

The Glory and the Veil

The story that Alisha and Meredith read a few minutes ago had a few very prominent images: the overwhelming radiance of God's glory, and then the veil that was used to hide it.

This idea of the veil is very intriguing to me. We don't see them much in our part of the world, except maybe in weddings. Actually, it's funny, I combed through our entire movie collection looking for a movie with a veiled bride... and *Lord of the Rings* was the closest I found. But, yeah... the veiled bride. It's a powerful image.

I remember the a conversation I had a week or so before my wedding day. A buddy of mine, who was married, told me this, "Mike, when you see her for the first time in her dress on the other end of the church... it's powerful man. Like, it will be the most beautiful you've ever seen her."

And now fast forward to my wedding day. I'm standing up at the front, waiting and watching. Bridesmaids passed by smiling and lovely (but not too lovely) and my heart steadily accelerated in my chest until the music changed. Pachelbel's Canon in D. And then she rounded the corner and came into sight. The bride for whom I had waited all my life, shining like the moon and lovelier than a sunrise.

I nearly passed out. But, you know.... In a good way? That was glory.

I think we are often times a bit dismissive when it comes to the glory of God. When you read about it in Biblical times, the glory of God was heavy - literally heavy. It was overwhelming. Even Moses, who probably had the closest relationship with God anywhere in the old testament, couldn't look God in the face. God said basically, "Because I love you, I won't show you my full glory. It will kill you."

That's intense. And then think about this: after he had looked at God's back, he actually absorbed some of that glory. When he came down off the mountain, Moses face was glow-in-the-dark. You think that would freak somebody out?

But that was Moses' job: he reflected God's glory in himself. I think that would have been pretty awesome. People *could have* gotten a glimpse of God's glory, but instead they were scared and made him hide it away.

I want you guys to do something for me. I know it may sound silly or feel silly, but everyone else is doing it, so we can all feel silly together. Okay, I want you to cover your eyes just like this. Don't just close them, I want you to cover them just like this. Alright, keep them covered for a minute.

This is what it's like under the veil. It's dark, and dark is easy. The dark is where secrets hide. This is the place that we keep all the parts of ourselves we don't want the world to know, and we definitely don't want to talk to God about.

There's not much pain here, because we can live in denial and avoidance. There's not much glory here either. When we're in the dark, all that matters is ourselves. We

aren't looking up to see God's glory. We aren't reflecting light onto our brothers and sisters.

It's tempting to stay here. This is where the Israelites were. After a while it gets comfortable, and familiar. After a while, the light doesn't seem like such a good thing. But God wants to lift the veil. He wants to show us his glory, even if it hurts.

Okay, you can uncover your eyes now. It's unpleasant at first, isn't it? A little disorienting, but after you live in the light for a little while, your eyes become changed. Little by little, the light stops hurting and it actually makes your life better.

2 Corinthians 3 says this:

“Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.

But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.”

Paul says that we are like Moses, because we've seen Jesus. Actually, this is a very common theme in scripture: Christ is the groom and his church is the bride. I'm trying to imagine what it would be like if I was at a wedding, and the groom reaches over and lifts the veil from the bride's face. For the first time all day they look eyes with nothing between them. And then... the bride reaches up and pulls the veil back down. “No thanks, I'm good.”

Here in God's house we get a glimpse of God's glory completely unveiled. That is no small thing. But it is dangerous.

Maybe you never thought about it before, but it is, because if you look into the face of God, you will be permanently changed. In fact, there's a part of you that will die. The part of you that loves the darkness, that clings to denial. That part of you that wants to pull the veil back down.

And when that part of you dies, do you know what's left? Well... I suppose it's different for each of us, but I reckon we all would wind up looking just a little more like Jesus.

The glory of God changes us, like the light of the sun changes the moon. In the coldness of space, the moon is an unimpressive lump of grey rock and dust. But when it is bathed in the powerful and overwhelming light of the sun, it becomes the glory of the night sky.

FOR DISCUSSION: Think about some place in your life where you have seen God's glory revealed, and how it has changed you.