

SHINE!

The theme today is **RADIANCE – SHINE!!**

That's easier said than done sometimes. There is an old Sunday School song that starts '*Jesus wants me for a sunbeam*'. Apart from sounding a bit embarrassing, just what does it mean? How do I go about beaming?

So we'll think about our Bible passages today with these headings:

- radiance and humility
- radiance and fear
- radiance and God's Word

RADIANCE AND HUMILITY

Sometimes people talk about a bride being 'radiant' on her wedding day. (They don't seem to apply the word to the groom. Any reason why, I wonder?) Yet we could probably all say that we've met someone who really does radiate something good!

I found a website which is called 'Shine Hair and Beauty'. They say this: *your hair helps define your personality: by thoroughly studying your facial structure, hair texture and listening to the demands of your lifestyle...we deliver a custom cut and colour....creating a bespoke style of your own.*

It's all very well adding a few chemicals and getting out the scissors to enhance the look of the hair but does that *really* help define your personality and make you shine?

I think *this* is one of the key features of a person who shines: they don't know they're doing it. They're humble enough to have no idea of the impact they have on the world.

*“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was **not aware** that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord” (Ex. 34:29)*

He didn't know. Shining people are not self-important and wanting to draw attention to themselves. They get on with the job and people notice them but

they don't set out with an intention of getting noticed. In the book of Numbers we read '*Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth*' (Num 12:3) but it wasn't because he did nothing and just stayed in the background. When he dies we hear that '*no prophet has arisen like him, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt...no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did..*' (Deut. 34:10-12)

Great things happened and Moses spoke, he led, he made judgments, he set up worship, organised, inspired, led campaigns, taught his apprentices and did it for over 40 years. But his aim was not to draw attention to himself but to God. He never wanted the job; he was chosen for it and then he did it faithfully. C.S. Lewis said that *humility is not about thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less*. Be honest – you're good at things, you can do what other people can't do because God has made you that way or because you've worked at it or both. Don't put yourself down; just don't let thinking about yourself matter more than it should. That way, maybe there's a chance you'll really shine.

Neil Armstrong – first man to walk on the moon- was said to have a chief characteristic of humility: “he walked in the heavens but kept his feet planted on the earth”. Think Gandhi, Mother Teresa – they shone because their aim was not to draw attention to themselves.

Here was Moses, no self-appointed leader, just one who spent a lot of time with God, absorbing something of God's character of light and purity and brightness. When he came away, he shone.

When Jesus was on the mount with his disciples, he shone. It was not about attempting to get people to notice him so he could sign autographs. It was just who he was. He shone when he was praying, in the presence of God, face to face, as Moses had been. (Luke 9:28-29) and when – Moses and Elijah appeared, they shone too.

Jesus is marked out as '*my chosen one*'. People have been hazarding a guess to this point. '*Who do people say I am?*' asks Jesus a little earlier. They answer '*Moses or Elijah or one of the prophets*' (Lk. 9:18-20) Now God gives the definitive answer: *This is my Son whom I have chosen* (9:35)

In the presence of God, when people are more bothered about him than

themselves, something can happen. People begin to shine with God's nature. They may not even realise. They are just 'being themselves' – the people God makes them.

RADIANCE AND FEAR

Yet radiance can be disturbing. *'When Aaron and the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant and they were afraid to come near' (Ex. 34:30)* Moses has to call them and first the leaders come and then they persuade the others that it's alright.

There had always been the sense that no one could see God and live. Now there was a kind of brightness they'd never seen before.

Have you ever been with a person who is very different from you? It can be disturbing. We don't like difference very much. If they're not like me it's harder to know how to relate to them. Moses has gone away and they thought they knew what he was like but he's come back looking different.

Brightness shows things up, shows people up. John's gospel is full of phrases like *'men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil' (Jn 3:19)* There's no hiding in the light. Light seems to be a very good thing but not if it shows you up or you don't understand it. The glory of the Lord that filled the temple at different times in history had people unable to go inside; when Jesus is arrested the soldiers draw back before they lay hands on him; the apostle Stephen died with his face 'like an angel'; then there are other times when people are close to Jesus and he does something amazing and they can't take it: he heals a demoniac and they ask him to leave; he calms a storm and they are terrified. Somehow things like that are too much for us to take in, too far removed, too different. Somehow in the presence of goodness or purity or love or joy there is a fear, because we're not quite the same. (I have a schoolfriend who always seems so over-the-top thankful and positive about everything that it's quite unsettling to be with her. Yet I really do think she is genuinely thankful and positive – and if I'm not, it shows me up!)

So when the people see Moses he has to persuade them it's alright to come close. When the disciples see Jesus, shining, they don't have a clue what to do or say.

Instead of backing off from the people who shine, who radiate goodness or truth or love or thankfulness, maybe we need to come close as Moses encourage people to do and find out what makes them different.

RADIANCE AND GOD'S WORD

When Moses finished speaking with the people he put a veil over his face but whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with him he removed the veil until he came out and when he came and told them what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant' (EX. 34: 33-35)

When God spoke it brought radiance. Moses shone when he heard what God had commanded and told people about it. People so often have the idea that God's commands are harsh, difficult, dull, restrictive. Whenever Moses had heard God's word, he was radiant.

When God's voice is heard on the mountain with Jesus, he shines. *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path' (Ps. 119:105)*

OK so that was Moses and that was Jesus. But **you** may not feel very shiny today! I daresay Moses had his rough moments too. When his shining face was first noticed, he was on his way down with new tablets of laws because he'd broken the first lot when he found people had got bored of waiting for him and everything seemed to have fallen into chaos; when Jesus was transfigured he was on his way to Jerusalem to be killed; they still shone. It was nothing to do with circumstances

In a way it's simple – in the presence of God Moses was shining; after a while the light faded away.

- Radiance comes by being in the presence of God and doing what he's chosen us to do, not pushing yourself forward or pushing yourself down. Seek to be with God as much as you can
- Radiance can create fear – but come close to the people who shine and hear their story instead of backing off
- Radiance comes from hearing the Word of God. Give time for those words every day.

...and maybe that way you'll have a chance of being a sunbeam!!