

McCabe United Methodist Church

February 14, 2010

Pastor Art Scanson

“Your Face Says It All”

Luke 9:28-36

This is Valentine’s Day and this might be a reminder to the men in the congregation, just in case you forgot. According to one source, it is easy to tell you forgot Valentine’s Day. Here are some dead giveaways:

- The kids tell you that Mom “went to bed early” and “locked the door” . . .while you were taking out the trash.
- Hallmark calls, offering discounts on apology cards.
- You wake up with a florist’s ad stapled to your forehead.

Then maybe a word to the single guys present. According to another authority, there are some things you definitely should NOT say on your Valentine Date this evening. Like. . .

- I really don’t like this restaurant that much, but I wanted to use this 2-for-1 coupon before it expired.
- It’s been tough, but I’ve come to accept that most people I date just won’t be as smart as I am.

While we are not here today to celebrate Valentine’s Day, even though romantic love is one of God’s most profound gifts. Rather, I would want to focus on something far more profound – the love that God has for us, the love God has for the world. I would like to do that by using some of the truths of our faith suggested from Valentine’s Day. We might begin by calling to mind the face of someone who is in love.

People who are in love want to put on their best face./ Quite naturally, people in love want to be seen as attractive. Many singles today are going to online dating sites. Now there is nothing wrong with this. However, do you imagine that the people who use these online dating sites go there to advertise their flaws? I don’t think so!

People who are looking for a mate want to put on their best face. Nothing in the world is more normal than this. Yet, the desire to improve our appearance can lead to some unfortunate situations.

Pastor Glen Schmucker tells about a young woman who had been in his youth group when she was younger. Time has passed and she is now a single adult in a high pressure job. She called Pastor Glen to talk about where she is in life and what has gone on since her youth days.

In these intervening years she’s had a very difficult life. She witnessed her grandmother commit suicide right in front of her. There has been a very brutal divorce. Her father has died before his time and she is now estranged from her mother.

She is still a very attractive woman with platinum blonde hair and a beautifully sculptured face. So Pastor Glen was shocked when she told him that she was going to have a nose job done on her fortieth birthday. His response was, “You’re so beautiful just like you are. Why in the world would you want to have a nose job?” She said, “As I turn forty, I become less competitive in the market and I’ve got to keep my edge so I’ve got to change my face.” How sad he thought, She’s a lovely woman, but she doesn’t think she’s competitive. (April Herron-Sweet

People who are looking for a mate may be tempted to do a lot of things, but what about our inner self? This brings us to something else we need to look at: *no matter how beautiful a person may be (or not be), your face reveals what is in your heart.* Having said that, I know some people have what is known as a “poker face.” Meaning, you can’t read their face. It is said that no one could read President Delano Roosevelt’s face, which is probably a good asset when you are negotiating treaties with other countries. But experience tells us that over time what is in your heart will steal its way out to your face.

Annette Simmons wrote a book about storytelling in which she noted the importance of body language to tell great stories. This leads her to say some interesting things about the face.

She notes that a baby can perceive emotional content—anger, fear, love—from facial expressions long before he or she can understand words. You can tell a baby while you are feeding it that you like strained liver, but your face gives you away. She also says, your face is a communication tool that transcends language and cultural barriers. How about parents who have that “look” that says, don’t do that! Or, Stop that right now! Yes, we all know that all too well - both on the receiving end and the sending.

For us as Christians, as God’s people in the world, when we are telling a story of hope and joy, we need to feel hope and joy in our heart to communicate it. If you try to tell a story of hope while you are feeling frustrated, you communicate the frustration rather than the hope and joy.

In other words, you can’t fool your face. You may be able under some circumstances to hide your emotions, but sooner or later what is in your heart steals its way into your face.

If you can’t fool your face. If you have been in the presence of God, it is going to show. That’s what our scripture lesson for today tells us. It is the story of Christ’s Transfiguration. Jesus goes up the mountain with Peter, James and John. As Jesus is praying the appearance of his face changes, his clothes become as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appear with him, in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.

Jesus that day not only had a glowing face. His whole body was radiated with God’s glory. Jesus was filled with the glory of God as he lived continually in the presence of God. My friends, we too can spend enough time in God’s presence that our face can literally glow with the light of God. Think about it. Think of those saints you know or have known and those times they just seemed to glow with the glory of God. Their faces said it all! They loved God from the depths of their heart and it found its way to their face. If you live in the presence of God, it is going to show!

Living in the presence of God doesn’t just affect how others see you, it also affects how you see them. It is interesting that Jesus, who lived continually in the presence of God, was also the most accepting and loving man who ever lived. The experience on the mountain was just prior to Jesus leaving the mountain and soon moving towards Jerusalem and ultimately the crucifixion. (In the Christian tradition this is the scripture for the last Sunday before the Lenten season.) It seems to me that as Jesus was filled with radiance, so it is a possibility intended for Christians. Oh, maybe not to same level. But that it is indeed expected.

For persons of faith to be persons who see the radiance, the glory of God in life is—to see the glory of God in the beauty of creation,

-in the gift of one another,

-in the promise of a new day,

-in the challenge of a new opportunity – persons of faith are able to see the radiance, the wonder, of God. When they are joined with God in serving others.

Mother Teresa received what she called her Inspiration. It was a “calling within a call” to serve the most destitute and poor of Calcutta.

As she was persisting in bringing her Inspiration to reality, she felt the presence of God intensely within her. It lifted her spirits and made her face shine. Her Inspiration helped her to give her whole life to the poor for Jesus’ sake, and she did not “lose heart” as she served others.

While the time came when she felt she had lost the inner glow of Christ, she came to see it in others. In every person she met—no matter how poor, sick, alone and offensive to all sensibilities—she saw the glow of Christ reflected. And the poor saw Christ reflected on her face whether she felt the glow within or not. And so it is for us – we may not always feel the glow of God’s presence within us. But it can be seen on the faces of others, and they may see it on ours when we follow Christ in our love and service.

Tomorrow (Feb. 15th) begins the week of Random Acts Of Kindness. If you want to see the glow of radiance on the face of others and a smile on your face—get involved in this effort. Ask God to help you find places to do something good for someone else. Randomly give someone a dollar bill or maybe a five or ten dollar bill. As the bulletin suggests, pay for the person behind you in the drive-up. Give the cashier an extra 5 or 10 dollar bill towards the groceries for the person behind you. Or for the next person who comes in to pay for their gasoline. Now try to think of how many other places you can do a random act of kindness this week.

Here is my promise. If you do at-least one random act of kindness each day this week - I will guarantee you will come back to church next week with a smile on your shining face. Yes, your face will say it all! Your heart will be filled with joy! Because you will be found in the presence of Almighty God.