

Rev Sally's Sermon
February 14, 2021
The Last Sunday after the Epiphany

Glory. In our culture it's a sign of victory, triumph. On Sunday, how many of you watched the G.O.A.T. beat the kid? When Tom Brady lifted the Lombardi trophy high, following the game, he was proclaiming victory over his rivals. He was claiming glory for himself and his team. This glory is about holding power, strength, and privilege over others, being better than others and profiting from that greatness.

But the glory of God is different. In today's gospel we catch a glimpse of this glory. Six days before, Jesus had said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life, will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." These were sober words. When Jesus spoke of losing their lives, he meant it literally. I'm sure the disciples had many questions. They may have even wondered why they should be willing to risk their lives for Jesus. They may have wondered who Jesus thought he was to ask for such a sacrifice. So, six days later, Jesus went up a high mountain and took three of the disciples with him – Peter, James, and John. And on that mountain Jesus was transfigured – transformed by the presence of God, transformed by the glory of God. Then the voice of God spoke – "This is my son, the Beloved; listen to him!" For just a moment, Jesus' true nature was revealed. These three were given a brief revelation, a brief glimpse, of the glory of God. In that moment, these disciples knew who they had been listening to. And they began to understand why his words mattered.

In this scripture reading, along with the disciples, we also see the true nature of Jesus. We see the glory of God. This is the glory that Jesus set aside to live among us. This is the glory Jesus set aside in order to care for us, to heal us, to serve us, to sacrifice for us, to die for us. In his life, Jesus revealed the self-giving love of God. This love is the true glory of God. And this glory is very different from the glory that the world expects.

As Jesus' disciples, we're called to share this glory. We're called to make his presence known in our world. St. Paul reminds us that this is what he was doing. "We do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake." In other words, when we serve others, we reveal the glory of Jesus.

This year, we've seen this glory in our midst. I've seen this glory in medical workers who have risked their own lives to care for others, like doctors, nurses, lab technicians, cleaning staff. This glory has been evident in their sacrifice. At times, these servants have sacrificed their very lives. I've seen this glory in teachers who keep going into schools to teach our children, even without the protection of vaccines. I've seen this glory in so many of you. You have cared for family members and neighbors, sometimes at your own risk.

As God's Church, as the body of Christ, we're called to continue sharing this glory. As the body of Jesus Christ here in Fort Mill, we're called to let the glory of God be reflected in our lives by serving one another.

I'd like to suggest some practical ways we can share in this glory. We can begin by collecting food for those who are hungry. During Lent, we will be collecting a different food item each day of Lent. This will provide us with a disciplined way of sharing God's glory. Another ministry we'll be doing together, is the sending of post cards of thanks to health care providers and others who serve us. Instructions for this ministry can be found in parish emails. You can also reach out to your neighbor, especially those who are older or in fragile health, and offer to go to the store for them or to help in other ways. In all these ways and many more, we can share the glory of God.

Our God tells us that life is about caring for and serving others. This is what it means to love. This is what it means to share the presence of God, to reveal the glory of Jesus. This is because the power of God is not revealed in worldly strength but in divine love. When we let that love be seen in our lives, then the glory of God will shine in his world.