

Interactive lesson



picture enlarged and cropped
from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/aranandjennie/184146342/>
“Fenton’s Sundae”

What is the sweetest thing you have ever eaten?

<Let them respond>

Were you able to eat all of it? <Let them respond>

Do you think you could finish a sundae like the one shown? <Let them respond>

What might you do with leftovers? <Let them respond>

Sometimes we get so much good in our lives, that we are overwhelmed. Have you ever experienced the grace of God like that, or been with someone who did?

<Let them respond>

How were other people around affected?

<Let them respond>

When your life is – when you are – transformed by the love of God, others around you may not know what to make of it. Like the Israelites, they might be frightened by the changes in us, causing us to veil some of the effects around them. Have you ever hidden your faith from others? <Let them respond>

What did Paul say about hiding the glory of God upon us? <Let them respond>

May each of us be emboldened to share the glory and love of God joyfully with all whom we encounter!

Gospel lesson

Prior to this reading, Peter had called Jesus “The Messiah of God.” Then, Jesus foretold His death and resurrection, which left the disciples questioning exactly who and what Jesus was, if His mission was to die; for at that time they did not understand the reality of life after death.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-transfiguration/>

Luke 9:28-43a

(NRSV)

²⁸Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.

²⁹And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.

³⁰Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him.

³¹They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

³²Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

³³ Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" -- not knowing what he said.

³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.

³⁵ Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

³⁶ When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

³⁷ On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him.

³⁸ Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child.

³⁹ Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him.

⁴⁰ I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not."

⁴¹ Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here."

⁴² While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean

spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.

^{43a} And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn “O Splendor of God's Glory Bright” UMH #679>

Message: Seeing the Glory



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/come-home-for-christmas/second-sunday-after-christmas-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-after-christmas-year-c-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Glorious Savior, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may celebrate life in You. Amen.

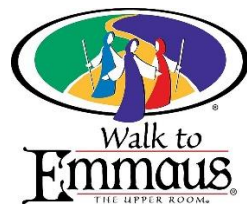


picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/love-never-ends-being-the-body-of-christ/transfiguration-sunday-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/transfiguration-sunday-year-c-graphics>

The “Love Never Ends” sermon series concludes with “Seeing the Glory” today:

“If your church is itching for a praise service, this is it. All the hymns and songs about the greatness of our Lord can be sung on this day. All the music that speaks of the awesomeness of God, of the wonder of Christ, of the mystery of the Spirit. This is a moment that defies explanation. And that’s a good thing.”



picture from <https://www.nwaonline.com/news/2014/sep/20/walk-to-emmaus-helps-renew-refresh-chri/>

A couple dozen years ago, I went on a [Walk to Emmaus](#) as sponsored by the United Methodist Church. It is a three-day experience filled with the love of Christ. At the closing on the third day, the pilgrims on the walk are invited to give a short testimony of their experience before their sponsors.

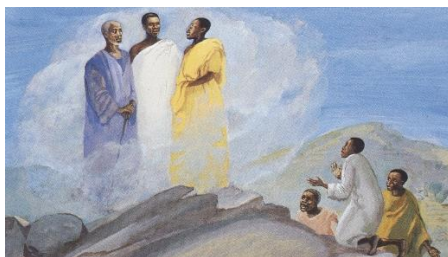
Every one of the pilgrims that I have seen at a Walk to Emmaus closing has had a glow about them, flushed with joy and wonder from their experience. All of them. And I was told that I had one, too.

Then we went back home, into the mundane world. All the excitement and joy of the walk was essentially unknown to most of family, friends, and especially colleagues at work. They were not ready for me to be gushing about my faith journey.

I suspect Moses encountered something similar on coming down the mountain after talking with God. The people were not ready for the reflected glory of God in their faces.

Just a few months earlier, the people had been slaves in Egypt; now they were adjusting to nomadic desert life with manna to sustain them. Even with God leading them out of Egypt, they were more focused on the physical, mundane world than on the spiritual.

Paul described it as a veil over their minds. I think people have the same thing today – a shield against the profound lest we be overwhelmed with something far greater than the lives we currently know. It is scary to let the veil be lifted, to be vulnerable for a closer encounter with our Lord God. We do not know just how our lives will be changed by it.



picture from <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imageLink.pl?RC=48307>;
credit: JESUS MAFA

The apostles Peter, John, and James had the veil lifted from their minds (at least briefly) when they went up that mountain with Jesus. They probably figured it would just be prayerful meditation, a little extra personal bonding time with their master.

Then they saw Jesus without the normal veil – and Moses and Elijah! The dead were not really dead; their presence represented the law and the prophets, all completely aligned with and centered on Jesus, and they were talking about His upcoming “exodus”.

