

Prayer of the Day: Eternal God, who created the first dawn, we thank you for the light of your love that rises among us all the time. You call us here to find ways to reflect that light in our lives. Astound us again, O God with your brilliance in Christ. Transform us and send us to shine until your true life radiates in all creation, in the name of Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Mirrors

Luke 9:28-36; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

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Mirror, mirror on the wall ... or in our hand, or on the car. We look in one to make sure our hair isn't sticking up, our clothes are straight, or to put on a good make-up face. We check the ones on the windshield and to the side to see other traffic and change lanes or turn safely. They're hung from the ceiling in the hospital hallway so we don't collide with someone else coming around the corner. They adorn our walls or even in extraordinary places they are the wall as if expanding the horizons of our vision. Our places seem larger. We see people and things outside of our normal line of sight. And wasn't it fun as a child when first we looked into mirror placed just opposite another to see on and on deeper and deeper as if to eternity. *Mirrors help us see life from a different perspective.*

I wonder what Paul had in mind, exactly ... the glory of the Lord reflected as if in a mirror. I mean in Paul's day they were no where near so ubiquitous. Most people had probably never seen special pieces of coated glass like we do. Scholars believe such mirrors may have been just invented in Lebanon in the first century. So maybe Paul had in mind the latest offering unveiled by the Steve Jobs of the day at some techie gathering. More often, people like you and I probably imagined something like pools of water, a fuzzy image in some highly polished metal object, a chance reflection in the bright sun against a piece of glass. For the ancient Corinthians, ordinary objects could become mirrors, reflections. And that's what Paul called ordinary people in the church to be: reflections.

Of course, the question is what do we reflect? In all times and places from ancient Rome to 21st century America the church always has this fundamental challenge of balancing its life as an image of the contemporary world and of God's kingdom. In faithfulness we try to be transformed evermore into the image of Christ's love. We try to shape life in our world with the goodness of God in which it was created, until God's commonwealth of abundant life comes in fullness. Sometimes it's not hard. There are glimpses of beauty to bring a smile. There are vistas that take our breath away.

And the trouble is often we look in the mirror and see our frailty staring back – the scars of surgery, the lines or pounds or other imperfections. We peer deeper into the eyes of our hearts through broken dreams, the cloud of questions, the dust of disappointments, a veil of fear ... and sometimes the reflections don't seem so beautiful. Do you see what I see? We look through the window, we turn on the computer or t.v., we go our way in the world in each day. Pictures of devastation in Haiti are beyond our imagination. Facial expressions of friends out of a job, just back from the doctor or wishing she could go make us scan the horizon of hope. The politics and glitz of stars; the surprising bird singing of spring; the joy or sorrow,

memories or longing of Valentines Day ... sometimes doesn't the image of our world seem more like those mirrors at the fair or a museum that distort things to seem super fat or stretched super thin? Our world desperately needs us to reflect the grace of life the way God created it and intends it to be. In God's mercy, how do we pursue our ministry together and not lose heart?

Now saving the world, or at least changing our own lives seems a common theme in literature and movies. Heroes and heroines brave some evil danger and preserve life abundant. It must be some longing deep in the human spirit from the days of Greek gods to fantasy powers of the future. We saw one such example on the silver screen Friday – the new movie “Percy Jackson.” A misfit boy finds out who he really is with special powers and saves the world from a battle of the gods. And along the way he uses the shiny silver back of his I-pod Touch to see Medusa and ultimately cut off her head, without being turned to stone by looking in her eyes.

And in the first Harry Potter book or movie, a similar misfit boy suffers under a life far from beautiful and bountiful. Until ... he arrives in the other world of Hogwarts School. Along the way of his enchanted adventure, he stumbles upon a huge mirror. The thing about this mirror is that when you look into it you don't just see yourself and the normal room. *You see reflected what you most desire.* His bumbling friend Ron sees a successful sports champion and head boy. The eccentric Headmaster Dumbledore sees lots of warm fluffy socks. Harry sees his real mom and dad standing beside each shoulder. He's never really known them. They died protecting him as an infant. And the trouble with this huge enchanted mirror, as Harry discovers and we know too, we can get sucked into staring at an illusion of our desire to escape reality. *When in the end, life only gets transformed in grace when we face those realities.*

That's the trouble with the disciples, of course. They're a misfit bunch who've seen Jesus transform so many people's lives – healing, preaching, feeding, teaching amid realities of everyday life. When Peter, James and John go with him up the mountain the Jesus they see is so wonderful they want to escape those very same realities and stay there as if entranced forever.

Really it's a very strange story, isn't it? Jesus' clothes shine like all the halogen floods at a football game rolled into one. Two old long-dead heroes of faith suddenly appear and a cloud speaks like a megaphone. Honestly, in some ways, I'd be o.k. if we just skipped the whole thing. Who can really make sense of it? I mean what does this have to do with our everyday life?

