

### **Glory, Passion and Resurrection**

As the Last Supper with his disciples was concluding Jesus told them that the hour had come for his *glorification*. “*Father, the hour has come,*” he said, “*glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you.*” “*I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do,*” he went on. “*So now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.*” (Jn. 17:1, 4-5) Jesus was speaking of his coming death upon a cross.

What did Jesus mean by describing his passion as *glory*? There was nothing glorious about it. It was a Kangaroo Court with trumped up charges and a conviction quickly pushed through by corrupt officials. It was brutal, and the end of it was a bloody corpse laid in a tomb. Even the dawn of that 3<sup>rd</sup> morning was chaotic: His disciples running hither and yon, confused identities, misunderstandings and a tomb as unkempt as a teenager’s bedroom with grave clothes strewn everywhere! How was this a glorification?

“*Glory,*” *doxa* in Greek, is an important concept in the Gospel of John. The word appears 42 times in John’s Gospel, more than in Matthew, Mark and Luke combined. To comprehend *glory* and the use of the word in the theology of John’s Gospel we have to understand something of the biblical use of *glory*. The appearance of the *glory* or likeness of God was beyond human comprehension and ability to see. The *glory* of God appeared in the tent of tabernacle in the wilderness, but the cloud veiled it and only Moses could come into the presence of God’s glory and live. Even Moses’ face shown so brightly with God’s glory that he had to wear a veil. *Glory* represents God’s living presence on earth. It is the visible sign of God’s presence. In later Old Testament development God’s glory was believed to be beyond human experience or comprehension in this present age. So God’s glory came to be understood as something that would only be visible and present in a future messianic age.

One of the key conceptions and beliefs of the New Testament is that the glory of God is revealed in Jesus. In the Nunc Dimittis, when old Simeon held the baby Jesus being dedicated in the Temple, he proclaimed,

*Lord, you now have set your servant free  
to go in peace as you have promised;  
For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior,  
whom you have prepared for all the world to see;  
A light to enlighten the nations,  
and the **glory** of your people Israel. (Luke 2:25-32)*

Jesus was the living, human representation of God’s hidden glory.

John made it clear from his introduction that his Gospel was about God’s glory shown forth in the life of God’s Son. “*In the beginning was the Word,*” he wrote, “*and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” He concluded his introduction saying that, “*no one has ever seen God, it is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has*

*made him known.” In verse 14 he said, “and the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1,18,14)*

John’s Gospel makes a strong case for Jesus’ miracles revealing God’s glory. Seven of Jesus’ miracles are represented in the Gospel of John. John refers to them as *signs* that reveal God’s glory. Beginning with turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee through miracles of healing, the feeding of the 5000, walking on water and ultimately raising Lazarus from the dead, God’s glory is revealed through the works of God’s Son. Each sign reveals something important about God’s glory – God’s presence, God’s life on earth. In Jesus’ miracles we see God transforming life, setting cripples free, forgiving sins, helping the blind (all of us) to truly see, feeding the multitude, and overturning death. Walking across the water Jesus shows us that God will let no obstacle get in the way of coming to the help of his followers. The signs (miracles) reveal God’s glory. But all along John has Jesus foreshadow the ultimate sign – his passion – as his true *glorification*.

How does Jesus’ messy death reveal God’s ultimate glory? It comes down to *love*. “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*” (John 3:16) It is on the cross that we see God’s love enacted. God so identifies with our human plight and condition that he shares our suffering, shares our brokenness, shares our dis-ease, shares our deaths. In Jesus’ death upon the cross we realize that God is seeking us out, sharing our pain, reaching out to us even when we run as far away from him as we can, forgiving us even when we blaspheme and deny him. On the cross Jesus reveals the full depth of God’s love.

God’s glory on the cross in his pain and suffering becomes fully evident when God raises him from the grave. In the resurrection we realize fully that his death was not in vain. And in the resurrection God defeats death itself. God turns death into life, darkness into morning, sorrow into joy. In Jesus’ resurrection we see the fullness of God’s glory revealed.

At the Last Supper with his disciples Jesus makes clear that God’s glory is not only in him, God’s glory will also to be revealed in his disciples.

*“As you, Father, are in me and I am in you,” Jesus prayed “may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:21-23)*

And that means God’s glory is being revealed in us – in you and me – Jesus’ disciples today.

How can that be? I don't think of myself as revealing God's glory. All too often whatever I reveal is something far darker than God's glory. What does God's glory in us look like? How could we humans possibly begin to reflect that glory?

In order to reflect that glory we first have to begin to see it. We need to see God's glory in the face of Jesus, see God's glory in Jesus' love, see God's glory in Jesus' sacrifice upon the cross, see God's glory in the power that raised him from the grave.

In order to reflect that glory we need not only to recognize it but also believe. Many times the Gospel of John proclaims that all who believe in God the Son are given power to become children of God, power to triumph over life and death. Belief is emphasized as the essential ingredient. "*I am the resurrection and the life,*" Jesus told Martha as she was grieving over her brother Lazarus' death. "*Those who believe in me, even though they die will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?*" Martha did (John 11:23-26). Do you and I believe this?

In order to reflect God's glory we are invited to believe in the power of God to triumph over sickness, over dis-ease, over sin, over hatred, over war, over failure, over loss. Believe even in the face of death. Death, as terrible as it is – and even Jesus wept in the face of the death of his friend Lazarus – (death) is not the final answer. God triumphs over death. We reflect God's glory as we believe.

Last of all we reflect God's glory as we *abide*. "*Abide in me,*" Jesus told his disciples, "*as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.*" (John 15:4) I love that word, *abide*. It means that I don't have to do it all by myself. I don't have try to lift myself up by my own spiritual bootstraps and reflect something of God's glory by my own effort. I am invited to *abide* in Jesus and to let him *abide in me*. What I need to be is to be connected, to let his life live in me, work in me. Like the spring of water he told the woman at the well would bubble up inside her to eternal life, so as we abide in Christ his life bubbles up inside of us. As we abide in Christ his life is alive in us, at work in us. His love is transforming us. His light is helping us see our way more clearly and perhaps even helping others see their way a little more clearly. His forgiveness is washing us clean and helping us forgive those who have wronged us. His Body and Blood are nourishing us and helping us to more and more become that spiritual food we eat. His love is helping us believe our own worth and being expressed in service to others. His resurrection is helping us to live in the face of death and to die unafraid.

It turns out that the hymn I am going to close with today, is the same hymn I quoted in my Easter sermon a year ago. The words are so powerful I can't help but turn to them again (Hymn #196 & 197). *Look there! the Christ your brother, comes resplendent from the gallows tree and what he brings in his hurt hands is life on life for you and me.* Christ Jesus comes *resplendent* from the gallows tree, revealing there above all else God's great glory. The 3<sup>rd</sup> verse is my favorite. *Good Jesus Christ, our Brother died in darkest hurt upon the tree to offer us the worlds of light that live inside the Trinity.* Jesus' death and resurrection reveal the depths of God's hidden glory. Now, in Christ

that glory is revealed. And so, with the response to that hymn I close: *Joy! Joy! Joy to the heart and all in this good day's dawning! Joy! Joy! Joy to the heart and all in this good day's dawning!* Amen.