

“Jesus—the Fullness of God’s Glory?”—Luke 9:32-35

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, *Jesus—the Fullness of God’s Glory?*, is Luke 9:32-35 → *Now Peter and those who were with Him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. And as the men were parting from Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Intrinsic to the “American dream” is “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” mentioned in the United States Declaration of Independence. With the rise of affluence, comfort, conveniences and modern medicine, many Christians also tend to view pain-free and suffering-free living as a divine right or promise. The expectation to experience God’s blessings as an “unalienable right” given by our Creator is even expressed openly by believers and non-believers alike through the phrase “God bless America.”

The expectation of experiencing the fullness of God’s glory through temporal blessings in a world corrupted by sin is not unique to the “American dream.” Rather, it is the desire of the sinful flesh and is reflected in a number of spiritually dangerous actions and attitudes. For instance, when something “bad” happens the temptation is to doubt God’s presence and providence. Conversely, some view catastrophes and physical afflictions as the removal of God’s blessings because of displeasing Him in some manner. The “litmus test” in this understanding for determining if you are in a “right” relationship with God is your physical blessings in this life and leads to making your “wrong” relationship with God “right” by your own actions.

Experiencing the fullness of God’s glory as bound up with experiencing a physically comfortable, prosperous and pain-free life because of obedience to God has been referred to as a “theology of glory.” It takes the blessings and providence of Yahweh and turns it into evil through a process of works-righteousness—being saved and defining your relationship with Him by your own works.

In our text Jesus revealed to three of His disciples where the fullness of God’s blessings and glory can be found—only in the Person & Work of Jesus **on His terms**. In His transfiguration, Jesus revealed that through His ministry on this earth the fullness of God’s glory can only be experienced in His struggle with sin and the devil through suffering and

dying on the cross (i.e. crucifixion). This has been referred to as the “theology of the cross.”

The misconception that being with Jesus means you will always be happy, blessed and experience only good things from the LORD in this life is exemplified here in Peter. About a week before His transfiguration Jesus told His disciples that He would *suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised*. When Peter rebuked Jesus for saying such a thing, He immediately revealed that it was only the devil who would try to thwart salvation by way of the cross (cf. Matthew 16:21-23).

Waking up to encounter Jesus in a glorified form talking with Moses and Elijah, Peter immediately offered to *make three tents, one for Jesus and one for Moses and one for Elijah* (verse 33). It appears as if Peter wanted to stay on the mountain and experience all the glory of God rather than go down into the sin-filled world with all its struggles again. It was so good to be there and building these shelters gives us the idea of wanting to make this glorious experience permanent.

Like many people today, Peter wanted the fullness of God and His glory in the Person and the Work of Jesus Christ without the struggles of His humanity. Many want a Jesus Who will take away suffering, not One Who embraces it and lives through our suffering with us.

It is natural for a Christian to want to experience the eternal joys of

heaven and God's glory forever. It is that for which human beings are created by God (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:5). However, because of sin it must come through the cross of suffering in Christ's crucifixion. The very purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry was to deal with your sin through His suffering and death on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for your sin. While his disciples were chasing a dream of the "perfect life" which they felt the Messiah would bring, Jesus was more realistic. While Peter was willing to fight for that "dream" with the sword during Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. John 18:10-11), Jesus fought the spiritual battle through suffering to make it happen **in God's way**.

Verse 33 of our text does place a commentary on Peter's desire for this wonderful experience to continue, *not even knowing himself what he said*. Such an understanding of experiencing the fullness of God's glory in the crucifixion of Jesus can only be obtained as a gift by the power of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says: *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned*. After receiving the Holy Spirit Peter and the other apostles were able to put aside the myths of a "theology of glory" in the present form of this world.

Peter's epistles (i.e. letters) in the Scriptures speak volumes of enduring suffering because you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. No longer did he preach a "theology of glory." Listen to what he wrote about

thirty years after the Transfiguration in 2 Peter 1:16-18 → *We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain. The Spirit dispelled the myths to focus on the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ while dealing with suffering in this present world.*

Because of the perfect obedience, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ **for you**, you will get to experience the fullness of God’s glory in “the life of the world to come” which you confess in the Apostles’ Creed. Throughout His teaching Jesus stated clearly that as you trust in and follow Him you will suffer in this life. The apostles were constantly *strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God* (cf. Acts 14:22). When Jesus spoke about peace and joy He made it very clear in John 14:27 → *Peace I leave with you; **My** peace I give to you. **Not as the world gives** do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.* (cf. 1 Corinthians

Facing the cross of Christ means that you face your sin, repent at the foot of that cross and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance to replace your old life of sin with a new obedience as you listen to Jesus . . . like the disciples were told to do at the Transfiguration. Listen to God's Word in this regard:

- Romans 6:6 talks about being connected to Christ in your baptism:
*We know that our old self was **crucified with Christ** in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.* The key phrase is **crucified with Christ**.
- Galatians 2:20 says: *I have been **crucified with Christ**. It is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.* Again, the key phrase is: *I have been **crucified with Christ**.*
- Galatians 5:24 says: *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have **crucified the flesh with its passions and desires**.*

When you are crucified with Christ you actually live in His victory over the power of sin, death and the devil in the midst of the struggles with their presence this side of heaven. Thus, experiencing the fullness of God's glory in Jesus Christ happens through faith as you embrace the

struggles which Jesus dealt with at the cross, looking forward to experiencing the fullness of God's glory eternally in heaven. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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