

Streetsville United Church

Sunday, March 17, 2019

Rev. John Tapscott

“WHERE WE SEE HIS GLORY”

Luke 9:28-45

Sometimes we say about someone – “That person really in their glory.” We usually say it when we see someone doing exactly what they want to, or exactly what God intends them to do, using their God-given gifts to the fullest. For example, when we hear and watch John Shillingberg play one of his special organ pieces or when he’s conducting the choir we say, “John’s in his glory.” I once attended a concert by Oscar Peterson at Roy Thompson Hall. Whenever Oscar sat at the piano, the music just poured forth from his hands and you could say, “He is his glory.” Sometimes you listen to a teacher or professor present a sterling lecture, totally in love with her subject and sharing her enthusiasm with the students. “She’s in her glory,” you say. You might say it about certain star athletes when they are performing at their peak. Or maybe when a politician makes an inspirational speech which moves an entire nation. It doesn’t happen that often but when it does, you would say, “That person is doing exactly what God put him on earth to do. He’s in his glory.”

The word glory means something like splendour, the peak of excellence, magnificence. In the Bible the word glory has the sense of significance, heaviness, awesomeness. That’s what we might say about God’s glory. It refers to his majesty, his ultimate importance, his absolute uniqueness, his weightiness. We say, “Glory be to God,” for nothing and no one surpasses him, nothing and no one else even comes close.

The glory of God was seen in his Son. Eight days after Peter had confessed Jesus as the Christ, Jesus took Peter, James and John up a high mountain. There Jesus began to pray. The appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Luke doesn’t use the word but Matthew and Mark say that Jesus was transfigured before them. Suddenly the disciples saw Moses the law giver and Elijah the prophet. They appeared in glory and spoke to Jesus about his departure which he would soon accomplish at Jerusalem. They were encouraging him to persevere in his mission, all the way to the cross.

The three disciples became sleepy in the thin mountain air, but as they awoke “they saw his glory,” Jesus’ glory. (Luke 9:32) Peter, in his excitement, wanted to build three shelters, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. But just then an cloud overshadowed them all, and the disciples were terrified. And from this cloud came a voice saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him.” When the voice had spoken, they found Jesus alone. That is not surprising, for there is no one, not even Moses and Elijah who measures up to Jesus. He is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. He is the Promised One. He alone is God’s Son, the One whom we listen to, above all others. For a long time, the three disciples told no one what they had seen. And

what they had seen on the mountain top was Jesus' glory. "They saw his glory." God gave Peter, James and John the privilege of seeing Jesus' glory as no one else had ever seen it. The experience was unique at least for them. But can we see Jesus' glory? The answer is "Yes, we can." Here's where we see Jesus' glory.

First, we see Jesus' glory in his selfless service.

Jesus and the three disciples didn't stay on the mountain top. The next day, they came down and a great crowd met them. A man shouted to Jesus, "Teacher, I asked your disciples to cast an evil spirit out of my only son, but they couldn't." Jesus seemed frustrated. "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you?" Well, not too much longer, as it turned out. The cross was not far off. But for now, Jesus said to them, "Bring your son here." While he was coming the demon dashed the boy to the ground, causing convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. All were astounded at the greatness of God. They saw the glory of God in Jesus, but not like the disciples had seen it on the mountain. They saw the glory of God in Jesus' selfless service to broken humanity.

Jesus said about himself, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve." Paul says of Jesus, "He emptied himself and became a servant." There was no pit of human misery and no valley of human despair where Jesus would not go. Serving was sometimes exhausting, even frustrating and very costly to Jesus. But Jesus was in his glory as he selflessly served humanity. Jesus' glory was seen in the greatness of his lowly service.

In a smaller way, it applies to us, too. We reflect the mind of Christ and the glory of God when we are serving others. Jesus said, "The greatest among you will be your servant." The great among us know that whatever gifts, powers, and advantages God has given us are for the service of others. When we go into the valley and truly serve others, we are fully alive and the glory of God may be seen in our service.

Let me share a couple of stories. The first is about Albert Schweitzer. It comes from the medical clinic he set up in the jungles of Africa. He writes, "In September we got the first rains and the cry goes up to bring all the timber under cover. As we have in the hospital hardly a man capable of working, I begin, assisted by the loyal helpers, to haul beams and planks myself. Suddenly, I catch sight of a native in a white suit sitting by a patient he has come to visit. "Hello friend," I call out. "Won't you lend us a hand?" The man answers, "I am an intellectual and don't drag wood around." "You're lucky," I reply, "I too wanted to become an intellectual but didn't succeed." Now when you realize that Schweitzer had three doctorate degrees, his humor and humility shines forth, as does the mind of Christ. In his humble service we see the glory of God.

