



# Auburn Presbyterian Church

*Passionately loving the Lord Jesus Christ and radiating that love to everyone*

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## **“Why Would I Do That?”**

Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-43

Healing Ministry

This Sunday is the last one before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, with our 7 p.m. service at St. Theresa’s Roman Catholic Church. The theme for these Wednesday nights is, “Faithfully Following Jesus”.

Now, if you have friends who are not yet Christians [and you should], they might well ask, “Why would anyone follow a dead blue-collar worker from 2000 years ago, living half-way around the world?” And that’s a fair question. Since we all seem to be examining everything these days with an eye to, “What’s in it for me?”, how can we let people know what Jesus offers that no one else has offered, or can?

That’s what I think God is answering for us this morning. So, let’s begin by listening to God’s word in Second Corinthians, chapter 3 through the start of chapter 4. I’m reading from the New International Version. *[text]*

Paul wants to compare Moses, whom he had followed all of his life since childhood—with Jesus, who had totally turned his life around just a few years before. And to make this comparison, Paul picks up an incident from the book of Exodus that Jews everywhere would remember. Keep your finger in this Second Corinthians text, while I read you Exodus 34. I’m going to read verses 29-35. Again, listen for God’s Word. *[text]*

Isn’t this interesting? Exodus brings us the story of God liberating His people from slavery through the leadership of Moses, and giving them the Law that will make them different from any other people on earth. Moses’ face was actually shining when he came back to the people after being with God. So one thing we learn right away is, *being with God changes you.*

Have you ever seen anyone who is totally in love? (A good thought for Valentine’s Day.) People who are in love “glow”, don’t they? They are right in front of you, talking with you--yet a part of their heart is with their beloved, even at that very moment. I imagine Moses looked like someone in love with God, and so the “wattage” was turned up several notches. The glow was so evident, it made people afraid—*what happened to him? What might happen to me, if I get too close?*

In the Exodus account, to avoid startling people with this light of God radiating from his face, Moses fashioned a veil so he could see out and he could speak. But when he went back into the Tent of Meeting to be with God, he took off the veil, so there would be no barrier between God and himself. And I don’t think at first Moses was aware that his face was glowing. It was others’ avoidant reaction that clued him in that he needed to make a veil.

The writer of the Second Corinthians text was the Apostle Paul who was, by his own description, a high-achieving follower of Moses—what I call a “super-Jew”. He wrote, **“If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.”**

Then Jesus interrupted Paul’s life, and he goes on, **“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish [or, literally dog dung], that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”** (Philippians 3:4b-11, NIV)

What an amazing turnaround! Met on the road to Damascus by Master Jesus, so much changed in Paul’s life that he had to express and impress on others how much more precious is Jesus compared to Moses. In our Second Corinthians text, the most obvious point of comparison Paul makes is with the light radiating from Moses. The light of Moses’ face had faded, in Paul’s own life; it had been superseded by the Holy Spirit of God. So Paul put that interpretation into the Exodus account. Since Paul had experienced how the glory of God in Moses’ face had faded, he figured Moses had wanted to hide a similar fading of that glory from the Hebrew people.

But there’s another point in Paul’s letter that I think is even more important than the glow of God’s glory. The glory of God was given to how many people in the Exodus? Only to Moses. Everything from God came through Moses. Moses also brought the people before God, interceding for them to God, time and time again. Moses was the one and only intermediary, acting as a priest; that’s what priests do.

But listen again to Paul: “But whenever anyone turns to the Lord [Jesus], the veil [the barrier between us and God] is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 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.”

The glory of God is given to all who follow Lord Jesus, not just to a single individual such as Moses. Here’s the point, if I’ve not made it as clear to you as God showed it to me: because of Jesus (the intermediary with God who is God’s SON), anyone who follows Jesus can have that same direct, powerful connection with God. By that relationship with God, God’s Spirit, God’s power, flows through us, and shows to others. A life following Jesus is the with-God life, now; people who live following Jesus are living eternal life now. The with-God life now is part of eternal life.

And people will see you as different, even if you don't; all you're aware of is “God-with-you”. You aren't thinking, “I'm doing a Jesus thing for this guy, and I hope he notices.” You are thinking, “I want to be with Jesus as HE does this thing for this guy.” Get the difference?

Christians, on your mark, get set, GLOW with God's Glory!

Jesus offers that connection to God that no one has offered, or can offer. And that kind of intimacy with God changes you. More and more, you begin to look like Jesus. You fulfill your life by giving up your life and following Jesus.

To hammer this point home, let's finally pick up the text from Luke 9, where Jesus goes up on the mountain with his inner circle—Peter, James and John. Listen for God speaking to you, right now! [*Luke 9:28-43*]

Jesus glows. It's not just his face, it's his person, even his clothing. The disciples see him consulting with Moses and Elijah—the Law of God and the Prophet of God supporting Jesus in his departure from this life, the climax of his years of ministry. It's an overwhelming experience for Pete and the Zebedee brothers. And then, to separate Jesus from the other figures, the disciples experience God's voice to say, “Jesus here is my beloved son. LISTEN TO HIM.” Listen to him more than Moses, more than Elijah. (And in Bible language, “listen” always means, “obey”, or “follow directions”.)

So this is what you say to your friends who smirk, “Why would I want to follow a dead carpenter from 2000 years ago, living half-way around the world in a backward culture?” You say, “Why? Because Jesus and only Jesus gives the with-God life, and lives it with you. Once you experience the life powered by the Spirit of the Lord, everything else in your life just seems like a waste. It's like being in love for the first time--people have talked about it, but until you fall in love yourself, you don't know. Following Jesus is falling in love with the God who is love.”

With the “mark of the cross” in ashes that we receive on Wednesday night, we begin a Lenten journey with Jesus to his cross. For many Christians, Lent is a time to give up some pleasure, to identify somewhat with Jesus on his way to the ultimate sacrifice. Most of us choose something trivial—like chocolate (OK, that's not trivial for some of us)—maybe like “giving up watching my favorite cable TV program for these weeks”. The trivialness of our choice indicates how poorly we value Jesus' sacrifice. Can we really equate skipping some TV programs (which we can always catch on re-runs) with the suffering of Jesus? I don't think so.

So instead of giving up something for Lent, why not “take something on for Lent”, and give up what might be necessary in order to take this on? Why not do something that will serve poor people? Why not talk to a scoffing friend about God in your life? That would be more like it, don't you think--something that makes us look more like Jesus?

Would it be like Jesus to be doing it, these acts of service to others? And would it be like Jesus to speak respectfully to scoffers? But more importantly, do we detect Jesus doing that in that present moment, so that we can join Jesus in this Jesus season?

**Spiritual direction moment—“Lord, where did I miss you this week?”**

**And if you didn’t detect God at work this week, ask God, “Lord, is there more You want to give me?”**

*Increase our love for You, Father, that falling in love with You we begin to know You deeply, and see You more, day by day.*