

Matt Henry
2 Cor. 3:12-4:6
11 Feb 2018

“Unveiling Grace”

Grace and peace...

The title of my message today is the title of a book I was challenged to read recently: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Only kidding. I actually read *Unveiling Grace* which was a fascinating read and autobiography from Dr. Lynn Wilder and her family. One of her sons was just a few weeks away from completing his two year mission when he chose to leave the LDS Church. And in the subsequent months and years, the whole family did the same. This was particularly difficult for Dr. Lynn Wilder because she was a tenured professor at BYU. Even though she was a convert to Mormonism, she found herself very much on the “in there” and “up there”. The church was her life and she was happy. But she left and her ministry and passion in life now is to help other Latter Day Saints find truth and the courage to leave—even though it means, in their view, becoming an apostate.

She titled her book *Unveiling Grace* in reference to the veil in the Mormon temple. In one of the temple ceremonies, on the other side of the veil is a person who portrays God who speaks through the veil. The sacred name and handshake are given and the temple-goers have to remember this for the afterlife. The veil represents a pinnacle spiritual moment in the life of a Latter Day Saint. But as

Lynn writes, as she came out of Mormonism, it was like a different kind of veil was lifted from her heart, and she came to see Jesus for who He really is. This created a crisis of faith that spawned tremendous change in almost every realm of her life. For Dr. Lynn Wilder, the veil was lifted and she began to see what grace was all about for the first time.

Most of us have been around grace so long, we have forgotten what life was like without it. But put yourself in the shoes of someone who doesn't know what grace is. I think that's what makes her book so compelling and it makes me appreciate the grace that is at the center of our life with God. We have people joining the church today. Do they know what they are signing up for? Are they signing up for guilt? Or are they signing up because they know grace?

One thing I like about this church is we don't mess with God's Word and tell it what to say. We let it speak to us. The Word preached in its purity is a mark of the church. Another mark of God's church is openness, not secrecy. No secrets—it's all in the open! Paul writes in 2 Cor. 4:2, "We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." That's the standard. Further, we favor freedom, rather than control. People are free to serve, to use their gifts for the glory of God. The church offers opportunities for people to

serve gladly and joyfully. But we don't operate out of guilt. Freedom is a mark of the church. People serving willingly and joyfully is a mark of the church. Why? Because we actually believe that once people encounter the real Jesus that He will bring such a profound change within them that the privilege of serving Him and bringing Him glory is all the motivation one ever needs.

He brings the change. He makes the difference. I once was blind, but now I see. Or to put it another way, God has lifted the veil from our hearts and allows us to see Him and believe in Him. A couple of verses are pertinent here. V. 14: "Only through Christ is the veil taken away." Verse 16: "But one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

Well, good for us! But what about other people who do not believe? It means the veil remains. I know so many of you want with all your heart for someone you love to believe in Jesus, as you do. But it feels like there's something in the way. Well, there *is* something in the way—and it's that veil! They can't see what you see because the veil is keeping them from seeing what you see. And it leaves them in a state of unbelief.

As much as we want to, we can't lift the veil ourselves. God has to do that. But isn't this a nice thought? Once God does lift that veil, ideally in the church we

get to be around for that so we can see the difference He is making in their life.

“Therefore having this ministry, by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.” (4:1)

This is our ministry. Knowing that still today, people are coming to know Jesus one at a time as God wills and enables. **The Spirit is the veil-lifter.** He allows people to see with the eyes of faith. And what is it that we see? We see the light...of the Gospel...of the glory...of Christ. And I thought our church name was long! That’s a lot of “ofs”! What does that mean? The light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ? I don’t know exactly, but I do know I want to see more of it!

As a kid I remember playing with glow in the dark stuff. I had those stars that I put up on the ceiling. They would shine in the dark because they had soaked up the light energy from the light when it was on. The more light it took in, the brighter it shined or shone. Now this was a ceiling fan. Some of the stars shone more brightly than others. Why? Because some of the fan blades were in the way of the direct light. But if something is in the way of the light, it wouldn’t matter how bright the light was, would it? Paul says, “Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

But God is the God of light. He's all about "letting there be light" and the glow in the dark principle works for us in this way. The more we behold Jesus, the more we become like Him. More light means more glow. That light is what makes the difference. That beholding brings about transformation. It gets us out of worldliness and into righteousness.

I was just at Chinden and Locust Grove on my intense one-stoplight commute Thursday morning and a car drove past us. Black sports car. Looked cool. In the back of my mind, I thought, "Well, that person might be a little too worldly." Kinda judgmental right? Maybe it's because I drive a minivan and I'm jealous. And then I looked at the license plate said "TRNSFRMD" and I took to mean that the driver was indicating there had been a deeper change in his life.

It just might surprise us who gets this grace thing. It's God's doing. It's how He is changing us. Check out v. 18. "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of God, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." (v. 18)

It's quite a thing to say to the church at Corinth! I mean they were worldly people with all their worldly problems—and they're being transformed? Yes! Not because of who they are, but because of whom they are beholding! God has called the Corinthians to be God's church, and God is actively at work

transforming the believers from one degree of glory to another (3:18). Paul has faith -- not in the church's abilities to change itself -- but in the Spirit's work within it. That's the kind of church we get to be a part of. That is grace.

That word in Greek for "being transformed" is your new favorite word: *metamorphoumetha* . Like metamorphosis, right? So maybe it is all about that very hungry caterpillar being transformed into that butterfly. *Metamorphoumetha* only applies to people who believe, who have unveiled faces. It applies to you. What's fun about this word is it's the same word that is used to describe Jesus in the transfiguration. He was transformed. The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. That image makes sense in the transfiguration. Because of what they saw—God's true image as revealed in His Son—the disciples took in the light themselves and were at least in part transformed by that light, as though a veil is removed from the disciples' hearts in that moment. They see Jesus clearly for who He is.

We yearn for the unveiling of grace now for the sake of others knowing that glory will one day also be unveiled. This is our ministry. Let us not lost heart, but be drawn in by the light and pray others may too. One day we will see God face to face in His glory. Today we see him face to face in His grace.

In Jesus' name, Amen.