

“It Is Good That We Are Here”

Luke 9:28-36

We are drawing to the close of the Epiphany Season. This is the last time we will rejoice with “Alleluias” until Easter. On Ash Wednesday, our focus will change. These past weeks, we have seen Jesus manifest His Divine power at the wedding feast at Cana by turning water into wine. We have seen Jesus cast out demons and heal Peter’s mother-in-law. And we have witnessed the Baptism of our Lord, where God the Father spoke from heaven and said, “This is My Son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased.”

Throughout this season, in our Gospel lessons, we have been witnesses to miraculous and powerful events, where Jesus gives us little glimpses of His Divine Majesty – but the fullness of His glory was still hidden. But His real glory is not revealed in the way you think. In our Gospel today, Luke tells us about the one time when Jesus did not so greatly suppress His Divine strength, and in the Transfiguration of our Lord, we see the overwhelming power of Jesus Divine nature.

Luke tells us that the appearance of His face changed and that His clothes became dazzling white. What a sight that must have been – to witness a little bit of heaven on earth. But this is not where His real glory is revealed. The true glory of God does not manifest itself until Jesus begins speaking with Moses and Elijah. The glory is not in the bright lights or the dazzling whiteness of His clothes.

God's glory is revealed when Moses and Elijah speak of what He is about to accomplish in Jerusalem. They speak of His departure – the Greek word there is “Exodus.” Our Lord, once again, is going to rescue His people in spectacular fashion – bringing the Israelites out of Egypt is nothing compared to what He is about to do. The 10 plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud, the pillar of fire, bread from heaven – these are all just precursors to salvation and the glory of God that will come when the promised Messiah arrives. Those miracles did not do much to create deep and abiding faith in the people who witnessed them.

When our Lord promised deliverance to the Israelites, He spoke through Moses and said, “Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord . . . I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment” [Dt. 6:6]. The glory of God was seen in the Exodus. No one could deny that those miracles happened. Yet, the miracles didn't change hearts.

When Christ came to establish His new and better covenant, He promised to redeem all the world with two outstretched arms and with great acts of mercy. The glory of God is best seen in the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Once again, it is through the mouth of Moses that God's will for His people is revealed. Moses and the prophets testify of who Jesus is. How many times did Jesus say to the Pharisees and other critics, “If you believed Moses and the prophets you would believe Me. For they testify of Me.”? On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and the prophet Elijah testify of Jesus and what He came to do.

Moses and the prophets still testify of Jesus and what He came to do. Our Mount of Transfiguration is right here in our worship. God speaks to us in the Word through Moses and the prophets. We have the physical presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacrament. Hearing God's Word and receiving His body and blood in the Sacrament is as close as we can get to heaven here on earth. "It is good that we are here." We don't know exactly what heaven is going to be like. However, we can be certain: like Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, we are going to be in bodily form, communing with Christ. And we will join in that heavenly conversation.

And secondly, heaven will certainly not be a boring place. There is a reason that when Peter caught just a glimpse of the glory of God he said, "It is good that we are here. Let's make three tents." Peter did not want to leave.

But the real glory of heaven is in the sacrifice that Christ made. In John's Revelation, He is still the Lamb on the throne. The multitude of saints have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. That is what John sees as the heavenly things are revealed to him.

Peter desired to bask in the glory of God. To truly linger in God's glory, making tents would be of no use. They had to come down that mountain. The real glory would be seen in what is accomplished for us in Jerusalem. There was another Exodus to come. God was going to redeem His people with outstretched arms. This time, the miracles will create deep and abiding faith.

Throughout this Epiphany Season we have witnessed some of the

miracles of Jesus, but we see that better miracles have been performed for us right here. Here is where miracles truly create faith without doubt. Baptism washed you clean on the inside and opens the gates of heaven for you. I cannot doubt that I have been baptized. The water was real. The Word of God was spoken.

The broken body and shed blood of Christ, given and shed for you, is an opportunity to participate in the miraculous. I cannot doubt that the bread and wine enter into me. I see it happen. The only way I can doubt this miracle is to say that God does nothing up here. It is only bread. It is only wine. Move along. Nothing to see here.

The glory surrounding the saints in heaven who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb – we find comfort in knowing that our loved ones who have died in faith are sharing in that glory as we speak, and with angels, arch-angels, and all the company of heaven, they are glorifying and praising God’s Name with us. There is no reason to doubt this.

We will join them in that eternal glory either when we die in our Baptismal faith or when Christ returns – whichever comes first. Until that happens, we will continue to gather together as a community of believers and receive a glimpse of heaven in God’s Word, in His Absolution, and in His Sacraments. Here this evening/morning, we are privileged to truly have “a little bit of heaven on earth,” and we echo those words of Peter, “It is good that we are here.” Amen