

13 December 2017  
Advent 2 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“A New Revelation of Your Glory”

Text: Exodus 24:15-18; Hebrews 1:1-4; John 1:14-18

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

*If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? You've probably heard that question before. Maybe even argued over its answer. I'm not going to address that question tonight, but instead pose another one, a different one: *If God is glorious, but no one can see His glory and live, what does that glory look like?**

That's our situation. As sinners, the glory of God is to us like fire is to gasoline. It would consume us were we to come into its presence. So how can we see, how can we know, the glory of God?

Well, so that we can see, so that we can know, God hides Himself and His glory for us. Which sounds strange, right? Usually when something is hidden we cannot see it. But God hides Himself so that we can see Him, and live. For He wants to be with us, but He doesn't want to hurt us. He wants to be with us to help us, mercy us, grab hold of us and save us.

So we heard first of all tonight how God did that on Mount Sinai. He came down and cloaked Himself then in a cloud. But even so, even with that, we are told that ***the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain***. And the people were terrified. They said: you go, Moses! You go talk to God for us. We can't do it. It's too much for us. And it was.

So from the beginning, God had planned to reveal His glory in another way; a way that would not terrify us, but by which He would still show us Himself and His glory. So that we could see Him and know Him and love Him. And so when the time had come, God cloaked Himself not in a cloud, but in human flesh. And in that human flesh, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, we see the glory of God.

This is how we say it during the communion liturgy during the Christmas season:

*It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; for in the mystery of the Word made flesh You have given us a new revelation of Your glory that, seeing You in the person of Your Son, we may know and love those*

*things which are not seen* (Proper Preface for Christmas).

John said it this way tonight: ***And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.***

Or in other words, when you look at Jesus, you are looking at God. And not just God, but the glory of God. The reading from Hebrews tonight said that the Son is ***the radiance of the glory of God***. So when we see Jesus, we see the glory of God shining on us.

That's pretty amazing. And significant. Maybe we miss it because when we think of glory, we usually think big - riches, fame, power, celebrity, things like that. But the God who is big, and has all that, and more of it than we could ever imagine, isn't glorious *because* He has all that. That's just who He is. His glory, rather, is that He who is big makes Himself small. He who is rich makes Himself poor. He who has fame makes Himself nothing. He who is powerful makes Himself weak. As poor and weak and humble as a baby in a manger. In order to be with you. In order to save you. In order to make Himself and His love for you known. That you not be terrified of Him, but love Him and trust Him.

For this is the God you have. The God who would do this for you. Who comes to serve you in great weakness and meekness. And to share His glory with you. To take your shame upon Himself, your sin and death, and give you His glory, His forgiveness and life. For that's His glory, too. That He takes the unglorious and makes us glorious.

But maybe you don't feel or seem very glorious. Well maybe, again, we are thinking of the wrong kind of glory. The big kind. The riches, fame, power, and celebrity kind. The feel good kind. That glory is coming, on the Last Day, when Jesus returns in the clouds. But the glory He gives to you now is His other kind of glory. That you who are sons and daughters of God, who have a Father in heaven, who have a kingdom and inheritance waiting for you, aren't glorious because God has given all that to you - no. Our glory is Jesus' kind of glory. The glory of serving. Of humbleness. Of lowering. To use all that we now are for others. That they, too, be glorious. That they, too, know Jesus and His glory.

Advent teaches us that kind of glory. John the Baptist kind of glory. Jesus glory. Cross glory. Glory that to a sinful world doesn't look very glorious at all, but which shows the world what true glory is. And we who are raised in such a world need to learn it, too. And be conformed to it. For we who rebel, rebel against that kind of glory, too. But the God who would glorify us will not let us off. He will send us people to lower ourselves for. People to serve. And so reflect the image of Him who came for us.

And is that not a new revelation of glory? That we don't get it by climbing up, but by lowering ourselves down. Not by being right, but by repenting. Not by being victorious, but by dying. For that's where Jesus is for you. In Word and water and bread and wine. In humble things made glorious - when they bring His gifts. Until the day dawns when the dead are raised, the repentant crowned, and the humble exalted. To live in these glorious gifts of God forever. And glorious they will be - not because they weren't before, but because what we now believe we will then finally see. And we will see rightly: the glory of God in the face of Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:6).

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.