

GLIMPSES OF GLORY

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 & Luke 9:28-36

Moses' face shone so brightly with God's glory that he had to wear a veil over his face to shield the people from it. Peter, James and John went with Jesus apart, up on top of a mountain to pray. While there they're eyes were opened to see the mystery of the glory of who Jesus was all along – the literal life of God on earth, enfleshed, *incarnated*, in a human being. It was as if their usual extra dark sun glasses were taken off. They were overcome by the brightness of God's glory shining through him. And so on this last Sunday in Epiphany, the season for recognizing the ways that God's light is *manifested* – revealed to us – in Jesus, we get several glimpse of God's glory.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth at around 50 AD, but his words still expand outward to all Christians and to you and me:

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

We Christians, Paul tells us, get to experience God face to face in the life and glory of Jesus Christ. The veil is removed. We get to experience God directly and know him personally. And as we see him, as we experience him, as we glimpse his glory, God is at the same time working his miracle of transformation in us.

What are some of the places and contexts in which you have glimpsed something of God's glory? Have we not all seen glimpses of God's grandeur, God's glory in the beauty of nature?

- The sun setting golden red as it slips down, a fiery circle, into the ocean.
- Mist hanging over the water on a cool summer morning.
- Mountains rising majestic in the distance
- Red, yellow and orange leaves brightly shining on a maple tree in Autumn
- A hawk or an eagle soaring in the sky

For me Eastern Orthodox icons have provided wonderful glimpses into Christ's glory. The icon of Christ going down to the dead and harrowing hell, that we place each week by the baptismal font is a profound glimpse of Jesus' power to transform us as he did Adam and Eve, pulling them out of their ancient graves into new and eternal lives, as the doors of hell are shattered and souls rise free. Christian symbolism and art can be a window through which we glimpse the living presence of Christ.

These past several weeks we have glimpsed the mystery of Christ's passion in the suffering of the people of Haiti. Jesus' suffering is one with their's. As we see and treat them so we see and treat our living Lord.

We glimpse Christ's glory in worship. Sometimes the blinders come off and we experience Christ in the thundering chords of the organ as well as in those times when those reverberations trail off into a profound and shared stillness. In voices lifted up in praise and in the beauty of holiness surrounding us in glorious stained glass and soaring architecture.

Sometimes we glimpse Christ's glory when we come with trembling hands to receive the bread and wine, not just as powerful symbols, but as the living presence of Jesus' Body and Blood.

Sometimes in friends and loved ones we recognize Christ's love. As God was revealed to us in the very human face of Jesus, so in the human faces of those we love and those with whom we share community we sometimes glimpse the living Christ. Christ is made real in their fellowship, their love.

Sometimes we get a glimpse of Christ as we look in a mirror. In our humanity, in our ordinary human lives, Christ's life is waiting to be lived, waiting to be unleashed, waiting to be expressed. And sometimes – oh so feebly – we do express his life. We do sometimes reveal his care and love. The Apostle Paul says that we have these treasures in earthen jars, so that when the light shines through a cracked pot it's obvious that there's a reality beyond the pot itself shining through.

Often we get a glimpse of Christ in the words of Holy Scripture. Of course we read about Jesus in the Gospels. But in all the words of Holy Scripture, Old and New Testaments, the life of God's Son is being revealed. As God's plan is being revealed, God's love for his people, God's preferential option for the poor, God's power to heal, as God's longed for promise takes shape, God's wisdom comes through, and God is revealed in a way that we simple human beings can understand, then we catch glimpses of the Word of God made flesh.

Sometimes also we meet God face to face, in prayer, in silence, in meditation, in worship and praise, in dreams, as well as in times of crisis and distress. We may hear a word, catch a vision of God's love, hear words of reassurance, be called to some important task, be reminded of someone in need. Whatever the personal encounter it is a glimpse of the divine.

Oftentimes when we go away on retreat we draw nearer to God's presence. In the quiet of a monastery, in the sacred space of a beautiful cathedral, when we are able to be still and let go of the distractions of our day to day lives and responsibilities we may glimpse a new realization of God's nearness. We sometimes sense what he has to say to us.

Sometimes we glimpse Christ's life in the enthusiasm of someone freshly minted with his new life. In the newly baptized, or a new convert to the faith. In someone still in the grip of a call to new ministry. In that person's excitement, freshness and enthusiasm we can see Christ's Spirit alive and working.

In all these ways and many more we sometimes catch glimpses of our living Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Of course he was there all the time. It's just that most of the time we don't see him with more than our ordinary human eyes. Just as Peter, James and John usually only saw *the shabby rabbi of Galilee*, this one time on the mountain their eyes were open to see the almost blinding mystery shining through Jesus' humanity. So, we too sometimes catch glimpses of a grandeur and a mystery and a power that we don't normally notice.

The Apostle Paul tells us that as we get glimpses of the *glory* of Christ that something happens to us. In glimpsing Christ's *glory* we are being transformed into his very likeness. It's like looking into a mirror and seeing not ourselves as we are, but the possibility of Christ's glory shining through us, and we *become* transformed into that holy image. We begin to become that new reality.

When Mother Teresa of Calcutta was a young nun in India traveling on a bus she had a profound glimpse of Christ's glory, a *call within a call*. She was overwhelmed by the terrible poverty she witnessed and heard Christ calling her to radiate his light and love by caring for the poorest of the poor, the *unwanted, unloved and uncared for* and serving him in them. And so she pursued that call and founded a new order, the *Missionaries of Charity* and began to care for the dying and helpless on the streets of Calcutta. Her extraordinary witness led many to follow and join her. She was and remains an inspiration to many. Several years after her death in 1997 the Rev. Brian Kolodiejchuk compiled a book of her letters to her confessor. Surprisingly this confident paragon representing Christ through our care of the poorest of the poor, was herself wracked with doubt. Not long after her call and vision she began to experience an emptiness where she once had experienced the fullness of God. For the last 50 years of Mother Teresa's life she wrote often to her spiritual director of how little she *felt* God's presence and love. And yet through all that time she didn't waver in her service and conviction. And she herself was radiant! Thousands and thousands have been influenced by her witness and simple words of love. She had indeed been so transformed by her glimpse of Christ that she didn't need to see him again to radiate that amazing glory.

How hard it would be to lose the ability to glimpse Christ's glory in a way that touches our hearts and stirs our souls. Those moments when the blinders are off and we see with new eyes are profoundly important to our walk with Christ. As we glimpse his glory, that same glory is working in us to transform us more and more into his image. For Christ wants us to be his representatives. He wants you and me to represent the light so that in us others might glimpse his glory. So, as the Apostle Paul wrote in the beginning of today's passage to the Corinthians, since "*we have such a hope, let us act with great boldness.*" Let us not be afraid to represent his love, his holy image, his glory.

Amen.