The three followers of Jesus were too overwhelmed by the mere presence of those beings to make sense of all that they saw and heard just then. As Moses and Elijah left, Peter tried to offer his services to them, not knowing what would be helpful.

Then God surrounded them as a cloud, proclaiming Jesus as God’s son for a second time. Yet after all of this, they did not tell anyone about it then. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus tells them not to. I think that was in part because the disciples were still forming in faith, trying to wrap their hearts and brains around what the Messiah truly was. Jesus was not the traditional vision of the Messiah.

So the veil went back over their minds – so much so, that they could not heal the possessed child. Jesus pointed out to them that they should know better. This chiding was one more important step in their faith journey, helping the apostles to recognize the veil and the limitations it put on them.

I ponder, in the transfiguration, was it Jesus who changed, or the disciples? Could it have been just a

lifting of a veil from their minds, to see Jesus for who and what He truly is?



picture cropped from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-with-face-covered-by-fabric-10761003/>

Do we see the veil covering our own minds, limiting how we experience the presence and love of God? As Paul reminds us, we need to turn to the Lord for the veil to be removed. Once it is lifted, we can be overwhelmed. Who has the courage or desire for that?

You may recall from a couple of years ago a story I related by Robert Fulghum. In his asking, “What is the meaning of life?” he got a profound answer. A person playing with a mirror fragment found they could reflect light into dark nooks, providing illumination. Peoples’ lives could be like that.



picture cropped from <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/giant-sun-mirrors-of-rjukan>
credit: Bilfinger SE

There is a village in Norway located in a deep valley between mountains where sunlight does not naturally hit the village for about half the year. By putting mirrors on the mountains above the village, engineers were able to illuminate it during the winter days

when they would otherwise be in the dark. It is a tremendous feat of engineering.

When the veils on our minds are removed, we can reflect the love of God into places that are dark, for people who need that light, potentially illuminating whole villages, whole communities.

When we let the Holy Spirit illuminate us, we are transformed into a source of light for others. How brightly we shine depends on how fully we let the light of Jesus envelop us – the more we do, the more we are transformed into His likeness.

So this week, let the Light of the World shine through you. Look for areas of shadow in those you love, in the community, in our world. Let the light of Christ bring hope to those who need it through a helping hand, kind words, and thoughtful gestures. Be a reflection of heavenly light in sin-darkened lives.

Let us now respond with **A Modern Affirmation** UMH #885

Pastor:

Where the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is the one true church, apostolic and universal,
whose holy faith let us now declare:

Pastor and People:

We believe in God the Father,
infinite in wisdom, power, and love,

whose mercy is over all his works,
and whose will is ever directed to his children's
good.

We believe in Jesus Christ,
Son of God and Son of man,
the gift of the Father's unfailing grace,
the ground of our hope,
and the promise of our deliverance from sin and
death.

We believe in the Holy Spirit
as the divine presence in our lives,
whereby we are kept in perpetual remembrance
of the truth of Christ,
and find strength and help in time of need.

We believe that this faith should manifest itself
in the service of love
as set forth in the example of our blessed Lord,
to the end
that the kingdom of God may come upon the earth.

Amen.

<Doxology>

<Offertory / Pastoral Prayer>

Let us pray:

Transforming God, we come to your altar this morning,
knowing that in our giving and in our living, we

have often put “just enough” into living our faith so as not to impact our lifestyle or cause too much discomfort.

We have been reluctant to let go of our affinity for the things of this world; and in our attachments, we have often missed the opportunity for the transformed lives you desire for us.

Through this mountain top experience, fill our hearts with your light, that we may be filled with your love, filled with hope.

Just as Moses and your disciples were changed by their experiences, change us and transform us into the image of Christ by your mercy.

Lord, may we have unveiled faces that reflect your love, your hope, and your light.

May our offering this morning be an invitation to living a life radically transformed by your power, love, and grace.

- Lord, please help {these members of the body of Christ whom we lift up} with Your healing touch and comfort:

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- -
- -
- -
- -
- -

- Thanks for

- -
- -

- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
 - Family far off
 - Travelers
- Send Your Spirit to address world/social problems
 - end bigotry, dismantle racism, reform systems persist
 - bring world peace
- Guide our Leaders – local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,
<Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "Shine, Jesus, Shine" TFWS #2173>

<Benediction>



background picture from
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/Love-never-ends-being-the-body-of-christ/transfiguration-sunday-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/transfiguration-sunday-year-c-graphics>

Go now, transformed by your glimpse of holiness,
sharing the gifts with which God has blessed you.
Build relationships based on Christ's love,
creating community in the Holy Spirit.
Thus make the world brighter for you and for all whom
you encounter, to the glory of God.
Amen.