

**Exodus 34:29-35****Luke 9 28-36****Introduction**

It is interesting how popular makeover programmes are – and have been for many years. We have Your house/garden made perfect, garden rescue, what not to wear and so on. One that fascinated me was “60 minute Makeover” which was popular about 10 years ago. I don’t know how many of you are familiar with it. A team of fifty workmen and women moved into a house and transformed four of its rooms in exactly sixty minutes. I have to confess I found it absolutely compulsive viewing. Then there was the programme “ten years younger” a programme that achieved every woman’s dream –ten years off her age by a radical transformation in clothes, makeup and hair style.

The thought of being totally transformed can be very attractive. A complete and sudden change in our environment, in how we look, or what we are like can be a seemingly painless way to achieve excellence. The problem with such makeovers is that they seem to achieve instant transformation but they don’t really show the effort and skill that go into real change. The result is spectacular and it appears effortless but it is all on the surface. I often wonder what the transformed house looks like a few weeks later when the thrown on paint and wallpaper begin to flake and wrinkles appear elsewhere – and of course once the makeup and clothes are removed the woman isn’t any younger – it was all appearance.

But we all are attracted to this idea of instant transformation and if we aren’t careful this attitude can filter into our Christian lives as well. We long to be

transformed – which is good!. To reflect God’s glory and to fulfil his purposes for us, but we can expect it to happen overnight. God does transform us as Christians. He changes us radically, from inside out, if we allow him to. But usually this is a process that takes years of letting him change us and work with us.

Occasionally we see, or hear tell of sudden transformation. St Paul was one such. Transformed from a religious fanatic who persecuted Christians for their beliefs to a man whose only thought was to serve Jesus. John Newton, too, changed overnight from the tough and worldly slave trader into a fervent Christian who campaigned for the abolition of slavery and who left us with many wonderful hymns of praise and worship. For these men the change was sudden and complete and was the direct result of an encounter, very personal and shattering in its impact, with the risen Christ.

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It is impossible to encounter God directly and not be transformed by him. Coming face to face with God's holiness and love leaves its mark clearly upon us in changed lives, changed attitudes and, in Moses, when he encountered God, in a changed countenance.

For Moses this experience of transformation was different from the two examples I just mentioned. For him it was more of an expression of the transformation that God had been working in him for many years. He had changed from a hot headed, impulsive, under confident young man into a great leader. He had obeyed God's call and as he had followed him he had

seen God working, both, through him and in him. He had much experience of God working in his life and he trusted him. He had seen God lead the people of Israel out of slavery to freedom. He had experienced God's protection from their Egyptian pursuers and had seen God providing for all their needs in the desert.

For Moses this deep meeting with God was a high point, but it came at the point of his deepest humiliation and frustration. God had called the Israelites to Mount Sianai and given them the ten commandments. He told them what he expected from them and committed himself to them in the covenant. God told Moses and the people to consecrate themselves (set themselves apart) in order to enter into the covenant with him. Moses went up onto the mountain to meet with God and receive his full instructions for his people and then, while he was away on the mountain top the people became restless. They felt abandoned by Moses and needed something tangible to focus on. So they turned to Aaron and he made the golden calf for them to worship. In God's words, "they were quick to turn away". It hadn't taken them long to forget their meeting with God at the foot of the mountain when he had appeared to them in a cloud and in thunder and lightening.

Moses, returning to camp, was furious. He hurled the stone tablets that the commandments were inscribed on to the floor, shattering them and called for support from the Levites, the priests who were responsible for leading the people in worship. He must have felt totally let down and humiliated. He had just spent 40 wonderful days on the mountain with God sealing **the**

covenant with him and when he returned he found that the people had turned away from God, disowned him and let him down.

His response was to take responsibility for what had happened.

