

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

2 Corinthians 4:3–6 (ESV)

³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Pray

First, we are going to talk a bit about our Gospel reading and then we are going to let Paul's writings to the Corinthians form our application of this text.

We have some good evidence that Peter is the source of Mark's gospel that is why we don't have a gospel of Peter, because we already have it in Mark. It should be striking that Peter would tell Mark all of these things that happened and let himself be portrayed in such a poor light. Peter's sinfulness and foolishness are on display repeatedly. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus speaks to Peter and says, 'Get behind me, Satan!' (Mark 8:33)

Then, later on, the very night when Jesus was arrested, Jesus had to ask; 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?' (Mark 14:37)

Even after Jesus had prepared Peter and told him what would happen and how he would respond, Peter was adamant; 'If I must die with you, I will not deny you.' Yet when it appears Jesus needs a friend, Peter responds; 'I don't know the Man' (Mark 14:26—31, Mark 14:54, 66-72)

In the transfiguration account, his crazy comment even gets an explanation of how pointless it was; 'It's good for us to be here, let us build three shelters.' (Mark 9:5,6) Why did he say that; 'they didn't know what to do'. Look how foolish Peter makes himself look by telling all this to Mark to write down and look how he displays his fallen humanity. Yet he is free from the guilt and shame because he has had the light of Christ shone into his hearts and therefore, he is free to have his sins exposed to the whole of humanity so that others can know the light of Christ!

It was good for Peter, James, and John to be up the mountain to see Jesus changed, it was good for them to hear the message that Jesus is the Son of God, and it's good for us to know that we should listen to him. Last week we had God promise through Moses that a new prophet was coming; 'it is to him you must listen'. A long-held and now fulfilled promise from God, for here he is, one raised up from the Children of Jacob and now identified as the Son of God, and in case those present were not sure, the same words from heaven; 'listen to him!' It's good for us to know and see because in knowing Jesus and seeing Jesus we see the Father and we are illuminated.

That is Paul's message to the people at Corinth, 'For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'.

God has shone light out of darkness!

We see that darkness all around us, the sin and evil deeds of humanity. Murder, child abuse, all kinds of death and suffering, power plays, greed and corruption hidden behind all sorts of apparently good things, evil that claims to be good and good things proclaimed as evil. Suicide, drug abuse, divorce, gambling, all manner of idolatry and the list could go on and on. Not to mention all kinds of religions and cults, as well as those who are falling for the lies, that science has proved that there is no God.

Darkness is all around us, but God has shone out of and through this darkness, he has shown us his Son. Peter, James and John would have been waiting to see the Messiah, to be certain that Jesus was the one. And here they are, with a clear message 'This is my beloved Son; listen to him' and a clear image of Jesus in all his divine Glory, and all they can now think about is housing for the night, staying on the mountain.

We also come to this place to have Jesus revealed to us. He is shown to us in all these stories we read in the scripture, stories of Birth, Baptism, visitation by the Magi, miracles all over the region, healings, exorcisms, Transfigurations, denial, suffering, death, and resurrection. Jesus is revealed in all his Glory to us as we gather in this place and listen to his word. He is revealed also as we take hold of him in his Holy meal, at his table, with him serving us, his Body and Blood are revealed to us, and sheds his light on us and drags us out of the darkness of this world and into his light. Beaming and bright his light invades our earth like he did thousands of years ago and continues to do today. His light shines into even our dark hearts showing us as sinners and him as our saviour. The light of Christ has shone into our lives, into our hearts, showing all our sinful thoughts words and deeds and brought them out of the darkness and into the light of his forgiveness, setting us free.

It is good for us to be here, seeing this, hearing this. But we don't need to build a house or tent so that we can stay forever, we have been given knowledge of Jesus the light so that we can go down from the mountain and live in the light. Live as forgiven people who are not blinded to their own darkness but let Christ's light shine into their hearts so that they can live in his freedom and light. Unlike Peter, James and John who are told not to reveal their new knowledge until the correct time, the time is right for us to tell others all about Jesus the Light. In all our words and actions as those who have the knowledge of Jesus the light, we are called to share that knowledge with others so that the light of Christ can illuminate their lives also.

The world needs this light like nothing else. You might have been convinced that the only thing the world needs is zero carbon emissions, a new way of governing, a redistribution of wealth, the removal of a few choice world leaders, an end to war, or any number of things that we convince ourselves 'the world just needs this'; but none of these things matters if the world does not have the light of Christ. Our dark world needs this light like nothing else. Because this light is so hidden, as Paul says the god of the world has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they will not recognise the light and it is to these blinded ones that the light is all the more important. All those living with the guilt and shame of their own sin, which they refuse to call sin need the light of Christ to relieve them of that burden and darkness.

We are in the light, and in His light we know that all things come from God. We can live lives of thanksgiving, telling others about the gifts he has given to us in abundance, not just material, as in our homes, this country, our work and income, our food and water, our play time and sport, we can also tell others about Jesus the Christ who shines into the world his gift of salvation for all to receive should they believe that his forgiveness is for them. We who have his light, are compelled to shine it, if there ever was a way for us to hide it, imagine Peter, James and John trying to hide the Glory and Light that they saw on the mountain. It would have been like trying to hide an elephant in the phone box. If the disciples had attempted to hide the light and glory of God, it would have shone out from all the places of darkness they could have conceived to hide him.

Some may not want to hear our message as Paul reminds us, some are blinded to the gospel, they have shut their eyes and do not want to hear. Like a little child, fingers in ears, 'I can't hear you'. Sometimes it is our efforts to show them God that cause them to shut their eyes, they've had people try, they've seen how poorly-behaved Christians can be and so they are no longer interested. In these circumstances, we can freely and without fear of shame or guilt (like Peter and Paul) point out our own failings and sins that he has forgiven in the hope that God might use us to illumine the heart of but one blinded and lost child. As always

we must repeatedly remind these hurt ones that contrary to popular opinion the Christian faith is not about 'being a good person' or 'doing the right thing' or 'controlling others' – the Christian faith is all about forgiveness and sin, God's light shining into our darkness.

Other times it is the god of this age that causes their eyes to close, they can't accept God because he can't be proved, or they can't accept God because science claims there is no God. They might even be close members of our families, children that we thought we started 'on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it'. And yet we see that they have turned from the way, they've rejected God, they've rejected our efforts, they've covered their eyes and blocked their ears to the gospel. These are realities that will go on while this world continues. Paul knew it and we must know it, some are blinded to the gospel while others see the light clearly. We should not get downhearted because others refuse to hear or see what God has done, it is a reality of this life on earth, it is not a reflection of our efforts or desires and it is certainly not a reason to doubt that God is active. It is the work of Satan, the prince of darkness who wills that all are led astray and kept in darkness, but God has shone into this darkness, he has defeated this darkness with his all-conquering light of life.

God is truly active when his word is preached and sinners on account of the light of his forgiveness turn back to him. He is active when you hear the message of his Son transfigured and want to sing about his bright shining. God is active when you come to his table and receive his flesh and blood bringing forgiveness to you. And this reality that many are blinded and refuse to see the light should not stop us from shining the light that we have seen in Christ into the lives of all around us, because God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

In all our daily work, school, sport, leisure, eating, drinking, playing, laughing, crying all the activities and actions of life Christ's light shines through us. So that those whose eyes and ears and hearts were closed to his gospel might have them opened and they too can join us in proclaiming; that God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Amen