



“No Ordinary Sunday: Living in Hope”

Transfiguration of Our Lord
8:15 and 11:00 a.m. Sunday February 7, 2016
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-36

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Last Sunday we had a wonderful celebration here with a visit by the Army Chorus. There were a number of very special moments that were a part of that concert, but one of them for me in particular was, the singing of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, and the sharing of some of the background to that song, that I have to admit I did not know. The song was written by Julia Ward Howe after she had experienced seeing the horrors and devastation of the Civil War. She wanted to write a song that showed trust in God's faithfulness and care and protection, in spite of what she saw the nation experiencing. The third verse is particularly poignant.

*He has sounded forth the trumpet
That shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men
Before His judgment-seat.
Oh, be swift, my soul,
To answer him; be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.*

*Glory, glory! Hallelujah!
His truth is marching on.*

Do you see God's glory? That's a serious question. Do we see God's glory? And if you're inclined to answer, well yes, then why don't we act like it?

We continue with our theme of *No Ordinary Sunday*. As I was reflecting on the reading, I was struck by how God was putting himself right in plain sight of believers of then and now. How God was showing his holy, glorious, face to us in powerful ways and I was struck again and again how sometimes we act like it is no big deal. In fact, sometimes Sundays can become quite ordinary, can't they? And increasingly we see people finding all sorts of things to do on the Sunday. As ordinary as reading a morning paper, or grabbing a cup of coffee.

But in the Epiphany Season we read these stories, these extraordinary stories of God at work in our world. *Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! His truth is marching on.* But for us to see this, we will need to be filled with hope and vision to see.

One of the writers of proverbs says, “Without vision the people perish.” Paul takes that theme as he shares about the veil being removed from his letter to the 2nd Corinthians.

For Paul, this is a veil of ignorance. With this veil of ignorance people are unable to see the glory of God, and yet as Christians when that veil is removed by the grace of Jesus Christ, we can come into the very presence of God. You and I can participate in the Glory of God; for we too, will be glorified; glorified in heaven where is our eternal hope. And this is the foundation of the hope of God's people.

Before, you are covered, you are veiled. We were in shame and mourning because of our sins, like a child who is caught in the act, right? Remember? And they lower their head and they cover their faces. We too have become blind to God's glory, unable to see.

Paul talks about being uncovered, uncovered because of the Grace and Glory of God, and then we have confidence and freedom. And again like a child we beam with all of the confidence that a small child can have when they can see what they are doing, the benefit of it.

Brothers and sisters, you are not slaves to your past. We are not slaves to our culture. We are free in Christ to live in hope, and as Paul says, with boldness for the gospel. My whole ministry has been one of fighting against the maintenance mentality that churches take on themselves just to get by, just enough. And I have seen too many churches who have held that maintenance prospective and have gone to their graves. And I have fought against any church that I have served to go that direction.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! His truth is marching on!

We act with boldness for the gospel because we have hope, as Paul declares. God calls us into a vibrant mission and ministry as the church of Jesus Christ. We don't hide! We act with boldness because "God did not give us the spirit of cowardice," as Paul says in his letter to Timothy, "but rather a spirit of power and love and self-discipline." Indeed the opposite of hope and boldness Paul would say is hardness of heart – the inability to change fundamentally, to go to the places that God is pushing you. And the only recipe for that is to turn to the Lord, to turn to the Lord in freedom and life in the Spirit because it is that Spirit which will lead to transformation for you and for me and for the church and for society and for our nation and our community. And so Paul says, "Therefore, since by God's Grace that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart."

You can live 40 days without food. You can live 4 days without water, 4 minutes without air, but you and I cannot live 4 seconds without hope. God's grace is a message of God's love for you and for me, and you and I cannot live without it.

But with it, we are transformed into God's likeness.

To love God intensely

To love neighbor passionately

To offer healing mercifully

To serve unselfishly

To give extravagantly

To see God's glory clearly

To believe boldly

And to hope confidently that God will provide you and me with all that we need to meet the future ahead.

Today is the Transfiguration of Jesus. But it is also the transfiguration and the transformation of believers in Jesus, you and me, because his Spirit is at work in us! And it is in the triumph of God's grace to accomplish these things with us. Will we see it? Will we see the Glory of God? Will we see such things at work in our life and in the life of our church?

Paul says, "Do not lose heart." Keep our eyes on the Transfigured Jesus—the Son of the ever-living God, who called you into holy mission and equips you in ministry as a servant. Look at him, see him, God's glory shines in and through him. . . .and through you! You, precious followers of Christ. Precious followers of the One. Be bold, Live in that hope!

Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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