

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Transfiguration, Supplement Series B, February 11, 2018

Theme: The spotlight is on Jesus
I. He is true God
II. He is our Lord
III. He is the gospel light

INJ When I go to the grocery store for my wife, it can be a catastrophe. “Pick up some salsa and some cream soup. Here is a coupon.” I can do that. How hard can it be to get salsa and soup? After staring at a wall of soup cans for ten minutes, I finally see some cream soups. Does she want fat free? Name brand? Cream of celery, mushroom, or chicken? Good thing we have cell phones. From home she tells me to look on the bottom shelf, left side, in a box. Store brand, cream of chicken.

Off to grab a salsa and I won't have ruined the reputation of “guy shopping” too badly. Do you know how many kinds of salsa there are? The coupon in my hand doesn't match any of those on the shelves! Another phone call. It was there, in front of my nose. I wasn't looking in the right place, or at the right things, so I didn't see.

Can “male shopping blindness” happen at church – even to the ladies? Do we know what we are looking for, here? Or, are we distracted as we treat “those” people with disdain? Hurts from our past still linger. Some things the Bible teaches are way out of step with our American culture. It takes money and effort to keep this place going. Look at the frustration, the gossip, the grudges. Why do we even come to this place?

Plenty of people pile on to that defeatist attitude. You go to church how often? Do you really believe all that stuff? You give that much money? And you like it? What about all the other pleasures and activities of the world? Will you deprive yourself of them and instead choose this burden?

What you see when you come to church is sometimes good, but sometimes it isn't, right? The Apostle Paul tells us why we have such difficulty: “The god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from clearly seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is God's image.” Sometimes we also stumble about in the darkness, looking at all the wrong things. On this Transfiguration Sunday, the spotlight is on Jesus so we see him. Jesus is true God, he is our Lord, and he is the gospel light.

When Jesus is in the spotlight, we see that he is True God. We confess Scripture truth in the Nicene Creed when we say: “God from God,

Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made.” Jesus is the Second Person of the Triune God. He is almighty and present everywhere. He is holy, true, just, and pure. Jesus is to be worshiped by all people. Even the angels bow before him. In our Gospel today Jesus revealed his divine glory on the mountain, and it was dazzling!

Jesus is not just something to look at, though. The true God worked out our salvation. Only he could defeat Satan and destroy death. Jesus was victorious over sin and broke its hold on us forever. He drove out demons and controlled the wind and the waves. He showed himself alive after the resurrection to assure us that he is our Redeemer. The glorious God has come to save us. The spotlight is on Jesus, the true and saving God.

Not everyone sees Jesus that way. A great many are content to call Jesus only a human being, just like any of us. Scripture says there is more. God took on human flesh through the miracle of the virgin birth. This Jesus is fully God and also fully human at the same time. He has to be, or he is not the Savior from sin. The true God humbled himself, even to death on a cross. He didn't flaunt his power and authority. Today, the spotlight shines on Jesus and we see that “in Christ, all the fulness of the deity lives in bodily form.” Jesus' transfiguration glory lifts our hearts in joy!

Our reading says “the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from clearly seeing.” What is so hard for them to discern? “The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is God's image.” In blindness many refuse to see that Jesus is true God.

Be careful that it doesn't spread to you! Yes, the attitude that Jesus is nothing special is contagious! Here is an example: Does what Jesus says about sexuality make a difference in the way you behave? If he is God, then it should, right? But if you downgrade Jesus to just another preacher telling you what to do with your life, you can ignore him. It works that way in so many areas of life. When we tell ourselves that Jesus won't notice, or he won't care, or he won't do anything about it, we make him out to be less than God, don't we? We become blinded by the god of this age – the idols of reason, materialism, individualism – and we could lose everything.

Jesus is true God. His glory is revealed to us on this day not only to confront us, but to save us. God has come to take away our sins and to remove our guilt. The spotlight is on Jesus. Isn't that exactly why you walked in the doors? You want to see Jesus! Your determination to be here is somewhat counter cultural. So many things could have distracted you. So many other things were important, but True God Jesus has also made a close connection with you. He is your Lord who governs and protects and

rules all things for your good.

