

It has been said that here, at the end of Epiphany, this story of the Transfiguration of Jesus is about the **Jesus we want** – the peace, the vision, the presence, the blazing brightness...the mountaintop experience.

But, on Wednesday, we will be entering into Lent and then as we march to Holy Week, we will see the **Jesus we get** – the intimidation by the Romans and Jewish leadership, the arrest, torture and death of Jesus.

The life of Jesus, as all human lives, shares times of great joy, great sorrow, and sometimes tragedy. We have those wonderful times that we hope will never end, and then we have the lousy times when we are facing illness, or the death of a loved one, loss of a job, or depression to slog through.

Today, no matter what you were feeling when you entered church this morning, we are transported to the transfiguration of Jesus in our Gospel reading. This morning is all about the Glory of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus' face is changed, and his clothes become dazzling white. The disciples who were lucky enough to accompany Jesus were amazed and astounded and never wanted to leave.

We have said, or sung or heard the word "Glory" about 10 times so far in this service, and before we are through this morning we will hear it a few more times too. In helping us into the Transfiguration mood, our liturgy, and hymns repeat the idea of Glory!

But, "Glory" is another one of those religious words that we hear so often that we can't even hear it anymore.

What is glory anyway? "Glory to God in the highest..." "Glory to you, Lord Christ" and in today's Gospel, "They saw his glory". These don't seem to mean the same thing. How can you and I enter into the Gospel, hear the good news if we (*I should just say I*) can't figure out what the words mean.

So, as I often do, I turn to the dictionary entry for glory says... "*praise, honor, or distinction extended by common consent*" (m-w.com) That does seem to be the meaning of some of our uses of the word. We praise God in the highest. We praise Christ for his time with us and the stories we hear in the Gospel.

But what we heard in Luke's Gospel this morning is that Peter SAW the glory of Jesus. Well, you can't see praise or honor or distinction. There's got to be more to "glory" than what the dictionary says.

OK, so let's get to something we do know. If I say, "That is a glorious sunrise!" I think we all know that I mean that it is super duper, maybe one of the top ten sunrises of the year, or of the decade. So, when we think of the response of Peter to the glory of Jesus we can also tell a little bit about what glory means when we hear Peter's response to seeing the glory

...put into my own words. *"Let's just stay here, guys. We can put up some tents, we can just hang out and enjoy the gorgeous view, the presence of this man, Jesus, who we love, and respect and depend on. And we can enjoy the vision of Moses and Elijah who come to us from the past. This is so cool. We can't get this stuff down in the towns we've been visiting. Up here, we can see the past, the present, and the future of the world. Let's not ever leave the glorious place and the glorious presence of our beloved Jesus."*

So, for your own personal definition of glory...think of a glorious sight, or experience in your own life...the birth of your child, your toes in the warm sand at the beach, the smell of the pines on a hot summer day, being in the arms of someone you love, or the purr of a cat that leaps up in your lap for a scratch behind the ears. It's going to be different for all of us, but we all know glorious times, even if they are fleeting. Most often, these time are not just remembered with one sense but with several – the sight, smells, touch and sounds of glory.

And then, we always have to come back down the mountain; back the disciples go into the towns with Jesus. Back to the big crowds pushing and shoving to get a chance to see this man who can make people's lives better. A man calls above the fray, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child."

We're back to reality. Back to the world where people suffer. We suffer. The world is suffering. We are back to disease, war, hunger, homelessness. The mountaintop is still visible in the distance, but the experience will become a more and more distant memory. Where is that **glory** now? All we have is **gory** reality.

What is the Gospel, or the Good News for you? Is it only a fleeting thing that you sense in those moments of great connection...or can the glory of the transfiguration come back down from the mountain with you and accompany you on the gory reality day to day life?

When you first heard me read the Gospel reading this morning did you think, "wow, that's weird, two unconnected passages read together."

THEY ARE CONNECTED. Every part of our lives are connected, and you'd better believe that the Gospel writer, Luke, put these two stories side by side for a reason.

God's glory is on the mountaintop. God's glory is in the day to day. God's glory is in the suffering of that little boy who was probably a complete outcast among his friends. Who wants to play with a boy who starts convulsing for no apparent reason.

Look at the hidden connection between the two halves of our reading today. God says on the mountain, "This is my son, my chosen." The father of the boy in the valley says, "Look at my son; my only child."

There is the glory of God.

That boy was transformed because of Jesus and the greatness of God. He was a glorious human being when seen beyond his illness. You and I can be transformed by the presence of Jesus in our lives and we are and will be glorious if we can see through the things we suffer to the glory God has in mind for us.

Take that mountaintop experience with you down into the valley. Remember that Jesus didn't send the disciples down the mountain alone. He went with them...all the way down to the depths of the valley of the shadow of death.

The people in the town were astounded at the greatness of God. We are too.