Well, that's just the question, isn't it? I mean I think that's what Luke is trying to say, to describe, to explain, to inspire about Jesus and his affect upon our lives. If we see it as poetic expression, maybe like a painting, of who Jesus really is in God's grace, well I'd don't think we'd be far from Luke's point. All of God's goodness Moses, Elijah and Hebrew scripture points to is fulfilled in Jesus. His love outshines the brightest sunny day of our success, and illuminates our deepest emotional darkness. Each time he brings life another ray of light beams. And I expect what the disciples ask for is not far from what we'd all want if we were

in such a place, such a presence. That's when he reminds us all that faith is so much more than just a fantasy escape. *So much more powerful, more promising, more fulfilling – more transforming.* Jesus' transfiguration gives us a picture of all human life fully radiant with God's power.

Since we have such hope, Paul says, ***be bold*** at unveiling the glory of God! Now what does that mean exactly? Does it mean speak loudly, act abrasively or live flamboyantly? Paul's word "bold" here means having courage and confidence, openness and honesty. It's about living everyday in a way that's transparent, compassionate, vulnerable, ... unveiling our listening hearts to mirror the struggles and joys we see and hear in someone else. And together we'll see the truth of God's love revealed in our midst.

So, friends, I'm trying to go with Paul's image ... to picture our faith as a reflection of Christ amid all our everyday plates and i-phones and the pools of water we pass ... at our best in faith like a beautiful mirror. Of course, the difference between a piece of glass and a mirror is the silver lining on the back. I'm thinking about the difference between just seeing our lives and the world as it is – like a piece of transparent glass – and reflecting God's will for it to give a different vision of what it could be. The difference is a lining of compassion, vulnerability, honesty and grace that comes from the Spirit coating our minds and hearts. *Truth is, I believe such a lining of God's Spirit is inside everyone one of us.* And you know, in the end I kind of like this image, because of course, mirrors don't generate light of their own. We can't fill our lives and world with the light of love on our own. But don't we see? We can reflect it in our own flashes here or there, and even focus the light of God's love in places of other people's darkness.

So look into the mirror on the wall, dear friends, and unveil your inner mirror. Clean off the dust of our disappointments and lift any old sheet of fear or uncertainty. Peer into the depths of God's eternal love and goodness lining us inside. Turn our hearts toward full luminous power of God's Spirit. And then shine clearly, boldly in Paul's way of saying it, with trust that God's dream of abundant life can never be dimmed or shattered.

Can you see us together here in the church like one big mirror, made up of lots of little pieces – a mosaic mirror? Where do we see this light reflected? The radiance of these life-changing experiences with Christ so powerfully evident ... like the mirror, mirror on the wall?

A son sleds down the hill in his mother's lap. They don't care if his hat will make his hair stick up; if they're clothes are askew; if she doesn't have any make-up on. At the bottom when he flies off and bounces up again smiling, hugging and kissing, saying "I love you," their faces light up, transfigured, radiating life as God wants it to be.

We show a little extra patience in the supermarket and some other driver on I-94. We give a little forgiveness to our beloved or a work colleague and someone we meet on the street to transfigure a harsh word when nerves are frayed. And in that glimmer of grace we can change lanes and make a turn on our way without colliding.

Ladies gather around the tables in Fellowship Hall, while the men stand in the corner, or maybe it's gathered for an extended evening in a home or watering hole around town and stories are told that expand our horizons of life, our vision for what good and possible – things we couldn't see in our normal line of sight, and here and there little glimmers of light transform the place into a mountain top.

And at the funeral yesterday we had another beautiful look deeper and deeper at the meaning of life. Our stories of love shared with Lucille Dickey may have seemed like a dim image in a mirror, now, to quote Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. At the completion of her life Lucy now sees God with full clarity as if face to face. And at such moment of laughter and tears we are all transfigured in grace as we peer deeper and deeper into eternity.

And then there are times like mirrors in a flashlight, or on a lighthouse beacon spinning around, when radiate beams of light like Jesus. We deliver a meal to someone shut-in. We pop into a room on our volunteer rounds at the hospital. We meet with other friends at 8:00 here each night. And God's love illuminates the corners and concerns of darkness.

Soon we'll share our potluck and annual report ... lined, I pray, with compassion, openness and honest patience. And it will all be like a mirror of our life together in the past and coming year. In and through all we have to celebrate and all our questions of frustrations, may God be our vision – our wisdom and true word ... heart of our own hearts whatever may befall us. Then may we arise and go on our way again into the world to shine with our lives ever transformed from one (small) degree of glory to another, reflecting the image of Christ, our Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen.