

+ Luke 9:28-36 + One More Glimpse +
+ Last Sunday after the Epiphany: The Transfiguration of Our Lord + 14 February 2010 +

Have you noticed they're going on yet? Just two days ago the 21st Winter Olympic Games began in Vancouver, Canada. It opened with great fanfare and ceremony, all of which were very impressive, and now the athletes are trying to achieve Olympic glory after years in training. Some will get that glimpse of glory when they win it all and atop a medal stand receive a gold medal before hearing their national anthem played as their flag is raised to the sky. For that fleeting moment, they will be regarded as the best in their sport, but that's all it will be—a glimpse, a fleeting moment that will end.

Such a fleeting glimpse of glory motivates so many athletes to work hard over the next four years to make it back for possibly another glimpse of that glory they achieved in the past. Few, however, actually accomplish that. I wonder if that's how Peter, James, and John felt in the weeks that followed their journey up a mountain with Jesus, especially during their most difficult days. You see, on that mountaintop, they got a glimpse of glory greater than any Olympics. They got a glimpse of the glory of God's Champion and the glorious victory he would soon win on a cross. It's time for you and me to go up that same mountain to get **ONE MORE GLIMPSE** too.

When Jesus took Peter, James and John up that mountain, he needed to get away. He needed some time to pray away from the gawking eyes of the crowds. Jesus had entered the last weeks of his public ministry and he was facing some difficult opposition because of his great popularity. A very hard journey lay before him that would end in suffering and death. In the meantime, Jesus wanted to prepare his disciples for what was to come.

On that mountain, Jesus revealed that he was truly God's Champion. Now time and again Jesus had told the disciples that he was God, often referring to his heavenly Father as **"my Father"**. He had displayed his divine power with countless miracles, but here Jesus actually let his disciples see who he really was—the Lord of glory. His holy glory was so brilliant even Luke has difficulty describing it. **"As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning."** With that glimpse of glory, Jesus revealed himself to be the only one holy enough to live a perfect life for every one of us. He revealed himself to be the only one powerful enough to actually conquer sin, Satan and death.

Not only did Jesus reveal his divine glory, but he also revealed to them how he was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies of a Savior. **"Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus."** Moses was considered the greatest prophet of all because he had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt through forty years in the wilderness. When the time came for Moses to die, God himself buried him. Elijah was nearly as great as Moses. Elijah stood up for the truth of God's Word in the face of widespread unbelief and persecution. Through Elijah God defeated those who followed Baal and allowed his Word to flourish once again. Elijah never saw death, but went to heaven body and soul.

The two men had come to speak with Jesus to prepare him for victory. **"They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem."** This **"departure"** was actually Jesus' death only weeks away. Now through Moses and Elijah, the Lord had delivered his people, but they simply foreshadowed the great deliverance of all people Jesus was about to carry out. They were champions of the faith, but only shadows of God's Champion. He would be THE Champion of the faith, the sole reason for the hope that you and I and all believers in Christ have.

Finally, to remove all doubt that Jesus was truly God's Champion, we're told, **"A cloud appeared and enveloped them...A voice came from the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.'"** Jesus had proven himself to be the true God and the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecy, but he also received clear, divine approval from his heavenly Father. He received approval for the perfect life he had lived and the work he was about to carry out on behalf of all mankind. Above all, the heavenly Father commanded the disciples to listen to Jesus, who alone had the Word of life for them and all mankind. Jesus was God's Champion.

Now in the Olympics, before an event, certain athletes or teams are often expected or favored to win, but not until they win the final victory are they really champions. In the Olympics it's not unusual for an unknown athlete or an underdog team to overcome the odds and win it all. In 1980, a victory like that took place up in Lake Placid, when the U.S. men's hockey team defeated the highly-favored team from the Soviet Union. Some have considered that victory a miracle, because the Soviet team had gone undefeated for so long and had dominated so many opponents that the gold medal was almost assured...until they faced a ragtag team of

college athletes and semi-pros from the United States in the Olympics. That improbable victory is considered one of the greatest victories of all time.

