

Reflect the Glory of God
II Corinthians 3:12-18
Sermon Notes/Life Group Questions

This morning I want to talk to you about amnesia. And I am not referring to the kind that my wife Ellen accuses me of selectively suffering from. I want to talk about “spiritual amnesia”.

Amnesia is a terrible thing. It truly is sad when a person cannot remember who they are, when they cannot even tell you what their name is. Loved ones grieve as they look into the eyes of beloved family members and see only an unrecognized and distant stare. It is the height of sadness when a person can not remember their story – what is their story of significance? Where is their place of security? Who are the people that love and accept them?

It is also sad when a church falls into a form of spiritual amnesia, forgetting who they are and why they are there. Some churches fall into this over time, much like a frog in a kettle. If you throw (and I do not recommend this!) a frog into a pot of boiling water, the frog will immediately jump out. But you know the illustration – if you throw a frog into a pot of room temperature water and then slowly bring it to a boil the frog will not recognize the impending danger of the water coming to a boil. The frog will continue swimming until it can no longer jump out and ... it dies.

This is what happens in so many churches. They begin with a sense of purpose and in the blessing of the Lord. But over time the sense of purpose becomes clouded. Years and years of programs begin to layer over one another and the sense of purpose begins to go out of focus. Churches can begin to carry on what used to work and pretend that all is well while ignoring the danger signs of their “amnesia”. They carry on as if all is well but the anointing, the blessing, the Glory, the sense of the Presence of the Lord is a distant memory.

People are drawn to churches that can clearly answer the questions of “who are we?” and “why are we here?”. People, especially young people, are drawn to churches that not only have a clear answer to these questions, but have an answer that is genuine and authentic to their community. They don’t want replications of what God has blessed in the past or what God is blessing some where else. They want to experience the real thing – an authentic and genuine sense of the Presence and Glory of God.

Our children and our neighbors are drawn to a church that reflects the Glory of God. When people come and sense that God is in the house – they want to come back. When people come and see the Glory of God reflected in the faces of those that call themselves God’s people, they want to come back. When our children and our neighbors watch us during the week and see the reflection of the Glory of God in our faces, in our laughter, in our joy, in our peace, in our caring, in our listening, in the way we love one another – they want to get in on it.

The Glory of God is awesome. It can also be overwhelming. When the sense of God’s presence fills a room it becomes impossible to carry on business as usual. Even “church business” can come to a halt when “God is in the house”. The Glory of God belongs to Him. We cannot manufacture or manipulate it. We do not control or direct it. But the Bible tells of moments when God’s people reflected His Glory. Let’s look at some of these stories and ask what happens when we reflect His Glory. [The Glory of God – reflected by the people of God, a story that goes back to Joseph ...](#)

Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers. But God was with him. Joseph became a ruler in Egypt serving the Pharaoh. Under Joseph’s leadership God’s people flourished, even though they were in Egypt. But in Exodus 1:8 we read that after the death of Joseph there was a new Pharaoh that didn’t know about Joseph. God’s people became slaves to the Egyptians. In their moment of crisis they cried out to God. In Exodus 3:7 we read that God heard their cry and was concerned for His people. God called Moses to lead His people from slavery in Egypt into the Promised Land. Because of the unbelief and disobedience of God’s people, they spent forty years wandering in the

wilderness until God was satisfied they were ready to enter into his promise. The Glory of God began to appear to His people in the form of a cloud. God placed a cloud between his people to protect them from the Egyptian army. God began to speak to Moses and through Moses to His people from within a cloud. When Moses went to the mountain, God presented Himself in a cloud. Interestingly Moses had to wear a veil over his face until the glow from the Glory of God dissipated from his countenance. With each step Moses took away from the mountain, the more the glow of God's Glory faded. As Moses led God's people through the wilderness they were guided by the cloud of God's presence. If the cloud stayed, the people stayed; if the cloud lifted and moved, God's people moved with it. We also see that the tabernacle was completed according to God's instructions and a cloud covered the Tabernacle and the Glory of God filled the Tent of Meeting – a cloud so full of the Glory of God that Moses could not enter. Worship as they knew it stopped. The Glory of God was in the house. This was a time of blessing for God's people as they experienced and reflected the Glory of God.

