

The Glory!

Luke 9:28-36

The Transfiguration of Our Lord, February 7, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

The glory! Behold! The glory of the Lord!

The Lord takes His disciples up on a mountain so that they will behold His glory. And isn't that where the glory of the Lord belongs? Doesn't it belong on a mountain? The glory of the Lord has dwelt on mountains since the days of old. Moses climbed Mount Sinai to behold the glory of the Lord. The glory of the Lord came down on the top of Mount Sinai. It was smoke like from a furnace. It was a cloud that settled on the top of the mountain. It was fire from which the Lord spoke. The glory of the Lord shook the mountain and the Israelites were terrified. And since the Lord is the Lord if He is going to show His disciples His glory He will take them on the top of a mountain to do it.

The Lord shows the disciples His glory. His face is transformed into something other. In Matthew's Gospel he records that the face of Jesus shone like the sun in all of its power. And that is appropriate for the face of the Lord shines upon His people. It shines upon His people and illumines their darkness. It shines upon them like the sun shines down from the sky. The glory of the Lord is bright.

Even the Lord's clothing changes and becomes gleaming white. His clothes gleam with the brilliance of lightning. It is not simply that the face of the Lord is transfigured, if the Lord is going to show His disciples His glory, He must show them His glory through and through and so His glory permeates the creation around Him and changes His clothes white. The glory of the Lord displays His blinding purity and holiness.

The Lord shows the disciples His glory and they realize that He is the God of the Old Testament. Moses and Elijah appear and they begin to have conversation with the Lord. I have often wondered why it was Moses and Elijah who appeared. Some people say that it is because these are the only two people in the Old Testament who did not die. That is not correct. Enoch and Elijah are the only two people in the Old Testament who did not die. Moses died and the Lord buried him. The reason that it is Moses and Elijah on the top of the mountain with Jesus is because these are the only two in the Old Testament who go to the mountain of Sinai to meet with the Lord and have conversation with Him. Moses met with the Lord on the top of Mount Sinai and received His commandments and His instructions for the construction of the tabernacle. Elijah met with the Lord on the top of Mount Sinai and had conversation with the Lord about Elijah's vocation and those things that the Lord had sent him to do with the encouragement that he was not alone in his vocation, but that the Lord had provided him with others to support him in his work. In a moment of despair on the top of Mount Sinai the Lord appeared and had conversation with Elijah to encourage him.

And now these two men who are accustomed to meeting the Lord in His glory on the top of Mount Sinai meet with Him again on the Mountain of Transfiguration. And just as they had conversation with Him in the Old Testament so now in His glory they have conversation again with Him in the New Testament. They speak with the Lord about His coming departure in Jerusalem. They are talking to the Lord about His death.

This means that the glory of the Lord permeates the Old Testament. When Moses has conversation with Jesus it is not just Moses who converses with Him, but the entire of the Old Testament Law converses with Jesus. The entire Old Testament Law speaks to Jesus and about Jesus. When Elijah has conversation with Jesus it is not just Elijah having conversation with Him, but all of the prophets of the Old Testament who together prophecy of the Lord who stood transfigured there before them. And so

the glory of the Lord is not simply on the Mountain of transfiguration. The glory of the Lord permeates the entire Old Testament. The glory of the Lord Jesus is on every page of the Old Testament. He is there in the curse made on the serpent in the book of Genesis and He is there promising to come after the return of Elijah in the book of Malachi and He is on every page in between. All of the glory of the Lord of the Old Testament is the glory of Jesus!

And the glory of Jesus shines and illumines the night. It illumines the cloud that the disciples entered to see the glory of the Lord and the glory of the Lord is not simply for the eyes, but also for the ears as well. The voice from the bright cloud announces to the disciples back then and therefore to the disciples of today, "This is My chosen Son. Listen to Him!" And so the glory of the Lord is not simply in His transfigured face. The glory of the Lord is also in every word that He speaks. And so even you disciples today stand and hear the words of the Lord and before you do you sing, "Glory to You, O Lord." Indeed glory to the Lord who reveals His glory in every gracious word that comes out of His mouth.

This is the glory of the Lord and the apostles, Peter, John, and James bear witness to it. They bear witness to it so that you may see His glory also. They bear witness to it because you are going to need His glory. Yes, if you are going to meet the days ahead, you will need His glory.

The apostles bear witness to the glory of Jesus because they know that you need His glory. They know that you need His glory because even though they are apostles of the Lord, they are disciples like you and me. They are disciples whom the Lord leads in prayer.

The Lord took the Peter, John, and James up the mountain to pray. That was His purpose in bringing them. And in spite of everything that took place on the Mountain of Transfiguration, the disciples somehow managed to fall asleep. But that is how it is with the disciples of the Lord. Whenever He leads them to pray, they fall asleep.

