

## **The Veil**

*February 14, 2010*

(Last Epiphany – Year C)

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

*St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas*

Yesterday, the clergy and lay delegates from the Episcopal Diocese of Texas met in convention at the Council of the Diocese of Texas. The Diocesan Council took place this year just down the road from us in Killeen.

In order to save on travel and gasoline expenses, some of us from St. Alban's carpoled down to Killeen for the Council meeting yesterday morning.

So yesterday morning at 7 o'clock, Clint Capers and Jacqueline Frahm picked me up at my house to drive down to Killeen.

If you will remember the weather yesterday morning, we had freezing fog in Waco.

And on our drive down to Killeen, we were socked in with this fog all the way down I-35.

Getting off of the highway in Killeen, we then began to look for the convention center.

Our map and our directions indicated that the convention center was just off to our right.

Yet in the dense fog, we almost passed right by the entrance to the convention center until we suddenly saw the sign indicating the driveway into the convention center.

For in that thick fog, we could not see a thing.

In that thick fog, we almost passed up our destination.

And in that thick veil of freezing fog, I wondered:

What else am I not seeing?

The Apostle Paul remembers back to Old Testament times –

Back to that time when Moses wore a veil over his face after Moses had talked with God and his face shone with the glory of God.

Remembering the veil over Moses' face, the Apostle Paul, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, makes his case that today we still wear veils over our faces.

Paul makes his case that even today we grope along in the fog.

And Paul makes his case that when someone turns to the Lord, then their foggy veil is removed.

And when Jesus lifts the veil off of our faces, then we see the glory of the Lord.

I don't know about you – but sometimes I wonder if I have a veil over my face.

Sometimes I wonder why I cannot see the glory of the Lord through the thick fog.

Sometimes I wonder:

What else am I not seeing?

Last Tuesday night, I went to the banquet at the Farrell Center benefitting Mission Waco.

The floor of the Farrell Center at Baylor was packed with over 1000 people, all there to support the work of Mission Waco in our city.

After we had eaten dinner together, then Jimmy Dorrell, the founder and director of Mission Waco, introduced a multitude of speakers.

Each speaker witnessed to the power of Mission Waco to lift the veil off of poverty in Waco and to make a difference.

One of the presenters was Shirley Langston.

Shirley Langston founded a non-profit called Restoration Haven.

Shirley started her ministry by moving into an apartment complex in South Waco.

Shirley then began to open the door of her apartment to her neighbors living in poverty.

After that, she began to offer services such as GED classes and advice on how to manage personal finances and how to apply for financial aid at MCC.

I have met Shirley before and have marveled at her hands-on ministry at Restoration Haven.

Yet then at the Mission Waco banquet, one of the residents who has been helped by Restoration Haven got up to speak.

This woman told her story about how the ministry of Restoration Haven has changed her life.

But she also told us about many challenges that still keep her from fighting her way out from the pit of poverty.

She explained to us that there is inadequate public transportation in this city -

Because how is this woman supposed to be on time for her 8am class at MCC and get her kids off to school – when it takes her over an hour to get to MCC on the bus?

From lack of affordable and quality daycare to lack of access to resources, this woman explained to us how difficult it is to dig out of poverty.

Yet this woman made a vow to us at the Mission Waco banquet – that one day she would dig her way out of poverty and be a tax-paying and contributing citizen of Waco.

And as I listened in the Farrell Center on Tuesday night,  
As I heard the good news that Restoration Haven brings to South Waco,  
As I heard the continuing challenges for the poor in our city,  
As I heard the boldness and the conviction of this wonderful woman  
who wants so badly to dig her way out of poverty,

A veil was lifted off of my face.

The fog parted.

And when the veil was lifted off of my face, what I saw was the suffering and Cross of Jesus Christ.

What I saw when that veil was lifted was the resurrection hope of God's beloved people.

What I saw when that veil was lifted - was the glory of the Lord.

And yet, I still wonder:

What else am I not seeing?

Yesterday, at the Council meeting of the Diocese of Texas, our Diocese signed a partnership agreement with the Anglican Diocese of Southern Malawi in Africa.

In this companion agreement, we agree to mutually support our sisters and brothers in Malawi.

The Bishop of Southern Malawi, Bishop James Tengtenga, was there. He gave a stirring address and shared with us about a part of the world I had given little thought to.

Bishop Tengtenga shared with us about the reality of abject poverty in Malawi.

He shared with us about how 10% of the people in his diocese are ravaged by HIV/AIDS.

He shared with us that 70% of the women in his church are illiterate and how the Anglican Church is committed to equal rights and empowerment for women.

And as Bishop Tengtenga shared the good news of Jesus Christ in Southern Malawi,

A veil was lifted off of my face.

The fog parted.

And when the veil was lifted off of my face, what I saw was the suffering and Cross of Jesus Christ.

What I saw when that veil was lifted was the resurrection hope of God's beloved people.

What I saw when that veil was lifted - was the glory of the Lord.

And yet, I still wonder:

What else am I not seeing?

I am discovering in my life that when I focus my life outward, beyond my own selfish concerns, then a veil is removed and the fog lifts.

When I take my eyes off of my own checkbook and I focus on the poverty in this city, then the veil is lifted.

When I take my eyes off of a world that is centered on America and I focus on Malawi and Haiti, then the veil is lifted.

When I take my eyes off of my job and my family and my church and my career and my house and my money,

And I focus on other people,  
Then the veil is lifted – and I see the glory of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul writes this to his beloved Corinthians:  
“[All of us] are being transformed...from one degree of glory to another.  
All of us, with unveiled faces, see the glory of the Lord.”

And yet, I wonder:  
What else are we not seeing?

AMEN.

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