

TEXT: Luke 9:28-36

THEME: GLIMPSES OF GLORY

Dear Christian Friends:

Years ago, during the summer after my first year at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, four of my fellow students and I back-packed through the Canadian Rockies in Banff and Jasper National Parks. One time we hiked for two days, with all our gear on our backs, up a steep mountain trail. Moving up a mountain means hard work. Gravity fights you every step of the way. Switchbacks, exposed ridges, heat, cold, wind, hunger, and thirst—why visit such places? Because mountaintop views are breathtaking! This is Amethyst Lake, where we stayed several days and nights. It was hard work to get there, but well worth it.

Today God the Holy Spirit focuses our sight on the breathtaking view Peter, James, and John got of Jesus. Jesus was transfigured. Like a brilliant butterfly emerging from a drab cocoon, Jesus took on a different physical appearance—temporarily. There on that mountaintop, Jesus, as true man, radiated the divine glory he always possesses as true God, begotten of the Father from eternity.

Even so, the disciples' glimpse of Jesus' glory was a muted one. No sinful person can expect to stand in the presence of the full, uncovered glory of God and live. But God's love for us sinners moved him to take on our human flesh so that he could live with us and save us from our sins. God veiled his glory in the God-man, Jesus, for our sake. So it was at Jesus' transfiguration.

God allowed a glimpse of his glory to be seen in order to strengthen the disciples and prepare them for the horrible events we will consider in what we now call Lent. But it could only be a glimpse. Jesus' face gleamed like the sun. His clothes became white as the light. No less impressive, however, was the mercy of God falling on the disciples. God's mercy allowed them to live another day to tell and write about what they had seen.

Later on, Saint John, referring to Jesus, wrote: **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14)**. John was not exaggerating. He had gotten a glimpse of the glory Jesus possesses as the second person of the Trinity.

See how Jesus loved his disciples! Jesus had not exactly kept his identity as God the Son a secret from them. His teaching and his miracles—turning water into wine, calming the sea, curing blindness, healing leprosy, raising the dead—always pointed out that he was true God. But here Jesus disclosed to them—temporarily, partially, and visually—his awesome glory.

My dear friends, you are no less privileged than Peter, James, and John. Jesus' glory is found in the forgiveness of sins that is present yet hidden beneath the bread and wine as you receive Holy Communion. Jesus' glory is located in the washing away of sin flowing through the baptismal water connected with Jesus' promise of eternal life. Jesus' glory is present, though hidden, in the words of forgiveness proclaimed by ministers of the gospel, weak and sinful though we are. You too see God's glory.

This past week, our called teachers, Pastor Pankow, and I attended an annual meeting of the Northern Conference of the Michigan District of the Wisconsin Synod. The beautiful worship service with the Word, hymn singing, and organ playing was another one of those "mountaintop glimpses of glory." During the conference, at one point, the discussion turned to Christian education. The comment was made that in our Lutheran elementary schools, prep schools, college, and seminary, we do not teach any secular subjects. Now don't misunderstand: we teach math, science, history, geography, English, music, computer skills, and so on, all the subjects one may think of as secular. We teach them thoroughly and well right here at Trinity Lutheran School, and we have standardized test scores to prove it. But at Trinity Lutheran School, those are not secular subjects because each one is taught in the light of God and his Word. Each one is taught so that the student can catch a glimpse of God's glory in that subject.

Plus, each day there are lessons in God's Word, worship is conducted, Bible verses, hymns, and parts of Luther's Catechism are memorized, prayers are offered, discipline is tempered with God's love, the difference between right and wrong is taught without the filter of "political correctness." The very way classes are taught, the behavior of teachers and students, and the atmosphere of our Lutheran Elementary School give us a glimpse of God's glory.

We provide and support our Lutheran elementary school, preschool, Sunday school, and public Catechism classes so that our children, grand-children, and future generations can share a glimpse of God's glory with us. Certainly it is not a perfect glimpse because of sin. We are all still sinners with sinful desires living in a sinful world. The devil works hard among us. Yet, to keep us strong, God gives us glimpses of his glory. With the Apostle Paul, we must say, **"For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).** For now, Jesus calls on us to wait until the glorious day of his triumphant return to see his glory fully. May our glimpses of his glory on the mountaintop and in our Christian education opportunities keep us strong while we wait. Amen.