**Last Epiphany,Transfiguration,Feb. 10, 2013,Ex 34:29-35;2 Cor 3:12-4:2;Luke 9:28-36, Rev. Mary Trainor**

So, the Superbowl was exciting last Sunday night, and the half-time show was amazing -- but what seemed to generate even more excitement in the news were the advertisements.  Did you know that for a 30 second spot during the SuperBowl, advertisers paid up to 40 million dollars? It is true! I examined these adds looking for a common theme, and found one: the high point of each one was **the unexpected**!  In almost everyone of the adds, something absolutely mind boggling and strange happened--something outside of our reality.  Skechers shoes showed a guy running and catching a cheetah -- right -- impossible, no matter what shoes you are wearing!  But it sure got our attention!  The Taco Bell commercial is crazy- about a bunch of people from a nursing home breaking out, and having a party night. And, the Bush commercial about a Clydesdale horse remembering its trainer sure was unexpected, amazing, and emotional!

Human behavior is such that we seem to gravitate to the unexpected, even though we fear it. We live predictable lives, and we like them that way -- yet we love it when something amazing happens! We look for those amazing things in our sports and entertainment, but not much elsewhere - especially not at church! In our society, church has become just another part of our predictable, routine lives -- yet God is the KING of the unexpected. What has happened to us that we do not get all fired up about experiencing God's amazing things? Do we even notice them? We get all pumped about SuperBowl commercials because there is SO MUCH media hype beforehand (really hard to ignore): great anticipation is built up, so we have high expectations. Before we come here for Sunday worship, there is no media hype. We approach God with low expectations, and often low energy. Church seems only to get media attention when scandal occurs, and that is a shame -- because encountering the living Christ is truly beyond amazement. Are we even open to God 's surprises? Today is the feast day of the Transfiguration, and it is full of God's surprises.

In our Old Testament reading something unexpected happened to the Israelites.  Moses came down from the mountain with his face glowing: “***the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God***.”   God wanted to have the Israelites know Him better – so He gave them this experience of seeing divine light Moses’ face.

Today, in our Gospel reading, something unexpected happened too.  This time, it happened to apostles Peter, James and John.  The day began as a normal day; they went off with Jesus thinking they were just going on a day hike up a nearby mountain – for fun!  But, Jesus knew otherwise, and surprise!  “***While He was praying, the appearance of his face changed and his clothes became dazzling white***.” They witnessed Jesus transfigured in a glorious way – a way that is not possible with earthly constraints, within the laws of physics.  Unexpected? Oh yes. And to top this off in a big way, they also heard God the Father say “***This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to Him***.”  Jesus was glowing with great light and glory….it must have been so wonderful to see and hear!  But, was Peter open to learning all God was revealing to him? No.

God wants you know Him in all His glory, just like he wanted this for Moses, the Israelites, Peter, James, and John. Barriers stood in the way for them, and they stand in our way too. The Israelites' barriers were fear, and inability to release control to God. They thought that after Moses spent time with God he would return unchanged - but he didn't, and they couldn't cope with the glory. This scene was so far beyond their expectations that they got unnecessarily scared, so Moses put a veil on his face (instead of helping them bask in God's glory).  How about Peter? In the Gospel, Peter didn't bask in Jesus being transfigured before him -- instead he was focused on setting up a campsite. They had barriers, ***veils***, between them and God; so do we! Our veils are similar to them: our expectations are low: we have incorrectly made God small. Our barriers include: praying to God but not expecting a response, coming to worship without looking to encounter the living Christ, and missing the communications God is sending to us. God knows about our barriers and doesn't much like them, because He wants us to know Him- really know Him! In the story at the end of today's Gospel, we see Jesus being frustrated with some of the people's lack of faith, but He moves on beyond that and heals the boy with a magnificent miracle. God knows our barriers, and if we go to Him for help He will get brush them aside too, and bless us. Paul put it this way in our Epistle today, “***when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed***...***where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord...are being transformed...for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."*** Not only does God want us to experience His glory and freedom, but His plan is to transform us. Our closeness to God molds us; that is the transforming Paul is talking about, and what we prayed in our opening prayer (Collect): that we "***be changed into His likeness from glory to glory."*** We become more like God when we spend unveiled time with God, when we, "***listen to Him.***"

Lilias Trotter, of 19th Century England, spent a lot of time listening to Christ. She was a brilliant artist who wrote the hymn that we are going to sing soon, *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*. Lilias was told she would become the most famous painter of the Century, but in her prayer life she sensed nudging from Christ. She prayed for two years for God's guidance, and finally had clarity.  She wrote later about this experience, ***" It is easy to find out whether our lives are focused, and if so, where the focus lies. Where do our thoughts settle when consciousness comes back in the morning? Where do they swing back when the pressure is off during the day? Dare to have it out with God. . . and ask Him to show you whether or not all is focused on Christ and His glory."*** Lilias was transformed by Christ and did experienced the glory of the transfigured Christ in her life as a missionary; her call from God was to share there, " ***the light of the knowledge of God, in the face of Christ***." Her hymn we will sing was originally entitled, "*The Heavenly Vision of Jesus*." My prayer for you is that you turn your eyes upon Jesus, allow His glory to shine in you and through you, and to be changed into His likeness from glory to glory. Amen.