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**SUNDAY, JUNE 13, 2010**  
**THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**Galatians 2:20 (Becoming invisible)**

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**TODAY'S SERMON THEME:**

In a most unusual way, our faith as Christians calls us to become invisible -- completely transparent, completely open, completely vulnerable to our gracious Lord. For only through our transparency -- our openness, our self-surrender, our subjugation of ego -- can the light of Christ shine through us into the world around us. We have been crucified with Christ, and the life we now live, by faith, is His Life.

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**1. When I was a young teenager, I watched an old science fiction movie on late-night television one Friday . . . and it quickly became one of my favorite movies of all-time. It was a 1933 film called "The Invisible Man," based on H.G. Wells' 1897 book by the same name.** The movie both terrified and intrigued me. There was something about the concept of becoming INVISIBLE that completely captured my imagination. Frankly, it still captures my imagination today, nearly five decades later. And it turns out that large numbers of people share that fascination -- because the subject of invisibility keeps showing up in movies, TV shows, and novels . . . including the "Harry Potter" movies and several current science-fiction shows. The star of the 1933 movie was the legendary Claude Rains, one of the greatest actors of all time, who was making his American screen debut. Rains played the part of Dr. Jack Griffin, a mad scientist who accidentally discovered a drug called "monocane" that rendered him completely invisible . . . and, in the process, slowly robbed him of his mind. In a most compelling way, Rains was never actually seen until the end of the movie -- appearing wrapped in bandages and wearing sunglasses for most of the film. We only saw his face at the end of the movie, when his character died after being shot by police. In the course of the movie, Rains often took off all his clothes, all his bandages, rendering himself completely invisible. He was able to roam around the town completely unseen. He eavesdropped on conversations, went in and out of houses at will, inflicted great harm on people at will, escaped from crime scenes without detection, taunted and scared people at will, and generally caused massive amounts of chaos, confusion, mayhem, and disorder. To me, Claude Rains will always be the quintessential invisible man. And Hollywood is still enthralled by the possibility that people can become totally invisible.

**2. On a superficial level, at least in my opinion, people seem to be fascinated by the idea of invisibility because it offers the possibility of safety and security.** Much of our motivation as humans stems from our need to feel safe, secure, and protected. And how much safer and more secure can a person be who is totally UNSEEN and UNDETECTED? Let's look at two levels of our society's continuing interest in "human cloaking devices," or, invisibility:

**(1) On one level, our fascination with invisibility seems to focus on the prospect of escaping detection -- and, thus, avoiding responsibility -- for our actions.** Invisibility would allow a person to do almost anything, anywhere, at any time, but without being caught. Harry Potter was able to do this, with his invisibility cloak; and Kevin Bacon, in the movie "Hollow Man" was able to act out in whatever way he wanted, without being seen. But this level of fascination appears to me to be mostly a superficial and juvenile level of thinking. And the reason I say that is related to a simple question we can ask ourselves, a question that will always reveal the true nature of our spiritual character. And here is that question: What would I be willing to do if I knew I would never get caught? As I said, this appears to be an almost juvenile attitude.

**(2) On a deeper level, though, invisibility seems to merge with the idea of transparency -- and transparency brings an entirely different connotation of openness, vulnerability, humility, self-denial, and complete subjugation of ego. Transparency pushes the idea of invisibility into the realm of spirituality.** A person who is "transparent" becomes so completely open, so completely devoid of self, that the "invisibility" manifests itself as an utter lack of pride, a surrender (as it were) of will, of control . . . to another. A transparent person is invisible, in a spiritual sense, in that the reflection cast by that person is effectively the reflection of another. A transparent person reflects the light, the will, the force, the life of another.

