

The word “glory” brings to mind two very different things. On the one hand it makes some people think in terms of our heavenly destination, as in the hymn verse about the saints who have gone ahead of us to be with God: *We feebly struggle / they in glory shine*. Or just think of the expression from old Negro spirituals, “bound for glory.” That use of the word is much different than what we mean when we say, “No guts, no glory,” or, “Solomon in all his glory”; for then we mean “the state of having won praise, riches, and admiration here on earth.” Of Christ, however, the word means something else, as when John states in beginning his Gospel:

*We have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Here “glory” refers to the divine splendor, the greatness & power & splendor, that simply belong to Jesus because he is the Son of God. “Glory” now means something that none of us has – something nobody has except the Lord.

The Gospels say that at certain times in the life of Christ divine glory simply burst forth like a camera flash in a dusky room. Luke writes of the shepherds:

*An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them...*

Saint John says that, when Jesus turned water into wine at Cana, he:

*...manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*

Matthew & Mark join the chorus however, to show us that the greatest connection between Jesus and glory that we find in the Gospels is the way he applied it to himself in his teaching in connection with Judgment Day:

*"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne."*

This use we echo, of course, when we confess of Him in the Creed:

*"He shall come again with glory..."*

Today we must ask ourselves, What does it mean that on a certain day in Jesus' ministry he went up a mountain with three disciples and there appeared in glory? Why did it happen when it did – what purpose did that moment serve?

The first thing to say for certain is that it occurred for the sake of the disciples. Jesus gave them this

glimpse of his glory as a treasure that they should hide away for a time, and then take out and show to everyone after his resurrection. God the Father wanted the disciples to behold his Son's glory with their eyes, and later to describe it for the whole Church on earth.

The second thing we may say of his Transfiguration is clear, not so much from today's text but from its context in the Gospels: Right after this happened he started his final trip to Jerusalem for his trial and passion. In fact, we may go so far as to say this: Jesus Christ, in the company of Moses & Elijah, shone that day as brightly as he did not only because he was God's Son, but because as God's Son he would very shortly be seen bleeding & dying on the cross to win glory as the Savior of the world. Or, to put it more simply, Jesus was transfigured not only to show the glory of who he was, but to reveal the glory of what he was about to do.

Thus, there are now three things that we may draw from the account of the Transfiguration of Our Lord that apply to us. First, it is right for us to worship Jesus Christ. To do so is not idolatry, for the baby born to Mary truly was & is the glorious Son of God; and any praise to pour forth to him redounds to the glory of the Father who sent him. We no more worship Moses or the prophets or the Apostles or Mary than we worship our own relatives; but we do worship and pray to the Lord Jesus Christ; for he is our Lord and our God.

Second, he did give to us on that mountain a picture of that for which we should yearn. His bright blazing on this day – just like the brilliant sky over the shepherd's heads, and just like the dazzling white of the angels at the empty tomb – signifies a heavenly destination not promised to everyone who dies, but to those who live and die in Him. Christians should be people who look forward to life in the world to come with their Lord.

Third, as Jesus' disciples we must listen to him and learn from him as our teacher, in order not to go around in this world seeking glory from others. Christ shone on that day, not only because he was God's Son, but because as God's Son he was about to offer himself in death for the life of the world. And as you well know, to be his disciples means not only to believe in him but to follow in his footsteps. Saint Paul writes of faith & love:

*Because your faith is growing abundantly... the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.*

For Jesus to take the glory that was his, the glory that shone forth to Peter, John, and James; and for him to take it with him on his last trek Jerusalem, says to us in the words of Saint John:

*He laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.*

Or as Peter reminds us:

*Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand, that at the proper time he may exalt you.*

There is the glory of heaven toward which we are wending our way; there is the glory-grabbing that we should avoid like the plague; and there is the glory of the Transfiguration, the glory of a Christ who gave himself up in service to a world of sinners. We worship and we follow him. ✠