

“The Glory of the Lord” Exodus 34:29-35 / 2 Cor 3:12-4:2 / Luke 9:28-36 (3/2/25)

When I started to attend church worship services and gatherings, I found a very interesting habit of being Christian. Christians expressed God in a very friendly way. They praised God. They liked to call the name Jesus. They liked to express their love to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. They often said, “I love you, Jesus.” Even sometimes, they said, “God is my friend.” When I was a Buddhist, I never said, “I love Buddha,” “I praise you, Buddha,” or “Buddha is my friend.” I could feel that Christians thought that God was very friendly with them. It was interesting for me that Christians could express their love and feelings to God. And I liked that.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday. So, through the Transfiguration story, I hope to share about the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The word “Glory” is one of the words that are very often used by Christians. And we use this word a lot in church. I searched for a video to find an example of the use of the word “Glory” outside of the church, but all the videos I found were praise music in the church. The word “Glory” was used a lot by Christians.

Then, what is the meaning of glory? Why do Christians use this word for our Lord a lot? The Oxford Dictionary defines the word “Glory” as “high renown or honor won by notable achievements.” So, when we say, “Glory to the Lord” or “Your

glory will be forever,” we honor Jesus’s notable achievement. We can see in some movies that when a king returns from a victorious war or achieves notable achievements, people welcome the king by shouting, "Glory to the King!" So, what has our Lord achieved? What accomplishments have Jesus achieved so that we say glory to the Lord?

The Transfiguration story appears in three Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Compared to other Gospel authors, only Luke wrote one unique thing about the Transfiguration story. The other Gospel authors just said Peter, James, and John saw Moses and Elijah with Jesus. But only Luke said, “They saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.”

As I explained before, the purpose of Luke in writing the Gospel was to let people know the universalism of the Gospel. Of course, Matthew, Mark, and Luke were not in the place of the Transfiguration. So, they could not write this story as the witnesses who directly saw the Transfiguration. They probably heard the story from someone later when they wrote the Gospel. Matthew and Mark might want to emphasize that Jesus was with Moses and Elijah. However, Luke wrote that Peter, James, and John saw the glory of Jesus. He might want to emphasize the glory of Jesus.

I assume that people were familiar with the word “Glory” in the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire had many wars before a thousand years of peaceful Roman Empire. The Roman Empire people might have heard many stories about the emperor's achievements. So, when Luke chose to include the glory of Jesus, he might want to show that Jesus had the glory.

Then, what was the achievement of Jesus? The short answer to this question is that Jesus lifted the veil between God and humans. Jesus became the bridge between God and humans. Jesus brought the reconciliation between God and humans. Then, why can this work of Jesus be the glorious work? For the common understanding of the glory, Jesus probably was not a suitable person to use the word glory. At the time of Jesus, people expected Jesus to defeat the Roman Empire and restore Israel's reputation and power. However, Jesus was with people whom the Jews thought were sinners, traitors, Gentiles, and unblessed people. And finally, Jesus was crucified. He did not defeat Roman soldiers, powers, or people.

To know about Jesus's glorious work, we should know how people behaved when they encountered the glory of God. In today's Exodus Scripture, we can see Moses, who was exposed to the glory of God. Moses was just exposed to the glory of God, and his skin of face shone. People were afraid even when they indirectly

encountered the glory of God. In the Transfiguration story, Peter, James, and John also were afraid as they entered the cloud. The feeling of people when they encountered the glory of God was fear. Let me ask a question. Is anybody here who attended today's service with fear? Is anybody here who was afraid of God's presence in this worship service? Because of Jesus, we are not afraid of God's presence. We are not afraid to see and talk about the glory of Jesus. We joyfully, gratefully give glory to the Lord. In 2 Corinthians, Paul said, "And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." Through Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ lifted the veil, we could be in the presence of God. We could encounter God directly. We are not in fear anymore when we encounter the glory of the Lord.

The second reason why Jesus's work is glorious is that, because of Jesus, people could be in the presence of God everywhere. When I was studying at the seminary in Korea, one of my Old Testament professors made fun jokes during class. He asked us, "Do you know the secret of Moses' long life?" We answered that "God blessed him." "God made him to live a long time to complete the mission." Professor answered, "No, it was mountain climbing." Moses climbed Mount Sinai lots of times to talk with God. And nobody surely knew which mountain was Mount Sinai. But we can imagine that Mount Sinai was a high mountain, and Moses took a lot of time

to climb up to Mount Sinai. If we should climb a mountain or should drive a long way to talk with our God, can we talk to God every day? When I was a child, I really hated going to the Buddhist temple because most of the Buddhist temple was on the mountain. My parents tried to take me to the temple every first weekend of the month. Of course, I did not like to go to the temple on the weekend.

I assume another difficulty Moses had was that he had been disconnected from his ordinary life when he went up to the top of the mountain to talk with God. He could not take care of the people of Israel when he was on the mountain. When he was on the mountain, the people of Israel made a big trouble that they created an idol and worshiped it. Moses's glorious place had been separated from his ordinary life. If we should use our 40 days of time to see our God, if we should be disconnected from our ordinary life for 40 days to talk with our God, it would become a challenge to find our God in our lives.

Because Jesus became the bridge between God and humans, we could feel God's presence in our lives. It means that, because of Jesus, our life could be full of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus, our church could be full of glory, our workplaces could be full of glory, our homes and bedrooms could be full of God's glory, and our hearts could be full of God's glory. Jesus Christ achieved

much greater achievement than any other thing. Jesus Christ brought the reconciliation between God and humans through his sacrifice. Because of Jesus, we could go before God and see our God. Because of Jesus, we also could say, “I love you, Lord. I worship you, Lord.”

On this Transfiguration Sunday, I hope we can remember the glory of the Lord. I hope we can be thankful for the glory of the Lord. I hope our lives can be full of God’s glory and God’s presence. Amen.