

Going for the “Glow”

I have a question for you this morning: Did you ever wonder where halos came from? I mean we just came through the Christmas season not long ago, and there on our Christmas cards and in our Christmas pageants and on the top of many of our Christmas trees there were angels with halos on their heads. Where did the idea of halos come from?

One of my dictionaries gives these definitions of a halo: "A luminous ring or disk of light surrounding the heads or bodies of sacred figures, such as saints, in religious paintings; a nimbus." And, "the aura of majesty or glory surrounding a person, a thing, or an event that is regarded with reverence, awe, or sentiment." These definitions are interesting but they don't explain where the idea of halos came from. I do, however, have a theory.

Though the word "halo" is not found in any of our traditional translations of the Bible, I believe we can find its origin in Scripture. There are several places in Scripture where heavenly light and the aura of divine majesty and glory shone upon the earth. In our Scripture lesson for this morning, we are reminded of what happened to Moses when he brought the ten commandments down from Mt. Sinai. His face shone with the glory of God, so much so, that the people asked him to put a veil over his face. They were afraid to look or it hurt their eyes to look upon his face unveiled. Other examples of the glory of God coming to earth are found in the stories of the dedication of Solomon's temple, Isaiah's Temple vision in the year King Uzziah died, and the appearance of the angels to the shepherds announcing the birth of Jesus.

We also find this in what is known as the Transfiguration of Jesus. Matthew 17:1-2 tell us, "After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light."

Further examples are provided by the angels who appeared to announce Jesus' resurrection from the dead, and by the martyr Stephen when he was brought before the Jewish high council:

Acts 6:15 says, "All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel." Once you've seen shining clothes and shining faces, you don't have to look much harder to see halos. Or, one could say that halos are

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simply artist's renditions of the greater and more glorious reality.

Now, you may very well wonder why your pastor is talking about halos this morning? What, after all, do halos have to do with us? I hate to burst anyone's bubble; but, despite what you may have said to your sweetheart on Valentine's Day, none of us are angels. And, according to my reading of Scripture, none of us are ever going to be angels.

The Bible makes it quite clear that angels are one species of created being and we are another. Angels stay angels and we stay people. And, although one day our heavenly bodies will be freed from the constraints and contaminations of our earthly bodies, they will still differ from the bodies of angels. We will be like the angels, Jesus says, but we will never be angels. Actually our status in heaven will be higher than the angels. The angels remain God's servants and our servants, but we who know Christ will be known as the children of God. We will be glorified human beings not angels.

So, why am I talking about halos? Here's the deal. None of us are ever going to be angels, but all of us are called to have halos; that is to say all of us are meant to glow with the glory of God. When our "spiritual lakes," or lives, are filled with the Holy Spirit, our faces will be aglow with the glory of God; His holy radiance will be visible in our lives. Does this sound kind of crazy? I mean, has your pastor been out in the cold too long?

Not at all. Let's walk through our Scripture lesson from II Corinthians 3 and see what we can find out about this. II Corinthians 3:7-11 say,

Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of

Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

What Paul is talking about here is the contrast between

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what we call the Old and the New Covenants. Letters engraved on stone is a reference to the Ten Commandments that Moses received from the Lord on Mt. Sinai. This was a glorious thing is witnessed by the glow on Moses' face when he came down off the mountain. But as glorious as this was, Paul tells us that it was fading away. That is to say it didn't last forever. Eventually, even Moses lost his glow and didn't need to veil his face any more.

Likewise, the commandments lost their glow, in that they proved to be the instruments of death more than life. Once the people of Israel had the Commandments, their sins became clear and their breaking of the commandments led to their judgment. Many were condemned to death on the basis of the commandments. The commandments, though glorious, brought a stronger awareness of sin; they increased guilt and increased the sense of separation between God and man. The Ten Commandments did not bring salvation; **they just pointed out how much people need a Savior.**

In the first part of our Scripture lesson this morning, Paul makes several contrasts between the ministry of the Law that came through Moses and the ministry of the Holy Spirit that came through Jesus Christ. The ministry of the Old Testament Law was glorious, but the ministry of the Holy Spirit is more glorious (v. 8). The glory of the Law's ministry faded away, but the glory of the Holy Spirit's ministry to us is permanent (vs. 7, 11). The Law brought only condemnation and death, but the Holy Spirit brings righteousness (v. 9).

Now, the important question is what does this have to do with us and our halos? Let's read on:
Continuing at verse 12 Paul says:

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with

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ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

In verse 12 Paul speaks about a hope that makes us bold. When Paul uses the word "hope" here he is really talking about what we might call a "conviction." This "hope" is a "conviction" that has come to us through our faith in Jesus Christ. And, the conviction is this: What we have in Jesus Christ will put us in right standing with God and will make us righteous; it will never fade away. **The glory we see in the face of Jesus will never fade.**

The next thing Paul tells us in this passage is that there are some people who just don't get it. Many of the Israelites just didn't get it. Paul says that just as Moses' face was veiled, their hearts and minds were veiled; that's why they failed to receive the righteousness which comes through faith. And, it's not just the Israelites; all people are living in the dark until they turn to Jesus Christ. Notice the end of verse 14: "only in Christ is it (the veil of unbelief) taken away." Verse 16 puts it this way, "But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away."

There are two very important words in verses 14 and 16: "only" and "anyone." The gospel we proclaim is limiting in the

sense that it insists that there is only one Savior and only one Lord, and His name is Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12 says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Paul says, "Only in Christ is the veil taken away." But in another sense, the gospel we proclaim is limitless; that is to say that it is available to "anyone" and everyone who believes in the Lord. **Whoever will may come. All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

What we have seen here so far is that the glory of the ministry that comes to us in the Holy Spirit will never fade away and that salvation is available to all who will turn to the Lord. But what about our halos? I still haven't told you everything I want to tell you about the halos.

Look at verses 17 and 18: Paul says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And 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." Do you see what we are supposed to be doing as those who believe

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in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? We have been given a ministry and that ministry is one thing and that one thing is this: We are to reflect the Lord's glory from our faces. We are to be like spiritual mirrors, catching the light and love and glory of the Lord, and reflecting that light, love, and glory to others. This ministry is our halo, and please notice that this ministry is to increase as time goes on. Not only are we to be aglow with the Spirit of Jesus, but we are called to glow more brightly over time. Our halos are to become more and more visible as we continue to draw closer to Christ.

Now, this Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and ushers in the traditional 40 days (not counting Sundays) which remain until Easter. I have an assignment for us to work on over these 40 days.

The assignment is this: I want us to be polishing our halos, working on increasing the intensity of the glow of the Holy Spirit that is meant to emanate from our lives. Please

understand the assignment. I'm not asking you to try harder to be good or even more holy. I'm not asking you to give more money. I'm not asking for good deeds. I'm not asking you to do anything except to do everything you can to get closer to Jesus. I'm asking us to draw closer to Him through reading His word and prayer and by being in fellowship with one another. I'm asking us to spend time in His presence just soaking up the rays of His love, forgiveness, and grace.

Let's draw near so that by the time Easter comes, many of our halos will be visible. Let's draw near until the glory of Jesus is visible on our faces. James 4:8 says, "Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

Our Lenten assignment is to seek for and to remove anything that stands in the way of our catching and reflecting the rays of the glory of God. Let us make it our goal to be fully aglow with the Holy Spirit by the time we come to Easter. Let's go to work on our halos.

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II Corinthians 3:7-4:1

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