**3. And that leads me to the main point I want to emphasize today, about spiritual transparency, as we look at the unbelievably shocking words of St. Paul in Galatians Chapter 2. And here is my primary point:**

In a most unusual way, our faith as Christians calls us to become invisible -- completely transparent, completely open, completely vulnerable to our gracious Lord. For only through our transparency -- our openness, our self-surrender, our subjugation of ego -- can the light of Christ shine through us into the world around us. We have been crucified with Christ, and the life we now live, by faith, is His Life.

**4. There is one verse in our Epistle this morning from Galatians Chapter 2 that is clearly the most shocking, the most compelling, the most startling verse in the New Testament.** Here is what St. Paul writes in Galatians 2:20: "Christo sunestauromai zo de ouketi ego, ze de en emoi Christos." "With Christ have I been crucified, and live no more do I, and Christ doth live in me." "I HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST. THEREFORE, IT IS NO LONGER I WHO LIVE, BUT CHRIST WHO LIVES IN ME." A few points about the context of this shocking verse:

**(1) St. Paul is writing this letter in 49 AD, shortly before he journeyed to Jerusalem for the Apostolic Council -- a Council of the apostles that dealt with the first great crisis in the Christian faith:** What were they to do with GENTILES (pagans) who became followers of Jesus. Did those Gentiles have to become Jewish first, before they could become Christian? St. Paul argued that only faith was required; others said they needed to follow the Torah

in its entirety. This was an argument that St. Paul ultimately won, with a couple of minor additions.

**(2) Paul's letter to the Galatians was a letter to churches HE HIMSELF had founded, with Barnabas, on his first missionary journey.** The churches were in Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. (It was in Lystra that Paul was stoned and left for dead.)

**(3) Paul's letter was written specifically to address the "Judaizers" who sought to impose all of the Jewish laws on the new Gentile Christians.** Paul's letter is an angry one -- pointing out that even the leaders of the Jews do not keep the whole law. Our salvation comes through GRACE -- the gift of God in Christ Jesus -- which we can appropriate to ourselves by BELIEVING. BY FAITH. We are saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not through our own efforts to try to keep a set of laws. Paul hammers this point over and over in his letter to the Galatians.

**(4) And then, to make this point in a shocking way, Paul writes that in Christ's death, he also died.** And so his life now is actually the life of Christ. "Christo sunestauromai zo de ouketi ego, ze de en emoi Christos." With Christ himself I have been crucified; and it is no longer I who live in me, but Christ who lives in me.

**5. Let us look at this another way: Because of what the Lord Jesus has ALREADY done for us, we are able to LIVE IN to His resurrected LIFE. TO TAKE FULL PART in His own life. To share in His work, His ministry, His power, His grace. And HOW CAN WE DO ALL OF THAT: BY BECOMING INVISIBLE. BY BECOMING TRANSPARENT.** When we decide to open our lives to Him, we make ourselves completely open, completely transparent, completely vulnerable, to Him. We do precisely what JOHN THE BAPTIST did after he baptized Jesus in the Jordan River: John pointed to Jesus, who was walking along the river bank, and said (in the presence of everyone), "Behold the Lamb of God! He is the One I told you about . . . I MUST DECREASE, and HE MUST INCREASE." John the Baptist announced to ALL that his own life would decrease to the point that the life of Jesus would live through him. He subjugated his own fragile ego, replacing it with the grace, mercy, and love of the Son of God. And so can we . . . once we decide to become invisible. Once we decide to let the LIGHT of Christ shine through us into the world around us. This is nothing less than the MAIN TASK -- the MAIN CALLING -- for all Christians. To become invisible. To become transparent. To let the Risen Christ live IN us, and THROUGH us.

**6. A beautiful way of looking at this is by reading a verse from the writings of St. Teresa of Avila -- the 16th Century mystic who, along with St. John of the Cross, brought spiritual reform into the Carmelite religious order. Here is what St. Teresa wrote:** "Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours; yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion is to look out to the earth; yours are the feet by which He is to go about doing good, and yours are the hands by which He is to bless us now." We can be His hands, eyes, and feet . . . only by becoming invisible.