

Sermon Notes – March 2, 2025
The Holy Gospel of St. Luke 9: 28-36
Peace Lutheran Church
“Witnesses to the Glory of God”

Both the Exodus and Luke readings describe theophanies - encounters with the divine. Although God tells Moses, “You cannot see My face, for no one shall see Me and live” (Exod. 33: 20), this does not stop God from revealing Himself to Moses in a pillar of clouds (33: 7). God reveals himself to others in multiple ways, including to the prophet Elijah (who accompanies Moses in Luke's transfiguration account) in “a still small voice” (1 Kings 19: 12, KJV, RSV). Those who receive such theophanies not only live but also become vehicles for God to communicate with His people.

Paul likewise has a revelation of the resurrected Christ (Acts 9: 1-19) and should understand the startling power of an encounter with the divine - a power so great, the brilliance of the transformation so complete, that it might be easier for Moses to communicate with the people with a veil over his face so as to not distract from God's message. Indeed, Paul does understand the importance of communicating God's message in such ways that people can comfortably receive it (see 1 Cor. 19-23).

However, in the text from 2 Corinthians, Paul isn't interested in God's self-revelation on Mount Sinai but rather interprets Moses' theophany to demonstrate that no external works are necessary to receive the gospel. It is, perhaps, the same rationale behind the futility of Peter's suggestion to build a dwelling on the mountaintop (Luke 9: 33). This is a form of Jewish biblical interpretation, commonly seen in Hebrew Scriptures, with the intent to answer contemporary questions. As such, Paul's argument is not intended to diminish Judaism - which he understands to continue to reflect God's glory - but rather to highlight the strength through which Christ now also reflects that glory (2 Cor. 3: 7-11).

Attention to and resistance of such potentially anti-Jewish and supercessionist readings is an important act of the same kind of neighborly love that has been uplifted in both the New Testament and Hebrew Scripture readings we have read over the past several weeks during this season of Epiphany. This is even more important in light of the historic harm that misreadings of Exodus 34:30 have caused. The Latin Vulgate translation of the Hebrew word for “shining,” as “horns,” has led to the false

accusations Jews being associated with the devil, which has resulted in their persecution to this day.