All those things we heard about Jesus—his divine glory, his fulfillment of prophecy, his divine approval—all make us expect him to be God's Champion, but he didn't leave heaven to simply have that potential. No, amidst the glory of the Lord, our eyes catch a glimpse of the cross of Christ—the site of the greatest victory of all by God's undefeated, invincible Champion over sin, Satan and death. You see, Jesus didn't leave heaven for his own glory, but to defeat our archenemies who so dominated and ruled over us that by nature, you and I would rather give it all up and follow them into hell than stand up to their attacks. Yet Jesus changed all that. As true God, he could put himself in our place and win the victory so every single one of us could share in his eternal glory.

It's no wonder Peter wanted to capture that glimpse of glory on the mountain. He told Jesus, ***“Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”*** Peter didn't know what he was saying, but we don't blame him for what he said. We probably would've done the same. All this holy, divine glory was overwhelming. Matthew (17:6-7) explains, ***“When the disciples heard [the voice of God], they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. ‘Get up,’ he said. ‘Don’t be afraid.’ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.”*** In terror those mortal, sinful men dropped to the ground and feared the worst, but Jesus took away their fear of God's holy wrath and appeared to them once again in humble humanity.

What they had seen was just a glimpse of what Jesus had come to do—to win the complete, eternal victory for them and us. Even though he didn't appear in glory any longer, Jesus needed to be that humble human being to carry out the improbable task of winning our salvation. He had to live under God's holy Law, which he himself had written. He had to endure everything we have gone through to truly be our Champion over sin and its temptations, over Satan and his slavery, and over death and its heartless attacks. Jesus had to even endure death to make the full and final payment for our sins.

With this one last glimpse of glory, the Lord was preparing his disciples for the difficult journey to victory ahead. From this mountaintop Jesus began to make his way to a smaller hilltop outside of Jerusalem. As Jesus' glory diminished, the shadow of the cross and his impending death grew. On the way, he endured constant opposition and attack. He endured betrayal by one of his closest followers. He endured brutal beatings and ridicule at the hands of those who should've recognized him as God's Champion. Jesus found himself betrayed by man's justice and convicted to endure one of the most excruciating forms of capital punishment in human history. He endured humiliation and anguish and the rejection of his heavenly Father as he bore every sin of every human being, including yours and mine.

When Jesus gave up his life to death, it seemed like the darkest moment in human history. It seemed like he had failed. Even in that darkest hour, however, Jesus provided one more glimpse of eternal glory. With one simple Greek word, Jesus declared his victory complete. ***“It is finished!”*** (John 19:20)

The world remained in darkness, but the great day of glory was only three days away. Soon the glory of Christ's resurrection from the dead did shine forth and was never set aside again. Jesus gave his disciples that glimpse of glory on the mountaintop to prepare them to witness his complete victory.

For this same reason, Jesus gives us glimpses of glory in his Word. We've seen them these past couple months. We saw his glory in a lowly manger bed. We saw his glory as he was baptized in the Jordan River. We saw his glory in his forgiveness for all sins and as he calls us to follow him. We see his glory on a lonely mountaintop out in the wilderness and will see it in a cross on a lonely hilltop outside of Jerusalem. We will see his glory in an empty tomb and in promises fulfilled and in life everlasting. We see his glory at Holy Baptism when a mortal enemy of God is made his beloved child. We see his glory in the Holy Supper as Christ gives the greatest gift of all—himself for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus provides these glimpses of glory to make you and me absolutely sure that he has already won the complete, eternal victory for salvation, for deliverance, for eternal life for us.

As the shadow of the cross lengthens and this Epiphany season comes to an end, catch one more glimpse of the glory of the Lord, of God's Champion, our Victor Jesus Christ. Unlike the passing glory of the Olympics, the glory we see is a glimpse of the eternal glory we will one day enjoy because of Christ's complete victory for us. Brothers and sisters, lift up your heads, for your redemption, your deliverance, your glory in the cross and empty tomb of Christ, is drawing near! Amen.