

Sermon May 21, 2023 John 17:1-11

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. 6 "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

A long time ago in a faraway place called Missouri this pastor started classes at our denomination's seminary in St. Louis. A seminary is a school where our men and women go to be prepared to be pastors and deaconesses, respectfully. I graduated cum laude from Concordia university in Milwaukee and Pastor Maschke, the campus pastor there, assured us that we would have no problem getting through the seminary. If you can do the college, the seminary is easy. Green lights all the way. That summer I signed up for first quarter classes, Linda and I got married, and we packed up the 14' moving van and headed to the gateway city. It was hot. And humid. We lived on the third floor of an apartment building where other married seminary couples also lived. Did I mention it was hot and humid?

We had a big kick-off opening service in the auditorium. I never heard singing like that ever before in my life. It was otherworldly. Then it was time for classes. My first class was an introduction to the Old Testament. My first assignment was to write a report on what the Old Testament meant when it talked about the glory of the Lord. Ok. I never heard that one before, but Pastor Maschke said this was going to be easy, so... with my untrained eyes I studied the passages the professor gave for us to read. After looking everything over and really having no idea what I

was doing, I wrote in my report that the glory of the Lord included things like the smoke, fire, thunder, wind, and other such things that the Bible mentions that happen when God is around. Well on that very first assignment in my very first class in the first quarter of that first year of seminary the professor gave me an “F.”

It turns out that the glory of the Lord is not the smoke, wind, thunder, fire and everything else like that. What the glory of the Lord is, is the presence of God. The presence, or revelation of God may indeed be accompanied by smoke, hail, wind, and fire, but those things are not the glory. Those things are signs and signals that the Lord is here.

Now I thought that professor Bartelt was very mean in giving such a wet-behind-the-ears noob like me an “F” on that assignment, especially after only the first day of class. But I am now here to help you not to make the same mistake as I did, and to take that correct understanding of the glory of the Lord into the New Testament and as Old Testament Israel recognized the Lord in the fire, smoke, and thundering voice from Sinai, we will be able to recognize Jesus when he reveals himself today.

“Glory” in our language can have several different meanings. To get to the teaching at hand, let’s first go ahead and eliminate meanings for glory that don’t have to do with today’s lesson. First, “glory” can mean splendor. You visit the botanical gardens during a special show and report to your friends the presentation was glorious. That is not the meaning of glory we are dealing with today. When the Steelers win the Super Bowl and there is a street parade downtown, thousands of fans gather along the streets and glorify the team. They honor them for their great victory. That is not the meaning of glory we are dealing with today. The blind mountain climber ascended to the peak of Mt. Everest. When he reached the top, he stretched his arms up into the thin air, gave a loud cry, and basked in his glory, the height of his super-human achievement. That is not the meaning of glory we are dealing with today. Today’s meaning of glory can be well illustrated by little 18-month-old Henry. His parents put Henry down for a nap while they entertained guests in the living room. Henry woke from his nap, climbed out of the crib, removed his wet diaper, and wearing only his birthday suit he announced his presence to the guests as he stood before them in all his glory. THAT is the meaning of glory I am talking about today!

When Jesus speaks of glory in today's John 17 passage, he speaks of the same kind of glory my Old Testament professor taught us about. He is talking about the revelation of the presence of God in the world through himself and us.

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you." John 17:1

How did the Father glorify his son? First, he glorified Jesus by sending him to the cross. Jesus sacrificing himself to death and hell is the fullest revelation of God in the world of all. God reveals himself in smoke, yes. God reveals himself in fire and hurricane, yes. God even reveals himself in miraculous healings and tongues of fire. However, the greatest revelation of the God who is love is the sacrifice of himself upon the cross to save us from eternal death. God reveals his true self in Jesus who stretched out his arms upon the cross and embraced us in his death.

All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. John 17:10

Now Jesus is talking here about you and me. About Us. Jesus revealed the glory of God on Calvary. That was a long time ago. Even longer than when I went to the seminary. But now Jesus reveals the presence of God in us. How? In two ways. First, that we believe, have faith in, and trust our souls for all eternity to the grace, mercy, and saving work of God in Jesus Christ. This is not normal. This is not the natural state of humans. The natural state of humans is to 1) reflect on nature and the human experience and use what we know to come up with our own spirituality; 2) center our lives on ourselves and do what we think is best for us; or 3) follow the more modern trend and make our appeal to what is called "science" and concluded there is no divine, supreme being, and the countless wonders of this planet and universe all came about by random chances and/or the tinkering of aliens. To believe in the God of the Bible takes some real hutzpah, to borrow a Hebrew word. More than that, to believe that one man, born of a young virgin woman, nonetheless, is fully divine, and by his one horrible death by crucifixion and hell he somehow was able to bring us into an eternal blissful relationship with our Creator is poppycock to outsiders. (Who more and more of today's people are.) We can only make such a statement of belief by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, such an expression of faith is the proof and revelation of the presence of God in us. It is God's glory in us.

Secondly, the glory of God is not often accompanied by smoke, fire, wind, and hail. It is accompanied by our works of mercy. When we make personal sacrifices in the name of Jesus to aid others in need, we reveal the presence of God in this world, and we participate in making his glory known. This is why we adopted our son David. When we brought him home from the NICU at 6 months of age, he was blind, deaf, and mostly unresponsive. He was not expected to live. He needed caring people to meet his many needs. God chose us. We accepted. Every day takes its toll on us, but through faith, love, and a multitude of prayers, today David will greet you and shake your hand as you leave church. I don't say you need to adopt a profoundly handicapped child, but I hope our family leaves you an example of how to exhibit God's glory in your life and reveal Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. Romans 8:18-19

We suffer for our faith. It is becoming less and less popular. We surely give up of ourselves in the service of others. That can cost us too. Here we are assured that God is not done revealing his glory. He revealed it in the cloud, fire, and smoke the mean professor gave me an "F" on. He has revealed it in his Son Jesus. He is now revealing it in us. The last day will bring the fullest revelation of God to all people. All will see God as he is. And they will also see that he has revealed himself in us by our faith and our love. And we will go in to spend eternity with the Lord in everlasting joy and peace. Thanks be to God! Amen.

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in him. Amen.

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