

“GLORY”

OT: Exodus 24:12-18

NT: 2 Peter 1:16-21

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For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹ So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, ²¹ because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

The Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Have you ever looked at this window back here over this table with the cross, candles, and flowers? I know that might sound like a silly question, because how could you not see it when you walk into this space? And for those of you on the radio worshipping it is an even more silly question. But maybe you have been in this space and know which window I am talking about. The window is huge, it is front and center, and the focal point of the sanctuary. Even before you see the cross, like you would in most sanctuaries, you see this window. But seriously have you really looked at this window? An artist always has a point for what they include in an image because the image tells a story. The details of color, contrast, inclusion, exclusion, all add to the meaning. What do you see? What stands out? Colors? Images? You likely have your own take away, but do you know what word comes to mind for me? Glory!

GLORY... God’s Light Openly Radiating in You. (2x)

The Transfiguration of Jesus, which is what this window signifies (*and it is darn near impossible to talk about Transfiguration in this space without referencing this window*), falls nothing short of revealing the glory of God as we imagine and hope for in the heavenly realm. It is what we might think of if we were to meet Jesus or Peter or Moses in heaven. The fascinating thing about the Transfiguration though is that it is not just about a time we might see in heaven if we but believe. The light, clouds, and power of the Transfiguration moment, as God shines through Jesus- God incarnate earth side- reveals God’s glory on earth as it is in heaven. Transfiguration declares, “God is here!”

The act of transfiguration is a holy mystery. Our goal today, as called witnesses to reveal God's love to the world, is to strive to understand in the simplest way possible what happened to Christ with a hope for what might happen, in the simplest way, to you and me. (repeat)

The Rev. Dr. Alison L. Boden (Princeton)

God tried the Transfiguration first through Moses, and it served well to inspire and reassure the Israelites Moses had led out of Egypt, but overtime, and a lot of wilderness wondering, God's people fell slowly away and back into the darkness of life. With Jesus, God does it again. Apparently, there was a need for God to do this. As God's son, and God himself, Jesus' ultimate mission is to come to earth to bring God closer to God's people. In Hebrews, and we shared this together in our Affirmation of Faith, it is declared that Jesus "is the sole expression of the glory of God and the perfect imprint and very image of God's nature (1:3)." Jesus fully manifests God's glory.

As we look closely at the stories of Moses and Jesus, we learn from the witnesses that the glory of God and of God's divine emissaries is terrifying. First, it is terrifying because it is a holy mystery. It is unknown, a road not traveled. Second, it rattles those who get a glimpse of it because they glimpse its unlimited power, they glimpse the infinite, they understand how infinite is the magnitude of all that they do not understand, and do not control. In the presence of infinite power, those who catch a quick vision of all they do not know are terrified. The Rev. Dr. Alison L. Boden (Princeton)

We must note that terror, of course, isn't God's intent. Instead, God's intent is to reveal glory through humanity; through creation. The Transfiguration moments are powerful in that they illumine the power and glory of God through what many people may only see as ordinary.

The early Israelites believed there was something special about Moses. Why else would God did talk to him in a burning bush that didn't go up in smoke, or send him into Pharaoh's house to say, "Let my people go!", or pass the commandments on to him to be shared with the people in the wilderness? Moses must be someone special to God, but in the end, he was still just a man, wasn't he? A man? Yes. Just a man? No. No one is just someone with God. When God shined through Moses is when everyone witnessing understood that it wasn't Moses who was shining bright but God.

Now, for those witnessing Jesus' Transfiguration, who had also witnessed the miracles and things no other human had done, Jesus was certainly someone special. John the Baptist declared he was the one who would baptize with the Spirit and not just water. To the next person on the street (*religious leaders of that time included*), Jesus was still just a man. He may be able to do some fancy things and talk a good game, but a man nonetheless, right? A man? Yes. Just a man? No. No one is just someone with God. What that reveals to us, even when we believe Jesus is God incarnate, is that everything Jesus is and does was to allow God's light to shine radiantly through him.

