the river. His body was getting numb from the frigid north wind. He heard the hooves of horses galloping along the frozen pathway.

He anxiously watched as several horsemen rounded the bend. He let the first pass on without an effort to get his attention. Then another rider and then another. Finally the last rider neared the spot where the old man sat like a frozen statue. As this one drew near, the old man caught the rider's eye.

The old man said, "Sir, would you mind giving an old man a ride to the other side? There doesn't seem to be a passageway by foot. The rider replied, sure thing. Seeing the old man was unable to lift his half frozen body from the ground, he helped the old man onto the horse.

He took the man not just across the river but to his destination which was just a few miles away. Just as they neared the tiny cottage, the horseman's curiosity caused him to inquire. Sir, I noticed that you let several other riders pass by without making an effort to secure a ride, then I came along and you immediately asked for a ride. I am curious why on such a bitter night you would wait and ask the last rider. What if I had refused? The old man looked the rider straight in the eyes and replied, "I have been around these here parts for a long time. I reckon I know people pretty good, the old timer continued. I looked into the eyes of the other riders and immediately saw that no one was concerned about my situation. It would have been useless to even have asked for a ride, **but when I looked into your eyes, kindness and compassion were evident.**" I knew then and there that your gentle spirit would welcome the opportunity to give me assistance in my time of need. Those heartwarming comments touched the horseman deeply. I am most grateful for what you have said, he told the old man. **May I never get too busy in my own affairs that I fail to respond to the needs of others with kindness and compassion.** With that Thomas Jefferson turned his horse around and made his way back to the White House. I think you could say he was "Experiencing his Shine."

I would like to conclude with these verses from **II Corinthians 3:18** (from the New International Version [NIV] and from the Message [MSG Bible]):

*"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."*

*"And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him."*

It is important that we experience our shine so that we can do His work effectively in the world this week and this year. When people see folks from New Hope they should be saying: What is that shine? Where does it come from? You can tell them it is from Jesus Christ who is present in my life.