

“Mirror the Mirror”

2 Corinthians 3:18

Introduction:

“We are being transformed into Christ-likeness.” That’s been our theme, our aim for our chapel services from the beginning of the year until now. And it will be our focus until this school year ends.

So maybe now is as good a time as any to check on our progress. How are we doing in our being transformed into Christ-likeness? Anyone arrived yet? Anyone have a ways to go? Anyone further along today than you were last fall? Anyone not as far along as you were? Our answers to the two last questions are the most important ones. “We are being transformed into Christ-likeness?” Are we?

Mirror the Mirror

*“But we all, with unveiled face,
beholding as in a mirror
the glory of the Lord,
are being transformed
into the same image
from glory to glory,
just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”
(2 Corinthians 3:18 NASB)*

The theme is based on 2 Corinthians 3:18. Here’s the verse from the New American Standard translation:

*“But we all, with unveiled face,
beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,
are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,
just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” (NASB)*

It’s just like the apostle Paul to use language vague enough that you have to take some time to unpack it. The middle phrase - *“beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord”* - is long way of saying what Paul wrote in a little later in 2 Corinthians 4:4: *“the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”* Christ is the image of God.



So, in other words, the “mirror” here in verse 18 is Jesus Christ. We are beholding “in Christ” - the Mirror - the glory of the Lord, and we’re being changed into Christ’s likeness.

However, that’s not always the case. What I mean is that the promise of being transformed into the image of Christ doesn’t always play out. Not everyone who beholds the glory of the Lord

reflected in Jesus Christ - the Mirror - is transformed into Christ-likeness.

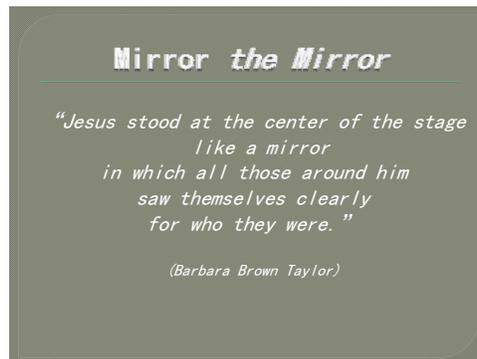
Move #1

Pilate, Herod, and most of the religious leaders of Jesus' time are a case in point. It wasn't that they didn't get it, that they didn't see God's image reflected in the life and teachings of Jesus. They knew full well what Jesus meant when he said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." He was a threat to them, to their status, their power, their way of life.

Remember, after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, ". . . *the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and said, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish (John 11:47-50 NASB).*" They knew who Jesus was. They had beheld God's image in Jesus' miracles and teachings, and they didn't want any part of it.

Barbara Brown Taylor is one of my favorite preachers. In one of her sermons she describes what happened when - a little while after raising Lazarus from the dead - Jesus stood before Pilate. She writes:

While Pilate and the chief priests conspired to solve their mutual problem while managing to stay enemies, Jesus stood at the center of the stage like a mirror in which all those around him saw themselves clearly for who they were.



One way we Christians have avoided seeing our own reflections in the mirror is to pretend that this is a story about Romans and Jews. As long as they remain the villains, then we are off the hook - or so we think. Unfortunately, this is not a story that happened long ago in a land far away.

Sons and daughters of God are killed in every generation. They have been killed in holy wars and inquisitions, concentration camps and prison cells. They have been killed in Cape Town, Memphis, El Salvador, and Alabama. The charges against them have run the gamut, but treason and blasphemy have headed the list, just as they did for Jesus. He upset those in charge at the courthouse and the temple. He suggested they were not doing their jobs. He offered himself as a mirror they could see themselves in, and they were so appalled by what they saw that they smashed it. They smashed him in every way they could.” (Taylor, Barbara Brown. “Truth to Tell,” *Bread and Wine*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006, pp. 88-89.)

Not everyone who beholds the glory of the Lord reflected in Jesus Christ - the Mirror - is transformed into Christ-likeness. It doesn't always happen that way.

