

May 4, 2008

“Glory to God” Year A/Easter 7/ John 17:1-11

Let us pray: May the words on my lips and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, our Rock and our Saviour. Amen.

Sometimes there are words in Scripture that are no longer in frequent use in our vocabulary.

The writer of John’s gospel uses one of those words in today’s passage - the word “glory” or “glorify”.

I’m aware of the slogan “No guts, No glory!” but generally it is not a word we use on a regular basis.

In John’s gospel “glory” or “glorify” appears 42 times and in today’s passage it appears 6 times.

John wants us to know that all of Jesus’ life has brought glory to God.

“On earth the glory of God was made known in Jesus and humanity apprehended through Jesus the presence of God.”

We have seen God’s glory in Jesus. In Jesus we have seen God’s splendor, God’s radiance, God’s presence, God’s salvation.

In Hebrew the word for “glory” is “kabod” meaning weight and substance, wealth, dignity. The weight and substance of God, the wealth and dignity of God, have been revealed to all the world in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus has revealed God’s glory.

On this last Sunday of the Easter season John proclaims that God has glorified Jesus in raising him up to eternal life. The hour for Jesus’ glorification has now come. Jesus’ mission has glorified the Father, now Jesus in turn will be glorified. “Christ is presented as the glory of God made visible on earth to those whose eyes are opened to see it.”

The glory of God in all its aspects is brought to a focus in the person of Jesus Christ. In Jesus we see God’s glory!

Think of Handel’s Messiah. “And the glory, the glory of the Lord, shall be revealed. And all flesh shall see it together, and all flesh shall it together”...

For the Christian community we see God's glory in Jesus. Just as Jesus sought to glorify God in his life, so we who seek to follow Jesus, are called to discipline ourselves so that our lives point to God's glory, God's splendor, God's wealth.

In the Anglican catechism one of the questions asked is "What is the chief end of humankind?" And the answer is - "The chief end of humankind is to glorify God and enjoy God forever." Our purpose is aligned to Jesus' purpose, which is to glorify God.

We have been put on this earth to glorify God. There is no greater purpose than that.

The great composer Johann Sebastian Bach "believed that music brought glory to God." Amen to that!

Bach put the letters SDG at the end of most of his scores.

SDG is the short form of the Latin - "Soli Deo Gloria"

"To God Alone Be Glory!"

Soli Deo Gloria - may that be our mantra, our purpose as the people of God - to bring glory to God!

When donations, like a stained glass window, are made to the church in memory of a loved one, the wording frequently says "To the glory of God and in loving memory of"..... We're saying may this window lead people into the presence of God, may this window bring the holy God close to us, may we be led to worship and glorify God through this gift.

What if we lived our whole lives seeking to bring glory to God?

Can we see our worship service as a way of bringing glory to God;

can we see our hymns as bringing glory to God;

can we see our choir anthem and solo as bringing glory to God;

can we see the sermon as bringing glory to God;

can we see our Community Meal as bringing glory to God;

can we see our Offerings as bringing glory to God;

can we see our Prayer time as bringing glory to God;

can we see the reading and hearing of Scripture as bringing glory to God;

can we see our gatherings around food and fellowship as bringing glory to God;

can we see our time shared with our children as bringing glory to God;

can we see how we use our time, talents and dollars as bringing glory to God;

can we see a visit or a phone call to someone who is hurting or lonely as bringing glory to God;

can we see small acts of generosity and kindness as bringing glory to God;  
can we see an act of mercy and forgiveness as bringing glory to God;  
can we see reconciliation as bringing glory to God?

As we seek to follow Jesus, our lives bring glory to God.

“The incredible privilege of the Church is to be an instrument to reveal the glory of God on this earth.”

At Christmas one year I recall someone telling me that there was a typo in the bulletin. The sermon title was supposed to be “Glory to God in the Highest”, but the “e” was left out and so it read “Glory to God in the High St.”.

Glory to God on the streets of our city as we seek to live in the ways of Jesus. God in the highest is glorified when we seek to bring God’s love to the streets. God’s glory was most revealed in Jesus, in his words and teachings, in his healings and prayers, As lives are touched and transformed by Jesus, God is glorified.

Our reading from John’s gospel today is in the form of a prayer.

An intimate form of communication. This is in the section of Jesus’ farewell discourse to the disciples. They hear him at prayer. This prayer reflects the intimate way that Jesus knows God the Father, and God the Father knows Jesus. Jesus prays that we too will know God in this intimate way.

That we will know we are entrusted eternally into God’s care- that God keeps watch over us, keeps vigil, guarding, protecting, watching over.

As Jesus prays - “Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”

In some Aboriginal cultures when a boy approaches adolescence he is taken blind folded out into the woods, the blind fold is taken off, and he must spend the night there alone. He hears many things, there seems like there is much to fear in the night and all around him, he imagines that there are wild animals lurking nearby. At first light he looks around and sees that his father has been standing guard with bow and arrow.

That we might know in our deep places that we are eternally in God's care.

In German there are two words for knowing:

“wissen” - to know a fact or idea; and

“kennen” - to know someone personally.

Jesus wishes for us that we might know God's love personally, that we might know in a place that no one can take from us, that we are a beloved child of God.

“Jesus prays that the church, his disciples, will know the intimacy of relationship that Jesus enjoys with God.”

“God's glory in John is more like being at the very heart of a fireworks display rather than watching it on T.V.

You see the light, feel the thunder of it, find yourself breathless, are caught up in the majesty and power and wonder and extraordinary transcendence of it all.

You look around and find that others have come seeking something of this wonder and so, you are connected with other pilgrims who have braved the journey rather than settling for second hand account of the thing.”

I'll end with the beginning of John's gospel:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.....

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.”

Amen. Thanks be to God!