

“There’s Something Different About You!”

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Exodus 34:29-35

Have you ever looked at somebody and thought to yourself “there’s something different about that person today!”? There’s something different. You just can’t put your finger on it, and then you figure it out - they got their hair cut or colored, or they got new glasses, or contacts, or they shaved off their beard or mustache. It takes a minute but it finally dawns on you.

Well, the Israelites had no such trouble when Moses came down the mountain from his encounter with God, because what was different about him was glaring, and actually it was his face that was glaring, or more accurately, glowing! He had talked with God, he had had an intense encounter with God, and now he was coming down the mountain armed with instructions for God’s people - he was a changed man, and it was written all over his face - and the people knew it immediately upon seeing him.

You know what friends? You cannot have a deep encounter with God and not be affected by it. You just can’t. It changes you, and sometimes it changes you so much that people around you can sense that there’s something different about you.

I saw it last year when the men returned from the first annual Men’s Retreat. I saw it in a lot of the men. They were changed. There was something different about them. They had experienced God in a way that hadn’t experienced God before, and you could see it in their eyes and hear it in their voices.

And I see it every time our church hosts the homeless shelter. People come back from that encounter with God through the people at the homeless shelter, and they are changed. They see life differently. You can see it in their faces, and hear it in their stories and in their passion and in their desire to return again and again. There’s something different about them.

And I’ve seen it in persons who come back from mission trips to Red Bird. They’re changed from that encounter with God through the people of Appalachia. You can see it in their eyes and see it in the pictures of their trip. They’re not the same people they were before they went. They know God in a whole new way, and you can tell that they’re different now.

You cannot have a deep encounter with God and not be affected by it. You just can’t. It changes you, and as I said earlier, sometimes it changes you so much that people know it immediately when they see you.

And you know what? For them, it can do one of two things. It can be off-putting, or it can be inviting.

It can be off-putting because sometimes seeing the effect that God can have on a person’s

life is scary, even overwhelming. Perhaps the person witnessing the change thinks, “I don’t want to change.” They think it’s too radical, or they think they’ll have to give up doing some of the things they do. It just might be too much, and so the evidence of such a transformed life can be off-putting.

Oh, but it can also be inviting. To see someone you know, or someone you love, and see what has happened in his/her life through an encounter with God, can stir up feelings like, “I want what they have. I want to know that passion, that joy, that intimate relationship with God. I want to experience what they’ve experienced.”

This morning, all of us are having an encounter with God, and will have a deep encounter with God through the sacrament of holy communion. We will come forward and receive bread and juice and remember the price that was paid for our lives. We will take and eat and remember that our sins have been forgiven by Christ’s death on the Christ. We will know through the gift of holy communion the peace that passes understanding.

So, chances are, that when we leave this place, we’ll look a little different than when we came. We came in out of the hectic chaos of a blizzard-overwhelmed world, after digging and shoveling, and scraping and sweating, and here we found peace. So we go back into the world a little bit changed, and hopefully that change will show in our faces and in our actions.

And maybe, just maybe, someone will notice that there’s something different about us. May all of us be prepared, if someone notices, to tell them what it is, to tell them the story of Jesus. May it be so.

Amen.