Have you ever met someone who’s like the Energizer Bunny or a little spark plug the moment he or she steps into a room? Even in a room full of strangers, he or she would manage to engage with almost everyone in the crowd. All of a sudden, the spotlight has been put on that person and all the attentions are being drawn onto him or her. It doesn’t have to be someone who’s famous or in celebrity status either. He or she has this natural charisma or aura and it follows wherever he or she goes.

 I’ve met quite a number of people like that in school or in my previous work environment and even now, among some of my ministry colleagues. Somehow they always seem to have a natural glow on their face and many people are drawn to their popularity. Perhaps that’s one of the characteristics of a good leader, maybe or maybe not?

 One thing many of these leaders have in common is that they love being at the center of attention. They thrive upon their shining personality and naturally drawing people together. Generally, they are extrovert in nature. They draw energy from those around them, and they channel all that energy right back with their enthusiasm and excitement that shines through them. The thing is, you don’t have to be a superstar, famous celebrity or politician, this could be a small child among us, or an elderly lady who always has something wise to say whenever she walks into the room. I think there are a few of those in this church as well.

 The truth is, we need inspiring people like that in a healthy community in order to thrive, otherwise the body would become dull, stale, and depressing. We need people who is willing to take action, take risks, think creatively outside-the-box and give us that little extra energy boost that sparks excitement and positivity in the rest of the people’s lives. So, there you have it, tomorrow being the first day of Chinese New Year, I have just described to you some of the characteristics of those who are born in the Year of the Monkey. Are there any Monkeys out there?

 Last week, we talked about two of the unwelcomed prophets – Jeremiah and Jesus, who were both rejected by the people because of what they had to say and because of their youth and inexperience. They too were full of energy and quite influential among their people. Certainly they were not afraid to speak what’s on their mind, even in the midst of an opposing crowd.

 In the text that we read earlier, we also came across another notable prophet who was disappointed by his people, even though he was well advanced in his age and experience. Moses had just come down from his mountaintop experience – a little pow-wow session with God up in Mt. Sinai. God offered him and the people two tablets of command to remind them that God’s covenant to the people remains steadfast. Up until now, the relationship between God and the people was kept only through the high priests and the prophets, no one else would dare to speak to God directly, nor have they attempted to see God. Well, if they did, they wouldn’t live to tell about it. This wasn’t because God was unreachable, but because the people feared God. The fear God out of their reverence towards God.

 Based on his personality and his characteristics, we could tell that Moses was definitely NOT a monkey, no need to check on his actual year of birth. Moses was not the most eloquent speaker. He may be strong-headed, stubborn, short-temper, and convicted murderer, nevertheless God still chose Moses to be a leader among God’s own people. God still shine God’s glory upon Moses amidst the face of the crowd. The role of Moses, like many other prophets, was simply to be the bridge, the mediator among the people and connecting them with God.

 Throughout the Bible, in both the Old and the New Testaments, we’ve seen evidences of God repeated attempts to reconnect with God’s own people – those who have lost their way and have distanced themselves away from God. The role of the prophet was not only necessary but critical especially during times of deliverance and judgement. Unfortunately to many, God was no longer at the center of their lives. They have abandoned God, even though God has yet abandoned them.

 As we read in our text today, even when Moses went up to spend time with God at Mt. Sinai, the people continued to sin down below. They worshipped pagan gods and committed various forms of sins in clear violation against God’s law. Upon coming back down from his mountaintop experience, Moses’s face was described as shining, glowing, or radiating. The people were shocked when they saw Moses. They hardly recognized him. Some probably thought that Moses had been dead. Is that really Moses? Or are we seeing a ghost?

 Moses had this glow on his face because he had been exposed to the light of God. I guess we could say that God left a mark on Moses’ face to commemorate this special divine-human encounter. From that day on, whenever Moses went to speak to God, he would put on the veil as a sign of reverence towards God. That veil also symbolized the eternal separation that lies between God and God’s people because of their sins. Even to this day, many communities still put on the veil when they come to worship before the Almighty God, acknowledging their own human frailties and shortcomings.

