

A sermon preached by Rev. Alden H. Snell at Clarence Presbyterian Church on  
Sunday, July 3, 2022

## **THE FACES WE SEE**

### **I Chronicles 16:8-18**

Before March of 2020 where would you expect to see someone wearing a mask? You might have seen your doctor wearing one as a surgery began. A mask might have been seen on a construction worker. What might have been the reaction if you walked into a bank or a store with a mask covering the lower half of your face? The Covid pandemic changed what could be seen of our faces. The presence of masks would now be seen on most people, even in a bank. This led to mostly seeing the eyes of family and friends. It became hard to observe emotions often expressed by our mouths. We were left to trying to read emotions in the eyes of our conversation partners. Several years back Jay Leno had a skit where he would show only the eyes of a person. He would ask the people if they would go to dinner with this person. The answers often led to surprises as they said yes to the late Saddam Hussein and no to Robert Redford. It is helpful to see the full faces of the people to get a sense of their emotions during conversations. The author of our Old Testament text, borrowing some from Psalm 105, reminds us of our need to daily seek and to see the face of God in our lives each day.

Faith leads us to know that the face of God sees us in our daily lives. Our God watches to observe how our faith meets the situations of our daily lives. Knowing God is with us, we are invited to "Give praise to the LORD." In my message preparations, I like to look up a word's definitions in a small dictionary by my computer. Here the word "praise" is defined as offering words of admiration or strong approval. We are invited to thank, to praise God when we admire what is being done through faith in our lives. I believe God offers praise toward us when we are faithful to our call as followers of Christ Jesus. An outgrowth of praise leads us to proclaim God's name and make the Lord known to family, friends, congregations, and communities about what God has done and is doing in our world each day.

There are times when our praise of God finds expression in songs. Thus, in verse nine we are invited to “Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.” The Spirit allows us to look for the story that is written into hymns. Some hymns become favorites with a special place in our ministry. This is true of the hymn, “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name.” This was the theme hymn for my Seminary. After graduation I chose to use this hymn in special places in my worship ministry. It became the first hymn sung as I began ministry with a congregation. It was used as the middle hymn on the anniversary of my ministry’s beginning. It became the last hymn sung when I concluded a ministry. Whenever it is sung in a worship service it reminds me of the power of God’s wonderful acts in my life and the life of other followers of Christ Jesus.

“Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.” When we sense God living in our lives, we can consider it an honor. There is a sense of joy when we feel or see the power of changed hearts in people’s faces as a reflection of God’s face. There is a sense that the word “name” reflects the reputation of God for a person. When we speak of the “name” of God, there are an infinite number of attributes of our understanding of God. When we mention the name of a church congregation in a community, it may raise many reflections of its reputation. Our personal reputation is tied into what is known about us as we interact with and see the faces of others.

“Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.” When I think of the strength of God, I am reminded of another favorite verse. It is in Isaiah 41:13. It reads, “For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.” I discovered this verse at a time when I was dealing with some faith questions. As I sense God beside me in times of need for support, I sense that I can catch a glimpse of God. The Lord’s presence can often be reflected in the words and faces of others whom God makes present to help. Jesus would say that to see him is to see the one, our God, who sent him for the ministry of redemption. There might be moments when our face may indeed reflect the face of God as we discover God’s directions for help.

There is truth of seeing in the faces of other followers of Christ Jesus a reflection of the face of God. Together in our lives of ministry, we are to allow ourselves to find time to “Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced.” As we look around at the world, our Spirits can see the wonder of the nature of the world we live in. The experience of the four seasons allows us to see the miracle of changes in our vegetation, our temperature, and how we are affected by these changes. There are plenty of opportunities to see God’s miracles. The birth of a child. The marriage of two individuals, especially those whose marriage lasts years beyond their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. There are experiences of inventions that change how our lives are lived. I remember a workshop where we discussed the transition of how music is recorded and played. It started with seventy-eight records, moved to thirty-three albums, to forty-five records with a big hole in the disc, to V8 tapes, to cassettes, to CD’s and beyond.

The Lord’s promises in verses 16 to 18 are first addressed to the nation of Israel “<sup>16</sup> He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. <sup>17</sup> He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: <sup>18</sup> ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.’” Through the face of God revealed in Christ Jesus, we are promised a new place to reside. Jesus tells believers of a mansion with presence of God. Here we shall see God face to face. Until that day, may our faces reflect the power of God alive in our lives through the Holy Spirit as Followers of Christ Jesus.