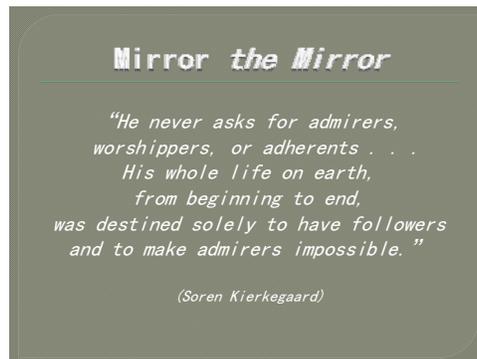
Move #2

Sometimes people recognize the God who is revealed in Christ and they're impressed by what they see. They respect his teachings, his wisdom, his influence. They think highly of his

kindness, his dedication, his service. They're moved by his passion, his suffering, his crucifixion. These folks admire Jesus for all the things he said and did. Who wouldn't?

But as Soren Kierkegaard reminds us,

It is well-known that Christ consistently used the expression "follower." He never asks for admirers, worshippers, or adherents . . . His whole life on earth, from beginning to end, was destined solely to have followers and to make admirers impossible . . . (55)



*What's the difference between an admirer and a follower? A follower is or strives to be what he admires. An admirer, however, keeps himself personally detached. He fails to see that what is admired involves a claim upon him, and thus he fails to be or strive to be what he admires . . . (Kierkegaard, Soren. "Followers, Not Admirers," *Bread and Wine*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006, 56.)"*

Now, I admire marathoners and computer programmers and entrepreneurs and sculptors. I admire mountain climbers and explorers and missionaries and adventurers. But I am not any of those. As much as I admire them, I don't have what it takes - or better, I haven't done what it takes - to make it happen.

Some of it's gifting, but most of it's hard work. Some of it's DNA, but most of it's discipline. Listen to SK again:

An admirer, however, keeps himself personally detached. He fails to see that what is admired involves a claim upon him, and thus he fails to be or strive to be what he admires . . .

You see, if I'm not careful, I can become just an admirer of Christ, even though I've been a follower for a long time. When I read these words from SK a few weeks ago, I realized that in the course of serving Jesus that maybe I was becoming more of an admirer than a follower of Him. Easy to get busy, get focused, get the tasks done, get the assignments finished . . . and easy to move from keeping in step with Jesus to just admiring him from a distance.

Also, I was talking with someone once about his relationship with Christ. He had made major progress from the time he was saved until that moment. The person described all the ways that God had worked in his life. And he admitted that there was still room for growth. And then he said, "God's working on me about the area of sexual purity in my life. He wants me to give that to him, but I'm not sure I'm ready to do that yet." Is that person an admirer or a follower?

Listen to SK again:

The admirer never makes any true sacrifices. He always plays it safe. Though in a word he is inexhaustible about how highly he prizes Christ, he renounces nothing, will not reconstruct his life, and will not let his life express what it is he supposedly admires (60).

Mirror the Mirror

"The admirer never makes any true sacrifices. He always plays it safe. Though in a word he is inexhaustible about how highly he prizes Christ, he renounces nothing, will not reconstruct his life, and will not let his life express what it is he supposedly admires."

(Soren Kierkegaard)

Not everyone who beholds the glory of the Lord reflected in Jesus Christ - the Mirror - is transformed into Christ-likeness. But they can be!

Move #3

That's the good news in this message. We're not "stuck in a moment and can't get out of it (U2 lyric)." We can mirror the Mirror. The passage says,

*"But we all, with unveiled face,
beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,
are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,
just as from the Lord, the Spirit." (NASB)*

Who is Paul referring to here? Men and women willing to be full followers of Jesus Christ, men and women willing to do what it takes to be fully transformed into Christ-likeness, men and women willing to mirror the Mirror in every aspect of their lives.

So now what?

I'm speaking to a room full of people who at some point in their lives have given their all to Christ and received his forgiveness. We have moved from rejecting Him and admiring him to following Him. But I need to ask - is that still so? Is that still true? Are we still following Christ without restraint, without reservation? Are we mirroring the Mirror in every aspect of our lives? We must make sure our answer is, "Yes."

Beyond that, we can take steps make sure that the "Yes" we say today will hold tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. One way we can do that is to support each other along the way.



So, I'm inviting those who would like to "mirror the Mirror" for the rest of the Spring Term to meet with me on March 25, at 5:05, in the Fireside Room in Williamson. We'll pray, we'll ask supporting questions, we'll help each be transformed into Christ-likeness.