

Enjoy Your Glorious Life!

Do you consider your life glorious? Probably not. How many Twitter or Snap Chat followers do you have? Are publishers asking you for your biography? Is your house filled with trophies and certificates of all your accomplishments? Do schools ask you to give motivational speeches to the students? Probably not. The people at the church of Corinth were eager for glory. Here in 2 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul was teaching the people about the plan of salvation, particularly about forgiveness. The core of the congregation was made up of Jews so Paul referenced our Old Testament lesson today to make his point. The Jews would understand the history of Moses although the details can get a bit confusing to us. As we work through the details, we will hear the encouragement to enjoy your glorious life.

After the Israelites left Egypt and passed through the Red Sea, they made it to Mt. Sinai. Moses went to the top of the mountain where he received the 10 Commandments that God carved on stone tablets. Along with the 10 Commandments, the Lord gave Moses hundreds of regulations for how the nation of Israel should function. If they disobeyed his commands, things would go badly for them. Some of the laws included eating kosher, worshiping on the Sabbath, offering sacrifices, celebrating the festivals such as the Day of Atonement and the Passover, and on and on. If they obeyed the laws, good things would happen. They would defeat their enemies and get rich. It would be glorious.

Those laws were glorious. They expressed God's will. When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai after seeing God face to face and getting all those rules, his face was glowing – think of the moon reflecting the brightness of the sun. As Moses told the Israelites the laws, his glowing face made a strong impression on the people. They got the point that following God's rules was important! But Moses also knew that the brightness of his face would be fading, just like the glory of the law would be fading. Moses put a veil, mask, over his face so the people would not see the glory fading. He wanted them to take the laws seriously. Eventually, over decades and centuries, people realized that they could not keep the laws as they should. If you read through history of the Israelites, things were not that glorious.

Just as the Old Testament Israelites were caught up with the idea of doing something to earn blessings from God, we often get caught up with the same idea. We don't have the hundreds of Old Testament laws that the Israelites had, but our minds think of things. How about we make a policy here at church that any member who does not worship with us for a year will be removed from the church. very quickly, our inactive list would be neat and tidy. It would look glorious, right? Not so much. In our home lives we can think, "If I increase my offerings to the church, then I'll get that better job." Or, "If I read my Bible for 15 minutes each day, then my cruel neighbor won't bother me anymore." Or, "If I pray for 10 minutes each day, then my children will make the sports teams." Or, "If I don't swear anymore, then all my health problems will be gone." Such so-called laws would not make our lives glorious, just like the Old Testament rules did not solve all the issues for the Israelites.

The Old Testament people never got it that you can't earn blessings from God. They didn't get it at the time of Moses and they still didn't get it at the time of the Apostle Paul. He explained in verses 14 and 15 that every Sabbath Day, people in the synagogue still read the writing of Moses, but they didn't get the point. Moses was leading them to see that they were sinners and needed a Savior. Instead, they thought that reading Moses and following rules would earn blessings from God and make life glorious. It's like they had a veil covering their heart.

The concept of the Law – doing something to earn blessings from God – comes naturally to our thinking, but it doesn't make life glorious. That's why Paul was excited to tell the Corinthians about the New Covenant, the new way of thinking. In verses 10 and 11, Paul says that the Old way was glorious (It made Moses' faith shine, after all.), but the New was far more glorious. The Old faded. The New never fades. In verse 9, Paul pointed out that the Old was glorious even though it led to condemnation. No one could keep all those regulations. But the New is far more glorious. It brings righteousness. This is HUGE! Righteousness is a matter of being "right" with God. It means not having any sin or guilt to your account. We can not make this happen on our own. It's something that God gave us because Jesus died on the cross to take away our sins. The New Covenant, the message of the New Testament, is that you are forgiven! You are righteous! You are saved! That is glorious.

Moses wore a veil over his face because he did not want people to see the glory of the Old Covenant fading away. The Apostle Paul, however, had the new message of salvation through Jesus. Paul could be bold and

not wear a veil since he had the good news of salvation through Jesus. That will never fade away. It will shine for all of eternity.

That New Covenant of salvation completed through Jesus is the heart and core of what we call the gospel, the good news. It's what this congregation is all about. That gospel comes to us through God's Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Maybe you've noticed that the stained-glass windows on either side of the main doors leading into our church feature the Word and Sacraments. One angel holds the Bible. The other angel has a baptismal shell and the cup for communion. It's a message that when you come into this room the focus is going to be on Word and Sacrament. It is through those means of grace that God touches our hearts, forgives our sins, draws us closer to him, encourages Christian living, and promises us physical life after death in heaven. That is glorious.

How sad when we come into church and see the Communion vessels setting on the altar, we think at times (It happens.), "Bother. Church is going to go 8 minutes longer today and I wanted to get home early." We should think, "Ah! Jesus is going to give me his very body and blood. Who could ask for a more glorious treasure." Or, when the Word is read, we easily think, "I've heard these readings again and again. Jesus is transfigured. He glows. Big deal." Our minds easily wander. Rather, we want to think, "The Bible is a pure message from God in heaven to us. How glorious!

In verse 16, Paul explains that our sinful nature is like a veil that covers over this good news of salvation. No one is born believing in Jesus. By ourselves we would be doomed. But when the Holy Spirit works through the Word and Sacraments, he touches people's hearts. He brings them to faith. He removes the veil over our hearts. Now we can see clearly that Jesus is our Savior and we are going to heaven. No wonder Paul was excited to share this message.

When Paul says in verse 17 that "**the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom,**" Paul is reminding us that the Holy Spirit is the only one to bring someone to faith. And when we are brought to faith, God gives us the freedom to live with joy and thanksgiving, not guilt. Paul said that through faith there is "**freedom**" – freedom from the power of sin; freedom from the coercion of the law; freedom from death. Paul concludes this section with verse 18, "**And we all** (who are believers), **who with unveiled faces** (we see the glory of

salvation through Jesus) **contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**" As believers spend more time with the gospel, they are gradually transformed into the likeness of God. Think of what happened on the Mt. of Transfiguration. Jesus shines and so do you through faith. As we just sang in our last hymn:

I'll soon exchange this mountain sight
For heaven's everlasting light;
Your brightness, Lord, will then be mine,
And my face, like yours, will shine. (CW 392, st. 6)

A change takes place in your heart every day through the gospel.

When Jesus was on the Mt. of Transfiguration, he let his divine nature shine and it nearly blinded the disciples. As you spend time with Jesus through Word and Sacrament, your faith gets stronger. The stronger your faith, the more your faith shines as you show love to God and one another. The stronger your faith, the more glorious your life is, regardless of how many people follow you on Twitter or Snap-Chat. By living a glorious life, I'm not talking about a sugary giddiness where everything is sweet and naively happy all the time. I'm talking about a calm, quiet confidence in your heart, a solid satisfaction that God himself loves you as an individual. Being connected to Jesus makes your life glorious. Stay focused on Jesus and enjoy your glorious life. Amen.