 In the New Testament passage that we read earlier, the Apostle Paul reminded the early church in Corinth (and to us today) that this veil that separates us from God, has now been lifted…because of what Christ has done through his sacrificial giving. We have been blinded by the veil that Moses put on since the old covenant. Because of our own sinful nature, we could no longer come to God face-to-face. But through Christ, as new covenant has arrived. The curtain at the temple was torn into pieces and the veil has been lifted above our heads. However, **even though the visible veil has been lifted for us by Christ, the invisible veil in our hearts remains, unless we stand before God in true repentance and faithful confession.**

 So what kind of veil are we talking about here? Sometimes we are blinded by our veil and we don’t even know it. We might be blinded by our traditions, by our lack of faith and trust in God, or our lack of courage to take risks. We might be blinded by our own insecurity of not having enough or a false sense of security of comfort. We can get by…so we don’t have to do anything. Or we might be blinded to see things only in certain way just because that’s how it has always been done. When we put on these blind veil, we’ve squandered our imagination and capacity to dream new dreams and to reach our higher goals and potentials.

 Through Christ, God has unveiled to us this new covenant of grace. The old covenant of the law has now been superseded. The Old is gone and the New has come, as the Paul wrote later on in his letter to the Corinthians.[[1]](#footnote-1)  **Through the lifting of this veil that has blinded us, we have been transformed and mirrored into God’s image. We have been liberated and empowered by the Holy Spirit to engage in God’s ministry here on earth.**

 This week, we begin the season of Lent with Ash Wednesday. The ashes that are placed on our foreheads serve as an important reminder of our own human depravity – our shortcomings, our sinfulness. Christ has also left us a mark on our faces to remember not only who we are but whose we are as well. From ashes to ashes, dust to dust, we come from God and we must return back to God. Ultimately we belong to God under God’s sovereign grace!

 Throughout this Lenten season, may we take a little time out each day to reflect who we are in God, and more importantly who God is in our lives. Some may give up certain things that serve as a distraction of our focus on God. Some may take on additional time for prayer and devotion so we may draw more intimately with God and rekindle that relationship once again.

 God has called each of us with a purpose, just as God called Moses, Aaron and Joshua to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. We may ask ourselves, ***“What is keeping us from seeing God’s Promised Land through the veil? What veils or idols must we cast aside in order for us to be truly liberated and be transparent in the face of God?”***

Perhaps these veils and idols are preventing us, like the Israelites, from hearing, seeing and acting in the ways that Christ has taught us. These veils and idols have misguided us into our spiritual blindness. Perhaps NOW is the time that we need to let go of those veils and idols that we’ve been holding onto, and place our trust in the Spirit once again that would set us free and lead us. **There is no turning back towards Sinai or Egypt but we must journey forward and fix our eyes upon Canaan the Promised Land.**

 Later on, we will also be acknowledging God’s calling in our lives with ordination and installation of various officers. Keep in mind that ordination is not just for those who are being called to the offices of elders and deacons. By the virtue of our own baptism, we **ALL** have been called. We **ALL** have been commissioned by the Holy Spirit to be God’s servants, ministers, and witnesses of God’s Kingdom.

 As we stand before God making our confession and reaffirming our personal and communal calling, may we once again be motivated, inspired, energized to serve God and God’s people. Engage in an intimate relationship with God through prayers and fellowship with others. Go on a mountaintop journey to seek God. Be opened to God’s possibilities of new hope and clear vision in our lives.

 It is time for us to **Lift up our veil! Be transformed and engaged in the Spirit.** Pray for the Holy Spirit’s courage and boldness to speak God’s Truth through our words and deeds. Through Christ sacrificial giving, we have been given a new covenant. No longer are we being covered with our veil, but we can see God face-to-face, and talk to God heart-to-heart.

 This is God’s calling in each of us today as we enter this Lenten season of preparation and holiness. May the light of Christ continue to shine and radiate through us into all hidden corners and darkest alleys of this world. ***Shine Jesus Shine, fill this land with the Father’s Glory!! Blaze Spirit blaze, set our hearts on fire!***

 In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *II Corinthians 5:17* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)