Let's continue looking at the story of God's people – leading up to the dedication of the temple by Solomon. In Joshua 24:31 and Judges 2:6 we read that "Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel." But in Judges 2:10-11 we see that a form of "amnesia" had set in. Here is what it says, "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord ...". In their "spiritual amnesia" a destructive pattern settled in. The people would cry out to God and God would deliver them with a judge and then they would again forget God. This pattern repeated itself for years. In I Samuel 8 we read that this arrogance finally led to the people of God rejecting Him as their divine King as they asked for an earthly king. Imagine that ... they had so completely forgotten who they are and why they were there that they rejected God as their King and asked God to instead give them an earthly king. God gave them Saul but he too was disobedient and the Spirit of God left Saul. In I Samuel 16 the prophet Samuel anoints David to be the King of His people. David ruled as the king over God's people for forty years. God did not allow David to build the

Temple himself, so David made all of the preparations. David's son Solomon became King and he completed the temple. King Solomon then brought God's people together before the temple as he led them in dedicating it to the Lord. And in their worship and prayer, God came to them. We read (I Kings 8:10-13, II Chronicles 5:13-14 and 6:1-2) that the Glory of God filled the temple. The Glory of God was so great that the priests could not perform their duties. The Glory of God was in the house. Can you imagine the blessing again experienced by God's people as they reflected the Glory of God?

(Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration)

His Story continues ... for fourteen generations after David the kingdom was divided. What was once one nation became two nations – Judah to the north and Israel to the south. What had once been one nation now became two nations that were now warring with one another. Wow – what a terrible case of “spiritual amnesia”. People who were once united and known all across their region as God's special people, were now divided and at war with one another. In their “spiritual amnesia” God's people were eventually carried into captivity in Babylon. As exiles in a strange land God's people began to cry out for a Messiah – the Promised One to be sent from God to deliver His people. God's people continued to suffer for another fourteen generations after their captivity in Babylon, when Jesus – the Messiah – was born. The Gospel accounts give us a wonderfully rich portrayal of Jesus' life and ministry. I want us to look into just one of the many stories. It is found in Matthew 17:1-13. Jesus is on the mountain with Peter, James and John. We call it the Mount of Transfiguration. It has been given this name because while they were on the mountain top with Jesus, they saw Jesus transformed right before their very eyes. The Bible says that His countenance was transfigured. His face shone like the sun. His clothes became a bright white. And if that wasn't enough, Moses and Elijah appeared and began to talk with Jesus. And then ... God Himself appeared – in a cloud of Glory – and said, “This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!” The Glory of God was in that place. This was yet another time of blessing experienced by God's people as they again reflected the Glory of God.

His Story carries on ... in Acts 1:9, after the cross and the tomb and the Easter resurrection, we see Jesus ascending into heaven. How is He taken from earth into heaven? Jesus is gathered up in a cloud sent by His Father. As Jesus left this earth and returned to His heavenly Glory He was seated at the right hand of God the Father. And the church was birthed. The church was to carry on the life and message and mission of Jesus. Their challenge was to be like Jesus, and their call was to help others be like Jesus. They began to live out the story of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was in heaven, but His Spirit was with them and they reflected the Glory of God. They had more than their share of struggles and persecution. But in the midst of such suffering there was an apostolic explosion of growth – a growth that exploded out across continents and into the Gentile – the non-Jewish – world.

Today we are a part of that story – His Story. We need to learn how we avoid the dangers of spiritual amnesia. Who are we and why are we here? The answer to these questions can be found as we go back and connect our Deer Flat story to His Story. It is a story of God's people reflecting the Glory of God. And when the Glory of God is in the house, God things begin to happen. When the Glory of God is reflected in the faces of God's people, lives are radically transformed in the community of God's people. Let's take a moment to study our text for today from 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 (Read).

What are some of the lessons from these verses that help us know how we might better reflect the Glory of God? In these verses we see the Apostle Paul referring back to Moses. When Moses would come down from the mountain after meeting with God, His face would glow as he reflected the Glory of God. But this reflection of God's glory scared the people of God such that Moses had to wear a veil that would cover his face. With each step that Moses took away from the mountain where he had been with God, this reflection would fade and eventually he would no longer have to cover his face.

Why does the Apostle Paul use this story? We may find the answer to this question in verse 18 when he says that "...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”. Okay, what did we just read?

Moses came down from the mountain and had to wear a veil over his face to cover the reflection of the Glory of God until the glow had faded. But that is not our story. It is suppose to be just the opposite for God’s people today. Okay ... let’s ask what changes when we reflect the Glory of God?

In verse 12 Paul says that we have hope. Hope doesn’t change our reality. It changes our perspective in the face of reality. Bad things will happen to good people – even to God’s people. But in the midst of this reality, we are a people of hope. We have hope when we do not suffer from “spiritual amnesia”. We have hope when we are confident in who we are and why we are here. And as we reflect the Glory of God we have a hope that we share boldly. We are not ashamed of the Gospel and its power to transform the lives of our friends and neighbors. We know that we are ambassadors that have been entrusted with Good News. We reflect the Glory of God. We live with hope, we share hope, and we do so boldly.

In verse 17 Paul says that we have freedom. A person suffering from amnesia has lost their personal freedom. They can no longer function from the strength of identity and purpose that comes from knowing who they are and why they are here. But to those who have a clear and compelling response to these questions – there is a sense of freedom. As we more and more begin to live out our spiritual identify and purpose expressed in the heart of the Deer Flat family to be like Jesus and to help others be like Jesus – we will have an increasing sense of freedom. This is a freedom that promotes unity. It provides focus. It motivates resources. It fuels passion. It aligns energy. We reflect the Glory of God. We live and love with a freedom to become more like Jesus.

