

Exodus 33: 7 – 20; 2 Corinthians 3: 4 – end

'Beholding the Glory'

Introduction ...

'I can't bear to look ...'

'I can't bear to watch ...'

'It's too much to bear ...'

I wonder what you associate those phrases with:

an England Football Penalty Shoot Out?

a Wimbledon tie-break?

an Election Result?

There are quite a lot of possible associations for us with those phrases ...

'I can't bear to look ...'

'I can't bear to watch ...'

'It's too much to bear ...'

But for a devout Jew in the time of St Paul – the passage we heard from Exodus might well come into mind:

**God saying to Moses: 'you cannot see my face for
no-one shall see me and live ... while my glory passes by,
I will put you in a cleft of the rock and I will cover you with my hand
until I have passed by ... you shall see my back,
but my face shall not be seen.'**

So actually banned ... or protected from looking ... as it's **too much to bear ...**

... yet if you read on in Exodus – to Chapter 34 things change, the relationship between God and Moses develops ... Moses does speak with God ... we're not told if he "sees" in some way the 'face of God' ... but we are told that Moses' own face '**shines**' from this contact with God.

Link to 2 Corinthians chapter 3 ...

Both the passage we heard tonight from Exodus 33 and the development in Exodus 34 lie behind tonight's second reading from 2 Corinthians chapter 3 ... and it's the last verse of that chapter I'd like us to consider a bit more tonight:

All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror

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are being transformed into the same image

from one degree of glory to another ...

for this comes from the Lord – the Spirit.

There's so much packed into that one verse! Here's a partial 'unpacking'...

We see the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror ... what's that about? Well, one interpretation is that we understand that Jesus conveys to us as much about God – God's character, God's desires, God's purposes – as much about God as it is possible to convey through the medium of a human being, a human life.

So in and through Jesus ... we see the **glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror** and so we are invited to look upon Jesus:

to look on him as a baby, and as a child ...

to look on him as an adult ... his temptations, his ministry, his teachings, his healings, his challenges, his emotions ...

to look on him in his passion ... of betrayal, of arrest, of unjust trial and torture, of death on the cross ...

to look on him in his resurrection ... his interactions, his commission ...

to look on him in his ascension, his prayer for us, his gift of the Spirit ...

to look on him in all these ways, to meditate on him, to ask him to be with us through all of this ... not to respond that

'it's too much for us'

And we're asked to do this for a purpose ... back to that last verse of 2 Corinthians chapter 3 ... the purpose is that then

we will be transformed into the same image ...

... we will become more Christ-centred, more Christ-like because – important to recall on Pentecost Sunday – all of this comes as St Paul concludes this sentence:

this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Amen.