



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

February 18, 2007

Last Sunday after Epiphany (Transfiguration)

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 148

Second Lesson: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Gospel: Luke 9:28-36

Glory is Found in the Light of the Gospel

What is the most glorious site that you have ever seen? Was it some sunset somewhere over a lake? Maybe you stood at the edge of the Grand Canyon and marveled at its glory and its beauty—some of the things in nature like that. Can you imagine now trying to describe that to someone who wasn't there? How do you describe the Grand Canyon, to picture its majesty, without ending up making it sound like just a big hole in the ground? Some of the glories and the majesty in this world just fall short of words, don't they?

Can't you hear that in any of the gospel accounts of Transfiguration? There are these men that see this full glory of God shining through Jesus' humanity, and they are left searching for terms. "It looked like a flash of lightning—whiter than anyone could bleach them"—things like that and just trying to put into words the unspeakable glory of God. That is what we want to focus on today—this incredible glory of God that is revealed to us in the light of the gospel. We want to focus on it because many become blinded to that light by the god of this age—Satan—but also many, by God's grace, believe in this glory and reflect this glory in their daily lives.

Some times glory is obvious, isn't it? All of you Badger fans here, the glory of your basketball team is kind of obvious, right, because they have numbers on a score board and at the end of it you know that this team was glorious or this team was less than glorious on that day, right? Sometimes glory isn't quite as obvious, or maybe sometimes we become so accustomed to certain glory that we become almost immune or numb to it.

For 12-13 years I lived by the Mississippi River, by Lake Pepin, by Lake City, Minnesota—just beautiful to drive down the cut rock, all those hills around the river, just incredible to watch the sun as the shadows paint in different areas over those hills along the river. I would look on the other side of the lake and see a train going by as the leaves are changing in autumn—just beautiful. It's the kind of place that makes you drive by and say, "That would be cool to live there." But then after you live there awhile, it is just another day, and you drive by and don't notice all that. You notice the guy that cut you off, and you get angry. You don't see the glory that is surrounding you.

I said that once to the people there and they said, "You know what? I guess I haven't been noticing just how beautiful a setting God has enabled me to live in," but that is the way it is. Then when it comes to the gospel—the message that Jesus lived in our place and died in our place and took away all of our sins—and you think about what we are

going to look at this coming Lent, you see a guy stricken, smitten and afflicted, bleeding, bruised and bloodied and you say, "He died as a criminal? Show me the glory. Where is the glory? I don't see the score board showing me this is glorious." Many trip over that. The god of this age blinds them to this glory because it is not obvious, because it's not a score care, and because it's hidden. This is what we are going to look at all through the weeks of Lent in our midweek services—the hidden glory of the cross.

It is hidden and many trip over it. Some "super apostles" will come to Corinth and say, "That stuff Paul told you, don't buy it. Look at it. Paul—he's not that incredible. He has all these physical things going on. He doesn't seem to be that great of a guy. But look at us. We are a little more eloquent. We are a little more well spoken." They might not say it, but they certainly would imply it. So then Corinth begins to trip over the idea of the glory of the gospel just being in what God has done for us and that maybe it has got to be something more about what we do for God. That makes sense to my human mind, right? I have to do something so that God will love me. Some of the glory has got to start with me.

That is what we saw this morning in our Bible study—that this is impossible. We looked at the story of the Rich Young Ruler—do you remember the guy that said, "*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*" (Mark 10:17). And Jesus told him, "Keep all the commandments." He said, "I've done all that. Check. Check. Check—done that." Then Jesus said to him, "*Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven*" (Mark 10:21). He went away sad because he loved his money more than he loved God. There is no glory in us. What would it be like today if Jesus came to our area and said, "Sell your season tickets to the Packers, give them to the poor and then come follow me." Are you glad in your heart that Jesus has never asked you to do that?

Glory can't start in us, because we are not glorious. We are sinners in our thoughts and our words and our actions. The glory can't start with us. It starts with Christ, and many don't see it because they see someone who died a criminal. They are blinded by the possessions of this world and the concerns of this world and the cares of this world, and they want something that is going to work right now, right here, and the way they want it to work. God doesn't always work on our timetable to take away our problems or our concerns or our anxieties. God works on his timetable, and his timetable is always better. We might not always recognize that, but we can be certain that this glory works in our hearts, and as we live for God, as we live to serve him, it is reflected in our lives.

As Paul says, "You know what? The power of the gospel isn't in eloquent words because when we came to you we didn't preach ourselves. We didn't say, 'Look at me, Paul, I am a great guy. You should follow me.'" He said, "We preach Christ crucified—the one who lived in our place and died in our place." The one who took away all those sins and took away all those times that you and I put something ahead of Christ—whether it's possessions, whether it's family, whether it's pleasure, whether it's just being comfortable. Sometimes we set that in front of Jesus, and that is a sin. But God, for whatever reason which I cannot understand, still loved me enough and still loved you enough to go through all of this that we are going to look at in Lent, even though he had

the glory of Transfiguration from all eternity. He set it aside to take away your sins and my sins and the sins of the world.

I can't claim to understand why he loves me and why he loves you, but he does. He tells us that again and again and again. He tells us, "I have taken away your sins," and that's where glory is found. The God who does this for us, simply because he loves us—don't let the things of this world hide his glory, don't let Satan come and point you to other things. Focus on his love and his glory.

Then take the time to get to know his glory a little better. There isn't a single one of us in here that can't know his glory a little better. As we spend time with the Word and with the Sacraments, we will get to know him better. We will reflect his glory better. There is always a temptation as we serve God to think that that glory is somehow ours. We are just a pale reflection of the love he has shown to us. We serve to thank him—not to be rewarded by him. We serve to reflect his love—not to earn his love.

When you see God's talents that he has given to his people on display, sometimes it is tempting to preach ourselves instead of Christ crucified. But I can assure you that as you gather here this morning and listen to our band, our choir and our children sing, their Director's goal, my goal and, I hope, all of you goals isn't to walk out today saying how great we are, but instead to say how great God is.