

Sunday, March 3, 2019
Transfiguration of Our Lord + Luke 9:28-43
“Changed from Glory into Glory” [Link to all texts](#)
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Marshall, WI
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Glory. The word appears several times in our readings today. What is glory, exactly?

I looked it up and found that Glory is a global corporation that helps customers automate their cash processes.

I learned that it is a 1989 film about the Civil War’s first all-black volunteer company.

I remembered it was the title song of the film *Selma*, which went on to win the Oscar for Best Song in 2015.

And I discovered that it’s the name of a much sought-after board game in which players are challenged to rebuild the city of Rome, returning it to its glory after the devastating fire of 64 AD. You know, the fire during which the emperor Nero fiddled while Rome burned. There’s a lot more to the story. Nero actually started the fire and blamed it on Christians. This gave him an excuse to ramp up his persecution of them. One of the first casualties was the apostle Paul, who had already been imprisoned in Rome for two years. Immediately after the fire Nero had him killed in his prison cell. Even so, if anyone has copy to bring to our Game Day next Sunday, that still might be fun.

The dictionary defines “glory” it as “praise, honor, or distinction extended by common consent.” Kind of like winning the Pulitzer Prize, I guess, or an Oscar. In general Biblical use it means “praise for the Lord.” Give glory to God.

But to my mind, the word as used in today's texts has a stunningly different meaning. To recap, ,Moses and Elijah appeared on the mountain *in glory*. Peter, John and James then saw Jesus *in his glory*. And Paul says in 2 Corinthians, when we behold *God's glory* as in a mirror, we are changed—transformed *from one degree of glory* into another. I believe “glory” must therefore be refer to *the fullness of a thing*. A thing, or an essence, or a person that is perfectly realized. That exists in the fullness of who or what God created that thing or person to be. Something that reflects God's own glory back to God. Here are some examples.

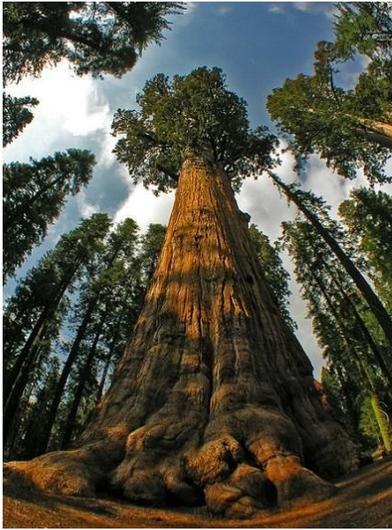
Glory is the perfect complexity of the passion flower.



Glory is the idea, the ideal, of a chair.



Glory is the magnificence of a sequoia.



Glory is the sparkle of children's faces as they are about to begin an Easter egg hunt.



Glory is a couple who has just been married.



Glory is a mother holding her newborn baby.



Glory is being in the presence of God and being changed as a result.

Moses and Elijah appear in this reading because they had experienced God directly, and both were changed. Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai as he was trying to deal with the idolatrous Israelites, who he'd just discovered worshipping a golden calf. After coming down from the mountain, the people paid attention to everything he told them.

God spoke to Elijah on Mount Horeb in "a sound of sheer silence" as he was fleeing certain death; Queen Jezebel was out to get him for having killed all her prophets. Elijah

had given up on everything and asked God to take away his life. But after this encounter he picked himself up and went on to identify his successor, Elisha, to continue his work.

Here on the mountain, Jesus, too, is changed. Luke tells us the appearance of his face changed and his clothes became dazzling white. We cannot know specifically what that meant, but what we do know is that Jesus is about to start out on the long journey to Jerusalem that culminates in his crucifixion. This journey is what Moses and Elijah were speaking to him about. His transfiguration may have marked the beginning of the full realization of God's plan for the salvation of the world.

Glory is being in the presence of God and being changed as a result.

Is this an experience only for God's prophets? No. It is for each of us. Paul tells us so in plain language: "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 into another." In Ephesians 3 Paul writes about his desire that we be filled with the fullness of God—that is, God's glory. The more we are filled with God, the more we take on peace, patience, kindness, compassion, generosity, joy and every gift of the Holy Spirit. To be "fully alive" is to be filled with all the fullness of God.

In the second part of today's reading, Jesus shows us what being "fully alive" looks like, and it's not sitting in a corner in solitary splendor. It can be a messy business:

³⁷On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. ³⁹Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. ⁴⁰I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." ⁴¹Jesus answered [to the disciples], "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with

you? [To the father] Bring your son here.”⁴² While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.^{43a} And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

At the beginning of Luke 9 Jesus had already given the disciples the power and authority to heal diseases, but for some reason here they failed. Perhaps they were afraid, or uncertain, just as they were on the mountain when they seemed clueless about what was going on. The result of Jesus’ healing of the boy is that everyone, including the disciples, was astounded at the greatness of God. Changed from one degree of glory into another.

Aren’t we often afraid or uncertain when it comes to how God’s glory is reflected through us? Perhaps we are timid and don’t believe that we could be a vehicle for God’s glory. Perhaps we think that other people’s hardships are their problem, just as in the story of the Good Samaritan when the two Jewish religious leaders pass by the poor man in the ditch. The Samaritan’s rescue took courage and time. He could have contracted some terrible disease from touching the man. And wherever he was going, he got there a lot later than he planned. In this gift of mercy the Samaritan was reflecting the glory of God—God, whose essence is love, mercy and compassion. He was making God’s glory shine just a bit brighter in the world.

This is the true meaning of “give glory to God.” Not only to praise and thank God, but to reveal God’s glory to others in a way that communicates the presence of Christ. God’s glory, reflected through us, makes the light of Christ shine that much brighter. And we are changed as a result, from one degree of glory into another. Amen.