On the surface, each of the amazing stories we read containing Transfiguration is about how individual people let themselves be vessels for the glory of God, mirrors to reflect the glory, vehicles for the expression of God's glory. They themselves are not the source of the glory; they are the ones who make themselves available to magnify it to others.

The Transfiguration then is our invitation to be vessels for the revealing of the glory of God to others. Karl Barth wrote, "We cannot ourselves put on bright faces. But neither can we prevent them from shining. Looking up to [Christ], our faces shine." Whoever we know ourselves to be, we can shine with God's glory. We are complex people. We have many faults. We sin – some of us boldly, some of us with as little notice as possible. We are very, very far from perfect. But perfection isn't required of us, only a willingness to look up to Christ; God and Christ accomplish the rest.

We are capable of this because every single one of us – all humanity – is made in the image of God. We are *imago dei*. That does not mean that we inherited a particular setting of the eyes, olive skin tone, or cleft chin from the Almighty, but that we have the very spark of God within us. **God's Light Openly Radiating in You.** We have the reflection of God's holiness within us at all times, no matter who we are or what we do. We are in the image of God because what animates God – the breath of God, the *ruach*– God has breathed into us at Creation to give us life. Nothing we can do, or that is done to us, can alter or remove the fact of our being made in the image of God. Nothing.

The Transfiguration reminds us that with God, the true nature of someone (like you) makes everyone and everything else around greater.

"Vincent van Gogh painted a number of ordinary objects: a yellow chair, a vase of sunflowers, a collection of small sailboats beached by the sea. Among his compositions is a painting of a pair of old work boots, almost worn out, each boot leaning against the other. At first glance, nothing could appear more ordinary or un-glorious. But as one looks at the painting, one notices that the boots are illumined from beyond that painting and that they describe a life not just of labor and toil, but of vast human dignity, even beauty. The boots are glorious, not because their style is chic, but because it is their peculiar splendor to reflect the humanity that has labored so long and so hard in their use. These boots cry out that their owner was made for the glory of God, that to be a human being is to be a glory-bearing, glory-reflecting, glory-bound creature. That is surely the meaning of such transfiguring glory: to see in its brightness an anticipation of the glory of the risen Lord and to find in him the destiny of every 'ordinary' life."

The glory of Jesus is the hope of the world. In the text we read moments ago in 2 Peter, "You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."

Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, “Abba, as far as I can, I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?” Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, “If you will, you can become all flame.”

This world can be a dark place. The people of earth are shrouded in confusion and deception. They have all kinds of false answers about the right way to live that actually crush their souls. It causes them tremendous pain, sadness...death. False religions, bondage to fleeting pleasures, and oppression. When a disciple of Jesus enters in and shows the love of Jesus by seeking to make peace amidst violence, or by showing beautiful humility against wretched pride, or by wholeheartedly trusting God instead of riches and power, it is like lighting a thousand candles. **Glory: God’s Light Openly Radiating in You.**

Back to our window. Something fascinating about this stained-glass window is that it reflects inward. God’s light from outside penetrates the glass and inspires those who are here in this space. God’s glory is revealed in this space. We can witness God’s glory in worship, in music, in children and youth, in fellowship, in passing the peace, in sharing cookies, in study, in packing a backpack for students and families who are hungry. The power of the Transfiguration, as manifested through Christ, inspires and reassures us of God’s glory in this place. But what about out there? Through the window alone, the Transfiguration message of God’s glory can’t be made out from the other side. We, you and I, are going to have to be vessels in caring it out there. Knowledge is power. You have heard it here and now that we know it, we don’t have any excuse. The good news of God’s glory revealed in this place needs to be shared out there. It may be the only way people, who may not get it any other way, will be exposed to the good news.

God provides the glory; our job is to look upwards for it that we may catch and reflect its radiancy. This is our main mission as God’s children. This is the main purpose of the church. Everything we do is to reflect the glory of God. Not just here at 1215 VES Rd or in our homes where people get who we are and why we are doing it, but everywhere else we might go: the office, the post office, the restaurants, the yoga studio, the gym, school, the tennis court, the golf course. We never know when someone else might see the glory of God shine through us.

May **God’s Light Openly Radiate in You.** Glory be to God. Let all God’s people say... Amen.