- He punished: - called the Levites to punish and kill the offenders 32:27-28
- Pleaded with God on the people's behalf 32:31

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- Persuaded God not to abandon his people. God had said that he would not go with them on their travels because he was so angry with them. Moses told God he could not go on without him 33:15. He was totally aware of their complete dependence on God for guidance and protection
- Asked for an encounter with God. – deeply shaken by what had happened he needed the reassurance of being close to God and of seeing him in his power and glory

God agreed. he told Moses that he would not be able to show him his face (v 20: no one can see me and live) but he would show him his glory.

So God told Moses to make two new stone tablets like the original ones and prepare to go back up the mountain to meet God. The new tablets of stone showed that the covenant was being renewed – but this time the tablets were chiselled out by Moses – man made. The previous tablets had been ch 32:16 “the work of God; the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets” This showed that although the

past was forgiven and God was prepared to start again the effects of the Israelites’ sin continued and affected the covenant. It was not quite what it had been.

So Moses went up Mount Sinai to meet with God. Read vv 5-7 <sup>5</sup> *The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name, “The LORD.”<sup>[a]</sup>* <sup>6</sup> *The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed,*

*“The LORD, the LORD,  
a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger,  
and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,  
<sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation,<sup>[b]</sup>  
forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,  
yet by no means clearing the guilty,  
but visiting the iniquity of the parents  
upon the children  
and the children’s children,  
to the third and the fourth generation.”*

The Lord proclaimed his name to Moses. This was much more than a simple recital of his title. It was a revelation of his deepest character and attributes. Until now Moses had known God as “The Lord”. Which in many ways had simply been a label for the God of Israel. In this meeting on

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Mount Sinai when God came down in the cloud, stood beside Moses and revealed himself to him it was clear that "The Lord " was not simply a title, no matter how exalted; But a deeply personal name which revealed God's deepest self. It was this revelation of God's self that transformed Moses and shone out of his face. It is impossible to

come into close contact with God without being touched and changed, and Moses' countenance echoed God's glory. This encounter with God gave Moses the courage to go on, to continue his demanding task of leading God's people. He had met deeply with God and knew he needed nothing else.

So who is the God he encountered?

**1 The Lord, the Lord**

which is another way of saying the alpha and the omega. The beginning and the end. The whole history of Israel had begun, continued and existed until then because of the power of Yahweh, the Lord; and its future would also depend on him. God revealed in Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is the Lord, the Lord

**2. This Lord is "A God merciful and gracious"**

The word translated merciful means the type of understanding and feeling for men's weaknesses that a mother shows for her child, that sense of compassion and understanding of a loving parent who knows how frail their child is and who indulges and protects them. He is not only compassionate – he is also gracious. The sort of behaviour is echoed in the parable of the good Samaritan – deep kindness to those who have no claim on him

**3. He is slow to anger**

God's anger is a reality as is clearly shown in his dealings with his people, but it is a patient anger. Again and again he gives his children chances. It has been

the slowness of God's reaction to human sin in history that has made many not take it seriously. But it is a reality and it is to be feared because, as God's revelation of himself goes on to demonstrate, he cannot leave the guilty unpunished and that punishment echoes through the generations such is God's disgust with sinfulness

**4. His love – with which he abounds – is a steadfast covenant love**

Much stronger than mere loyalty ; God has committed himself deeply to his people and that is the response that he also wants from them. His love endures through the generations and is shown by the way that he bears our crookedness and rebellion and failure at a great cost to himself.

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This is the God that revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai. The God that Moses had known throughout the years, leading, guiding and providing. He had experienced that deep compassionate giving love that could not let his people down even when he was disgusted and disappointed by them. He had seen that anger in operation and that clear sense of justice. This meeting with God on the mountain top confirmed all that Moses knew of God and left him transformed, glowing with God's glory. Moses had been given a vision of the glory of God and the people of Israel were given a fleeting glimpse of that glory in his face when he returned to camp.

If we want a makeover, if we would like to be changed removed let us ask God, as Moses did, "Now show me

your glory". We are about to begin the season of Lent. So let us take time to go aside and reflect on this great and wonderful God who loves us so much and as we meet with him let us pray that we will be able to show that glory to others.

Mention Lent Course  
Tuesday evenings  
Wednesday lunchtimes