In verse 18 Paul says that we reflect the Lord’s Glory. Our faces should be unveiled. We do not need to hide the reflection of God’s Glory. We should proudly wear the reflection of God’s Glory in our faces for all the world to see. As we become more like Jesus we

look and act less and less like the world around us. We have a love for God and neighbor that changes our whole approach to life. We are committing to being a part of Christian community where lives are radically transformed by God's grace. We give our lives in service and to be used in His Story. We reflect the Glory of God. What do others see when they look into our face and into our lives? We pray that they will see Jesus.

And last, in verse 18 it also says that we are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory. Moses lost the glow of the Lord's presence as he walked further and further away from the mountain. But for us, it is the opposite. With each step we take, we draw closer to the Lord. And our reflection of His likeness and His Glory only grows. We should be wearing an ever increasing Glory. We become more and more like Jesus, and our reflection of His Glory should only continue to grow.

Paul concludes by telling us that this is not something that we manufacture or manipulate. It comes from the Spirit of God. When God is in the house, God's people reflect His Glory. And the brightness of His Glory should only continue to shine brighter and brighter as we live in community together as the Deer Flat family.

Friends, the Bible says that one day Jesus will appear on the horizon as He returns for His Church. All of His Story points toward that moment in time. It is a time when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Jesus Himself spoke of this moment. In Luke 21:27-28 Jesus said, "At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Wow – that is our future. That is our promise. But we don't idly watch the heavens for the appearance of this glorious moment. We need to live in such a way that we reflect the Glory of God as we become more like Jesus. We seek to love Jesus ... to be more like Jesus and to help others to be more like Jesus ... that we usher in a cloud of His glorious presence.

Would you like to become like Jesus with ever increasing glory? This is not just a story from the Bible. It is a part of His Story for today. It is a part of His Story for the Deer Flat family. Friends, may I ask ... when was the last time we experienced the glory of God? I am talking about more than just feeling good. We can manipulate emotions and human responses but that is not the same as experiencing the Glory of God. When God is in the house every one knows that it is God. And when God is in the house we cannot carry on business as usual. When was the last time you were so overwhelmed with the Presence of God that it just stopped you in your tracks and you bowed silently or burst out in praise in His presence? Some of us have lived long enough that we may remember a time and a place where the Glory of God was in the house and God's people reflected His Glory in life changing ways. But one of the reasons why so many of each generation have left the church is that the Glory of God is no longer in the house. It is as if there is a "spiritual amnesia" inflicting the people of God.

Is there a danger in being satisfied with someone else's blessing? Yes, there is a grave danger. We are blessed and privileged to be a part of the Deer Flat family. We are preparing to celebrate one hundred years of ministry and presence in the Treasure Valley – and beyond. But friends – we do dishonor to the pioneers who brought us to this place if all we have to celebrate is their story. To honor them we must also seek an authentic and genuine blessing of the Lord for such a time as this. We need to have a story – a story that connects with His Story. A story of God's Presence filling this place. A story of God's Glory in our lives and in our faces and in our community and in our relationships. The blessing that God gave to our fathers, our grand-fathers and our great grand-fathers will not restore the Glory to us. We need to live in such a way that with ever increasing Glory we too reflect the Glory of God. We need to live in such a way that the story of God's Presence in the house of God will be one that our children will tell because they too will have seen the Glory of God with their own eyes.

My friends, what changes might we need to consider to better reflect the Glory of God? Is there anything in our lives that God wants us to set aside so that we will have room for more of Him? Is there anything that we are unwilling to give to Jesus? Is there anything

that we are unwilling to do for Jesus? Is there anything that we are unwilling to do to become more like Jesus? Is there anything that we are unwilling to do to help our neighbor become more like Jesus? If God identifies anything at all that veils or covers up our reflection of His Glory then we need to come to Jesus in repentance and seek His forgiveness.

As you enter into a new week with all of its opportunities, I invite you to find moments when you can get alone with God. I invite you to find conversations with people that you trust to love you like Jesus. In those moments and conversations, let's consider this question: In what ways are we being transformed with ever increasing Glory and becoming more like Jesus?

Be careful not to fall into a form of spiritual amnesia, where you wander away from Jesus and find yourself alone. Our prayer is that there will be no spiritual amnesia in the Deer Flat family. We need to know who we are and why we are here. The desire of our heart is to be like Jesus and to help others be like Jesus. May the Glory and Presence of God be with and among us. May we come together and find that God is in the house. May our children and the next generations see and experience for themselves the Glory of God in this place. May our faces – our very lives – more and more reflect the Glory of God – for all the world to see. For our children to see. For our neighbor to see. For Jesus to see.