

Sermon: **Reflecting God**
II Corinthians 3:18

“Don’t tell me how much of God you have. Tell me how much of you God has.”
---Corrie ten Boom

Fridtjof Nansen, the Norwegian explorer penned these words after being icebound near the North Pole. “I must break through this deadness... at times this... crushes the very soul.”

Nansen had studied the ocean currents and believed the best thing to do was to trust the current of the Artic Ocean. His goal was to drift to the pole and beyond it, coming out on the other side into the sun sparkling Pacific.

But soon the Fram was locked into frozen solidarity with millions of acres of polar ice cap. He sat there all winter. Then came a short spring and summer that thawed almost nothing. Winter found him with deck, riggings, and rudder frozen in uselessness. In the middle of the second dark arctic winter he wrote: “Life seems as dark as the winter night outside; there is sunlight, but he was stuck in a 6 month polar night. After 2 years, the soul crushed Nansen tried to “break through the deadness” by leaving the ship. With one companion he set out to walk to the North Pole. Fat chance, the jagged ice terrain pounded them into submission. The two drudgers took refuge in a shell of a cave and shivered through the third winter, eating polar bear meat and remembering the sunshine and hoping to feel it again in some, distant future.

After three years of frozen oneness with the polar ice cap he was rescued and went home.

I wonder if life’s winter has not clouded our perception. If we are caught in the business of activates, to a point that we see no real way out. That what should bring joy and fulfillment just brings stress, and an unsettling in our souls for something more.

Some of us may be caught up in the winter of service to God, and miss the point of our Christian existence. We may just see duty and obligation instead of freedom, and the joy of service.

In this verse Paul is speaking about those who should have seen the glory of God in Christ as they read the ancient scriptures. They were devout, sincere, and thought they were doing the right. Many of them were full-time religious professionals, Levites, priest, Pharisees. They read the scriptures, memorized the scriptures, and hugged the scriptures. They expanded on the law to the point of adding over a thousand amendments to try and keep it pure.

But there was a problem. Like us they were set in their ways. They looked to the law of mosses as the one and only way and expression of revelation of God. They could not conceive of anything new coming. Their belief became their spiritual coffin. They were so busy doing the letter of the law they missed Christ. They poured over the scriptures and missed the pouring out of the Lord’s Spirit during Pentecost. They worked for outward ceremonial purity through the keeping of the law and missed the purification of their hearts by faith.

We have become cynical and are walking in a living tomb. Gods has so much more for us but we have built a protective wall around ourselves that does not let the new thing God wants to drop in. We try briefly, only to recoil when an immediate response does not come.

We do not realize that a code of conduct like keeping the Ten Commandments will not truly transform anyone. And that keeping a code of rules cannot give you scruples. If you miss something in your daily list of do's and don'ts you feel guilty. This, being busy trying to keep the rules, brings us further away from Christ true love and freedom and we miss what Christianity really is and has to offer.

We miss it in a third way by looking for outward performance rather than on inward formation. How many people just see the church by how many attend and not by the depth and transformation that has and is taking place daily in the life of the believers?

Numbers never tell the true story. This is that legalism that provides presumptuous pats on the back. As C.S. Lewis once said "Nothing gives one a more spuriously good conscience than keeping rules, even if there has been a total absence of all real charity and faith." They cause us to presume that we are good.

I have been hurt the most and have seen the church fail in its job more times by people who felt they were good because they kept a few rules, than by those who allowed God to bend their hearts to be like His heart.

We are going to embark on a journey the next few weeks to understand heart holiness. To not only understand a doctrine but to understand what true Christianity is all about.

Too many of us are like seed blown in the wind. Full of potential but never being planted to see that potential blossom and grow. Grow to the point of not mere existence, but to the point where we can also reproduce and spread the life God has given us.

Now, as for us, we are all, with uncovered face, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are having our outward expressions changed into the same image from one degree of glory to another according as this change of expression proceeds from the Lord, the Spirit, this outward expression coming from and being truly representative of our Lord.

---Wuest

3:13 this is a reference to Exodus 34:33-35. The purpose of the veil was to keep the Israelites from seeing the glory of the Lord **fade** from Moses face.

Too many times we try and act like Moses with our Christian experience, we put on faces that are not real trying to cover up when the glory is fading. Only revealing our true selves when the glory comes again. This is pride and vanity. God's glory does not come upon us so that we can be honored by men. It should have been a sign to Moses that he needed to stay in the presence of God because his glory fades in the hearts of man.

If we just come to church to get our glory fix and then put our veils on during the week, this will be exposed. Our true selves will be revealed and we will feel shame and want to hide, instead of digging in deeper and coming to God in the midst of His people truly seeking His face.

This series is one called reflecting God. Like the moon, it does not produce light of its own. It is nothing by itself. But because of the Sun it has been worshipped, romanticized, and held in high esteem. We have missed the point that without the Sun the moon is a dusty crater filled orb.

But being set in motion it can affect the Earth. Tides can rise and fall, it helps illuminate our night, and it can be a source of awe in right perspective. This same is with us. We must not lift up people but the Son that illuminates the people. With the Son we can radiate a light that calls people out of darkness. It is not a light we produce, yet we can reflect from the true source enough to help people out of the darkness.

Holiness is this reflecting. Too many people today just want an experience. Hence they usually are left dead and empty. Like our polar explorer. But when we truly allow God to control, and change us then we will be fulfilled. We seek less to control and manipulate others; we purely are vessels to be used.

This week I had a chance to love someone who has set themselves up as my enemy. They have affected me politically and tried to hinder me as a minister. But God has opened a door for His true purpose. This same person now is broken, and God chose to use me to minister love, and acceptance. Love and acceptance they have not given others. Love and acceptance they do not deserve. They have given judgment and tried to ruin people's lives, but God called me to go past my personal feelings, and reflect His love.

How do you know you are sanctified? When you reflect God and it causes you to go against your natural tendencies. To flee, be mean, lie, shrug from the truth. Reflecting God is what it is all about.

When this experience comes we do not need the veil to hide that it may fade. The experience and change is from within. If it fades this is just a warning that we are moving away from our source of power and light and we need to be back in His presence. Today make that choice.