Now most of us serve in less spectacular ways than Schweitzer. But in our service to humanity others may catch a glimpse of God's glory. A person whom I know only a little is performing a selfless service for a friend. The friend is suffering through difficult treatments for aggressive cancer. This person has been living with the patient for the past three months, caring for her and assisting her and meeting her needs as best she can. She has not been in her own home since

early December. The person claims her service is not really a big deal, but I consider it very impressive. In her selfless service, I see the glory of Christ.

We see Jesus' glory in his selfless service to humanity. And with the eyes of faith we may catch a glimpse of divine glory in those who quietly, humbly, and sacrificially serve others, even as others may see it in our service.

"They saw his glory." Secondly, we see Jesus' glory in the death he died.

That may seem rather strange. But it's true. In that bloodied, crucified man on a cross we see divine glory. Jesus said that his death on the cross would be his most glorious moment. In John 12 Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies it produces many seeds...And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.' He said to show the kind of death he was to die."

Christ's greatest glory is seen in his suffering death on the cross. He died because of the great and overwhelming love of God for sinners. He died not for his own sins but for ours. He was our substitute – the sinless one taking our sins upon himself and bearing the punishment our sins deserve. He died to save us from separation and eternal death. He died so we can be forgiven and made righteous before God on the day of judgement. He died for us so that him you and I and all who believe can have new and eternal life. His death was glorious because it was his greatest service for fallen humankind.

A minister was called to the hospital to pray for a boy who was dying. After he had done so, the mother said, "There is only one hope – that a blood transfusion may save him." Soon afterward the transfusion took place and the minister waited with the family. Before long the boy's face and fingers began to show signs of colour. In time he recovered completely. On the next Communion Sunday, the minister noticed the lad in the congregation, and as he pronounced the words, "This is my Body...this is my Blood", he saw what he had never seen before – that blood is life. The boy would have died without it.

It's a great mystery, but we say that the Cross is God's blood transfusion for sick and dying humanity. The broken body and shed blood represent the very life of God which he has given for the life of the world. As we look up to the wondrous Cross with faith we feel ourselves being brought alive again – with a sense of dignity and worth, with strength for the living of our days, and with hope for this world and the world to come. We see Jesus' glory in the death he died for us. And so Paul writes in Galatians 6:14, "But far be it for me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..." And from that verse comes the great hymn, "In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time." "They saw his glory."

Finally, we will see Jesus' glory in heaven.

That great experience on the mountain which was given to Peter, James and John, is a foretaste of what we will experience in heaven. We will see Jesus in all the glory of His Risen Presence. The text tells us that Moses and Elijah were also seen in glory. But honestly I think their glory was a

reflection of Jesus' glory, because they were standing so near to him. In heaven, we will see Jesus in glorious splendour and his glory will be reflected in us. But we won't be terrified, as Peter, James and John were. In Matthew's account Jesus stepped forth, touched the disciples and said to them, "Get up and do not be afraid." We may be overwhelmed by Jesus' glory in heaven but there will be nothing to be afraid of. We will see him in the fullness of his glory as the Risen and Reigning Lord. His perfect love for us will cast out all fear.

Recently Adelaide, Julie and I watched the DVD of the movie "I Can Only Imagine." I know some of you have seen it. It's well worth seeing. It tells the life story of Bart Millard, who wrote the most popular Christian song of the past few decades. In fact, its popularity went well beyond Christian radio stations and became the most requested song on some secular radio stations. As the message ends today we are going to sit quietly and listen to Bart Millard and his group Mercy Me sing "I Can Only Imagine."

*I can only imagine
What it would be like
When I walk by your side*

*I can only imagine
What my eyes would see
When your face is before me
I can only imagine
I can only imagine*

*Surrounded by your glory
What will my heart feel
Will I dance for you Jesus
Or in awe of You be still
Will I stand in your presence
To my knees will I fall
Will I sing hallelujah
Will I be able to speak at all*

*I can only imagine
I can only imagine*

*I can only imagine
When that day comes
When I find myself
Standing in the Son*

*I can only imagine
When all I will do
Is forever, forever worship you I can only imagine I can only imagine*

"They saw his glory." And we will too. Thanks be to God.