

Curtis Almquist, SSJE
Seminary of the Southwest
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Psalm 8

John 17:17-23

...The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one...

In our Gospel lesson we hear some of Jesus' last words. They're about **glory**. Glory, or to be glorified, is to teem with God's light and life and love. The Gospel writers speak of glory as if someone were simply luminous, irradiated with God's light and life and love.ⁱ It's like what happened to Jesus when he was transfigured on the mountaintop. He looked up to the heavens and he received *so* much of God's light and life and love that his face shone like the sun.ⁱⁱ

Jesus, in his last days, in his last wishes, is looking for glory. But it's not for himself. Jesus is looking to reclaim glory for you, to glorify you. He prays to the Father, "The glory that you have given me I have given them," that is, given to you here, given to me: glory.ⁱⁱⁱ This is Jesus' gift for you. Now a gift only becomes a gift when someone receives it. I could say, "I have a gift for you. Here it is." In actuality, what I have for you is really not yet a gift. It becomes a gift when you receive it. Up until that point, what I have for you is only a promise or an intention. It becomes a gift when you can take hold of it. Jesus has a gift intended for you – his gift of glory – and this gift will make a world of difference how you live your life. Grasp the glory. Here's how:

Dare to enjoy your life. Laugh at squirrels. Gaze at flower petals in their most intricate colors, and forms, and fragrances. Eat slowly enough to guess the spices. Listen for the oboe at the symphony. Watch your cat watching; scratch your dog's chest. Experience what good architecture does for your soul. Notice the difference in color between the light of dawn and the light of dusk. Notice how shadows make life so much more interesting. When no one's looking, skip. Skip like you did in your childhood. Turn off your radio or iPod and hum. Hum from memory; hum up something new. Watch children playing. Risk being silent. Revere your body as a miracle and delight in what your body can do, what your hands can do, what your fingers can do, what your index finger can do. How many things can your index finger do? Listen for birds and choose your favorite bird call, your favorite that day. Recall the road less traveled that *you* have taken and that has made all the difference. Say "thank you" at least a dozen times a day. Take a sip of tea or coffee, and put your cup down; when you're ready, take another sip. Find an outdoor fountain and watch the flow of water. Repeat after me: "rubber baby buggy bumpers." Or make up your own tongue twister and try it out at a dinner party. Close your eyes and fly like you could when you were a child. Retrieve something old, something that you had almost forgotten. Create something new. Read a good mystery novel. Remember who it was, that first person who got through to you, who convinced you that you could do it. Reclaim some of your most notorious failures, and what good has come out of them. Find something that makes you laugh. Go to a museum and visit one gallery, one only, and stay until you've learned the secret you need to know. Remember your first love. Remember what brings tears to your eyes; remember who brings tears to your eyes. Why is that?

On I could go. On *you* could go, and you should. Live the miracle of your life, each passing moment. Take nothing for granted; take everything with gratitude. Dare to enjoy your life. And recognize that the Creator of life – the life that surrounds you and the life that fills you – has given you a life to share delight. In the beginning, God created life, and it was good, *so* good, *so* amazingly good that God could not help but share it... with you: God’s grandeur in its infinitely manifold forms, shared with you: you who are created in God’s image.^{iv}

So you could well ask, is *that* glory? Daring to enjoy your life, is *that* glory? It’s a manifestation of God’s glory: your being able to “taste and see” that God and God’s gift of life for you is good.^v Jesus promises to give us life, and to give it to us abundantly.^{vi} Receive that promise – it’s God’s gift for you – and lap up the goodness of life, the goodness of *your* life. Let God’s light and life and love shine upon your countenance, and savor every moment of your life. Don’t miss a minute of it.

Now you might stumble in apprehending God’s glory within you and around you because there is *so* much suffering, despair, deceit, cruelty, injustice, death in our world. That is true. And so is God’s grandeur. In this world, we have to make space in our soul to live amidst both the best and worst, and sometimes simultaneously. You can feel more than one thing at once. Your feelings may even be incongruous and irreconcilable. But you can feel more than one thing at a time. In our life in this world, we are on our way, somewhere between the beginning of life and the end. In the beginning, The Book of Genesis, where all was good; and in the end, The Book of Revelation, where there will be crying and weeping no more.^{vii} And in the meantime, and sometimes it is a *very* mean time, we have to make space in our souls – using St. Paul’s language – to “rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.”^{viii} Do both. You can do it.

Some years ago I was out for a run with one of Brothers in our Monastery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We were actually just down the block from our Monastery in Cambridge when we passed by someone, a friend of our community. He hailed us and he said to my Brother, James: “How are you?!” James, then in his 30s, had been living with cancer for more than a decade, and after years of remission, the cancer had aggressively returned, which this friend knew. “How are you?” he asked James, to which James responded. “I’m terrific! My multiple myeloma has metastasized, but other than that, life’s wonderful!” We laughed, because we knew this was *so* true for James. In ten days he was dead.

If life is really tough for you just now, name it, claim it, know Jesus to be really present with you always, even in the valley of the shadow of death... and meanwhile, take time to smell the flowers.

Presume that what is glorious in this world, and glorious in your own life, is just a foretaste of what is to come. We should enjoy our life, savor it, be deeply grateful for it; however it’s simply a foretaste of what Jesus calls “the food that will last,” the dwelling place he prepares for us for all eternity.^{ix} Using the language of an art critic, I’d say, “Life on this earth is an excellent reproduction of the original.” Using the language of the church, as we say, at death: “Life is changed, not ended.”^x You can feel more than one thing at once. That includes, “this is wonderful, *and* there is more yet.” In a very difficult time, it may mean – to use St. Paul’s words

– “this slight, momentary affliction is preparing for [you] an eternal weight of glory.”^{xi} Love your life, and when it’s slipping away from you, know that what you’ve loved the most has simply whetted your appetite for what is to come. Bask in God’s iridescent glory now; look to the glory to come. Glory, or to be glorified, is to teem with God’s light and life and life... and it will last forever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. *Amen.*

ⁱ Luke 2:9; Matthew 16:27; Mark 8:38.

ⁱⁱ Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:31-32.

ⁱⁱⁱ John 17:22.

^{iv} Genesis 1:26-31.

^v Psalm 34:8.

^{vi} John 10:10.

^{vii} Genesis 1:31; Revelation 21:4.

^{viii} Romans 12:15.

^{ix} John 6:27; 14:2.

^x *Book of Common Prayer* (1979), p. 382, in the Preface for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist at the time of death.

^{xi} 2 Corinthians 4:17.