And this is not the first mountain upon which the Lord will lead His disciples to pray. There is another mountain that awaits these disciples. It is the Mount of Olives. It is east of Jerusalem. On the Mount of Olives there is a garden called Gethsemane. The Lord will lead His disciples onto that mountain also. He will lead this same Peter, John, and James to pray on that mountain. And the Lord knows that they will fall asleep there also. The Lord also knows that on the Mount of Olives the only thing that will wake the disciples up will be the sound of Judas coming with the soldiers to take Jesus to His condemnation, crucifixion, and death. And because the Lord knows that they will fall asleep when He leads them to pray on the Mount of Olives, He leads them to pray on the Mount of Transfiguration and He wakes them there with His glory.

He knew that they would need to see His glory so that they their faith would be sustained through His crucifixion. Even in His glory Moses and Elijah are discussing His departure with Him. If the disciples had taken the time to heed the words of the voice from the cloud and listen to Jesus they would have overheard the conversation between Jesus and the Law and the Prophets, and they would have understood that His crucifixion was coming. But Luke tells us that the disciples were kept from understanding these things.

The Lord shows them His glory because He knows that they will need it. The apostles bear witness to the glory of Jesus because they know that you will need it too.

When Jesus says, "Anyone who would come after Me must deny himself, take up His cross, and follow Me," He is not speaking theological theory. This is not some kind of deep spiritual statement upon which your Lord wants you to meditate in order to more fully comprehend the reality of eternity. He

does not say these things so that we can inscribe them into systematic theologies and give tests to seminarians over them. He does not say these things for us to put into catechisms and make the 6th, 7th, and 8th graders memorize them. When Jesus says, "Anyone who would come after Me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me," He is speaking of your death. One cannot follow Jesus unless one dies. And if you are going to face death, you will need to know about His glory and so the apostles bear witness to His glory so that you may face your death for Jesus.

The cross of Jesus is a comprehensive one. Do we not all say that Jesus died for the sin of the whole world? And well we should for His holy apostle John says those words in his first epistle. If the cross of Jesus is comprehensive in that atones for the sins of everyone, then cross that we carry after Him is also comprehensive. It means that everything about us dies. I think that is why our Lord first says, "Let him deny himself," and then He says, "take up His cross and follow me."

Jesus has summoned you to your death. He has summoned you to give up everything upon which you would build a case for your own righteousness in the face of His. And since He is the one who has summoned you to be disciples the Lord knows that He will be putting you through those experiences that will teach you that you are unable to take credit for anything before Him.

If you take credit in physical prowess and athleticism, you will lose it. If you take credit before God in your intellectual ability, your mind will grow dim. If you think that you have led a righteous life, you will be confronted with your unrighteousness. If you think that there is something with which you were born that gives you any standing before God, it will fail you. Jesus will send someone to you who does not care about your birthright or national heritage at all. If you take credit in your country, prepare to lose it. If you take comfort in your life, prepare to die.

Each of our crosses is unique. There are no two that are identical. However it is that the Lord chooses to humble us will be exactly what we need. For some it is loss of friends, popularity, and influence. For some it is the loss of their political party or way of life. For some it is the loss of their money and income. For some it is the loss of those close to them. For some it is the loss of their marriage. For some it is the loss of their abilities. Shall I go on? What is common to everyone's cross is that like the cross of Jesus it merely leads up to our death.

Yes, you will face death. You will face the diagnosis that takes your life away from you. You will face the surgery that kills you. You will face the disease that has no cure. You will face withering old age. You will face the nursing home and all of the limitations imposed on you in those facilities. You will face the hospital room and the hospice bed upon which you will draw your last breath.

And when you face this cross that the Lord has laid upon you, you will need His glory in order to face it.

Peter, John, and James had the glory of the transfigured Lord to get them through the experience of His crucifixion with their faith intact. It is too bad that they did not pay more attention to the conversation of our Lord with Moses and Elijah. Perhaps they would have understood that. Instead they offered to build three shelters as if the Mount of Transfiguration was the only kind of glory that they would take. They weren't interested in the glory of the Lord that stood atop Mount Calvary.

And so the apostles do not want you to make the same mistake that they did. They tell you about the glory of the Lord so that you will be ready to face your crosses. And they tell you not only of the glory of the Lord as He is transfigured as wonderful as that is, but they also tell of you of the glory of the Lord who rose from the dead. They tell you of the glory of the Lord who faced His cross and after facing His cross rose from the dead.

The apostles tell you of this glory so that you will see the future beyond the cross whenever you are called upon to bear yours.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.