Paul says this: " Indeed, we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." A caricature of church is a fiery preacher telling everyone what to do. Or an imposing figure bullying people. Or a clique of ladies who talk about everyone behind their back. Or potluck meals with Jell-O. What good can you see among all those people at church? Where are you looking? If church is only the people and the activities we pursue, then it is empty.

We don't come here for the chit chat, the food, or our friends. We come here because the spotlight is on Jesus, our Lord. He has entered our heart and made his home there by faith. We gather each week not because of the force of my personality, but because Jesus feeds us with Word and Sacrament. He has won the victory over the god of this age! Satan has been defeated and Jesus lives, risen from the dead. Sin is forgiven. Death is swallowed up. Our focus is on our Lord Jesus Christ.

Trouble is that you can't see Jesus in his glory. Where is the dazzling white and the radiant light? Instead of Jesus, I stand here and my personality gets in the way. We do stand around and talk, and eat good food. Sometimes proud preachers do take the spotlight for themselves. It isn't rare for selfish sheep in a congregation to see themselves as most important. Look at the people gathered here today: we are a mess of problems, aren't we? Some Lord we have! It looks like we are on our own.

When we move the spotlight off Jesus, then we only have darkness. If we grab attention as master and know-it-all, we push our Lord Jesus out of the way and we have become blind. Yet remember how the Father spoke in the Gospel saying, " This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" Jesus is our Lord, our refuge and strength. We are not alone, for he has defeated the enemy and he keeps us in his tender care. " Indeed, we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants." The spotlight is on Jesus our Lord!

When I go to the grocery store, finding the correct item and checking out with it is not the final goal, is it? I want to eat salsa and chips, or use the cream soup to make dinner! So it is with Jesus in the spotlight. Our God and Lord is the gospel light. St. Paul says, " For the God who said, 'Light will shine out of darkness,' is the same one who made light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ."

The opposite of light is darkness, and the most impenetrable darkness had to have been at the creation of the world. It was all darkness, when " formless and empty" is the way God described it. Can you

imagine the scene when God said, " Let there be light" ? There wasn't even a source for light yet, as the sun, moon, and stars didn't come till Day 4. Yet light shone out of darkness. As miraculous as light was at Creation, so stunning is the light of the gospel that made you a Christian. Think about that! God's mighty power turned on the light in your dark heart. He pierced your unbelief, giving you new life in Baptism. He strengthens you in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. He brightens your heart of faith by his gospel word. He forgives your sin – as amazing a miracle as the creation of all things! The spotlight is on Jesus as the gospel shines.

On the day of Transfiguration, Jesus radiated with the light of his divine glory. Wouldn't it be powerful if he did that again? How many people would believe him then? Not many, I am afraid. It is like the Olympics. I watched the opening ceremony Friday night. The show was spectacular, but I expected it to be. I barely paid attention.

Jesus doesn't do his work through glorious splendor. He gathers every one of his elect through the opposite approach. Jesus works through humble words spoken by sinful people. Jesus works under bread and wine in Communion. He comes hidden under water in Baptism. Jesus defeated death and Satan through a cross. He comes into your darkness with a promise – a promise that he keeps. "I forgive your sins!" Jesus is the gospel light. The spotlight is on him.

You won't physically see Jesus when you come to church, but his gospel power is real. God did a miracle when he brought you to faith. He keeps on doing the miracle, keeping you in the faith by the gospel. Don't lose it. Don't slip back into the darkness. Don't succumb to the lies of the god of this age. The darkness seeks to consume you and it grows deeper if you ignore Jesus' powerful words. Return to the gospel, and the light shines on you! Lent begins Wednesday. In six special worship services we see the dark tendrils of evil wrap themselves around our Savior Jesus – for us. He was not defeated. He suffered and died to redeem you. Can you see what is important? Jesus is true God. He is our Lord. He is the light of the gospel.

The gospel has been hidden from those who are blinded by Satan. That is a far worse fate than being unable to find what you are looking for in the grocery store. Don't let Jesus be hidden from you. When you worship, look past the humbleness and the wretchedness of this place and these people. The spotlight is on Jesus. " Indeed, we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." He has " made light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ." SDG Amen.