**Hidden Glory**

Based on [Matthew 17:1-9](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt17.1-9)

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The Transfiguration of Our Lord

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Jesus showed his glory to his disciples. What does that look like...glory? If you went to the supermarket to pick up a bottle of glory, what would be in that bottle? White light?

We use the word glory a lot, and it usually indicates stardom, celebrity. But it means more than that. Glory is what makes someone look powerful, mighty, confident, strong, majestic, or, in today’s business language, “successful.” Glory is what gives a person indisputable bragging rights, commands respect. No one can deny the glory of whoever will win the Superbowl in a couple of weeks. No one can deny that Kareem Abdul Jabar or Pete Rose were glorious athletes. They had many moments of record setting record breaking glory to prove it.

Today Gospel is about the time when Jesus appears in glory before three of his disciples. This was a big deal, because Jesus did not come to earth in glory. Jesus was born a baby, with spit up, crying, burping, cooing, crawling, stumbling, falling, just like any other baby. Cute, but not powerful. Jesus grew up in Podunk Nazareth, a quaint little town, idyllic maybe, but not glorious. As an adult, he lived a vagabond life, no home, no possessions, no wife and kids, no Canadian dream, no viable stock options to secure a good retirement.

And yet here he is, calling people to follow him and teaching as though what he says comes from the mouth of God Himself. By all *appearances*, by “sight,” Jesus is just another guy with some salvation to sell. If he wants us to buy his message maybe he ought to broaden his phylacteries and lengthen his tassels. If he’s gonna be a savior, he’s gotta at least *look* successful right? How can we be expected to follow a God who doesn’t look the part? Jesus needs to polish his sandals, crease his shirt-sleeves, drive a Beemer. But he doesn’t, and so imagine being one of Jesus’ twelve disciples, always confused because this messiah that they cast their fishing nets aside to follow, he didn’t fit the mould of their expectations at all.

And so when Peter James and John go up this mountaintop, Jesus gives them confirmation. He gives them a glimpse of the glory he always possessed, but seldom showed. And when his divinity, veiled in human flesh, came shining through that day, Jesus looked holy, angelic, divine…in dazzling white robes, and his appearance changed. He still looked like himself because he was, only his *self* looked like God.

And finally, his disciples think, “**Now this is a Messiah I can follow. Now this is a God I can worship. Finally, after years of following this normal looking guy around, he shows his true colours and I like it!**” And overwhelmed by his glory, Peter wants to bottle up that glory, keep it in a safe place so he can access it whenever he wants. He wants to build tents so Jesus, Moses and Elijah will bring the Glory of God to earth here and now to stay.

But God does not come in glory this side of the promised land. In fact, the voice of God pipes up just long enough to tell us that Jesus is His Son, and we need to listen to him. Then the music stops, the mood changes, the glory goes away and once again they find Jesus alone, unglorified, in dirty white robes again looking like he always had, unpolished and lowly. And the disciples are left only with the memory of Jesus’ glory, as he marches forth in weakness to the cross.

We recall the story of the transfiguration every year in the church to help us remember something important about our God and about our world. In this world, it is those things that look glorious that God considers weak; and those things that the world considers weak God considers worthy to share in His glory. **For he casts the mighty down from their thrones and uplifts the humble of heart**. It’s backwards isn’t it? It’s upside-down.

Did you know that our eyes are so designed that we actually see things upside down. That really, right now, your eyes are telling your brain that I am is standing on the ceiling, and that the ceiling above you is really under you? Really!...that’s what your eyes are telling your mind right now--only you don’t believe them. You see, your mind learned very early that you can’t function properly looking at things upside-down, and so your mind learned to flip that image around and perceive it the way it really is…as up instead of down. Friends, our minds must learn to do the same thing with the world.

You see, Jesus Christ came to die on the cross for two reasons. The first is to die for your sins, to be your substitute and stand-in when the wrath of God is unleashed upon the sin of man. We know this. But the cross didn’t end at the cross, something that is over and done with so now you put it out of sight and out of mind.

No, the second reason Jesus died on the cross is to flip your image of the world around. You see, you are born into this world seeing things upside-down. The world gives you a picture, it says that power, and success of this world are the true source of glory, and that's all there is. The world preaches the merciless message of exalting your sinful self, of doing whatever you have to to get to the *top* in this life--whatever your "top" is--so that others can look at you and see your glory on the mountaintop. The world gives you that picture of success and calls it the “smart way to live” and “the level road to glory.” And if you believe what you see in this world—if you think *that what looks good to the eyes is to be desired by the wise*, like Eve did—then the cross of Jesus becomes foolishness and a stumbling block to your faith.

The reason Jesus died on the cross was to flip your vision around, and to see the glory of God in his suffering and death on the cross. Jesus appeared in glory on the Mt. of Transfiguration and Peter said, “**Wow, there is God**.” Later Peter saw him arrested and hung to a cross and, to keep up appearances he said, “**I do not know the man.**” He just couldn’t it right, that the cross was victory and not defeat; glory not shame.

I think that’s why Peter, when his time came to die for preaching the gospel, asked before his martyrdom to be crucified upside-down--so as to remember that as God says, “**My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways**.” Those who know not just Christ but Christ *crucified* know that to see this world the way God sees it, you have to see it as upside-down. It’s like looking at negatives.

The gospel is not yet complete, because story does not end in weakness. Jesus will come again in *glory* to take away our reproach, and to wipe every tear from our eye once and for all. He will come again only this time not in weakness, but in Glory to judge the living and the dead. That means not only will he be God in human flesh, he will look like God, and every eye will see him and every knee will bow, and he will look glorious. On that day, we will no longer need to flip our vision, for we will see things as they are. Until then, our hope remains in the glory hidden now, seen only by faith in the promise that, **just as Jesus Christ was raised by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life**.