

Glory, or shame.

Glory, or ugliness.

Glory, or gory.

Glory, or humility.

Glory, or blame.

Glory, or disgust.

Glory, or critique.

Glory, or muck.

Glory, or suffering.

Glory, or temptation.

Jesus had a choice.

The glory of the mountain, or the uncertainty of valley.

The companionship of Moses and Elijah, or the fickle crowds, disciples, and Pharisees below.

The dazzling bright white robe, or the dirty, dingy, dark, stained, tattered robe.

A beautiful, perfect,
unblemished life in the sky, or
death...back on the ground.

The choice is easy – living in glory is better.

God's story of the transfiguration is all backward. Like Palm Sunday to Good Friday. It starts with glory, but ends in misery and hardship. No one wants that. There's not a lot of good news – coming down off that mountain.

Jesus left Moses and Elijah to come down to a perverse and faithless generation. Coming down to problems. Coming down to demons. Coming down to betrayal. Coming down to death.

Yet, leaving glory IS the good news.

As much as we want Jesus to build a dwelling for eternity on the mountain....as much as we want glory for ourselves...Jesus comes down, leaves glory behind. Jesus doesn't stick around in the safety of the clouds. Jesus, Son of God, isn't about the glory, Jesus is about the life with the people, and salvation to the ends of the earth.

Didn't God send Jesus down, at his birth?
Leaving behind the glory of heaven, to be
with you and me?

Doesn't God promise that Jesus will come
back, come back to earth to redeem the living
and the dead?

Everywhere Jesus goes – salvation is found. If Jesus stayed in his own glory, we may never have experienced salvation.

Jesus leaves glory to spend time with a great number of people -- Jews and Gentiles alike – on all all socioeconomic levels of society, from social outcasts to elite rulers – shepherds, John the Baptist, tax collectors, sinful women, centurions, even Pilate and Herod. He leaves the mountain so that all humanity is saved, and sin is defeated.

Salvation is found in the here and now. We don't just need Jesus to die for our sins, we need Jesus to live for our life.

Of course salvation is felt in the redemption of the cross, in Jesus' death and resurrection, in our own death and resurrection,

but salvation is found also now in the mucked up world, as we imitate Christ, as we live the holy lives that God has commanded of us, as we help one another.

When Mr. Rodgers was a kid, and he saw scary news on TV, his mom would remind him... look for the helpers, you will always find people who are helping.

Most of us run away from the uncertain things of life, like danger. We run towards safety, to self-preservation. Our nature is to stay in the glory. It is safe, comfortable, clean. But – God calls us out of our comfort, and into the messiness of the world.

You remember 9/11 – and people running down the street with ominous gray clouds of dirt spraying up behind them...but you see the first responders running the other direction.

Or the people who go into the homes in NOLA – to muck them out. Scraping debris, bodies, belongings, silt and water – out of these homes destroyed by the flood.

Or the Boston Marathon bombing...and people aiding the victims who were hit with shrapnel – including runners who picked up another runner – so he could finish the race.

Or even now, the Jewish Cemetery vandalized...and Muslim neighbors coming to aid, repair, and restore.

There is no glory in these stories – but helping people is not for our glory. We help fellow humans, fellow creations of God, who need help.

Jesus goes to the places that not only are hard - but the very places we don't want to go. The places we try hard to avoid. Jesus goes to muck out the homes, and run toward the danger, and help his neighbor of a different religion.

That only happens off the mountaintop.

God calls us off the mountain – and back to reality – to help, to love, to forgive.

God calls us out of church – to love and serve God, by serving one another.

Sunday morning is glorious – the rest of the week is ominous – but that is where God's work is seen, felt, tasted, and heard. We don't just come here to escape the world – but to go back into it, fed and strengthened for a new week.

As we prepare for Ash Wednesday and for Lent - we intentionally come out of our glory, and into a dark time, to reflect, confess, admit where we fall short, all in preparation of Easter grace we are about to receive.

Following glory means trusting in ourselves, our ability, caring only about ourselves – believing we can fix ourselves, self-improvement, focusing on our blessing, – Glory is believing we do not need God.

Following Christ off that mountain means - giving rather than taking, self-sacrifice rather than self-protection, dying rather than killing, mucking out flooded homes, rather than staying high and dry.

Following Christ shows us that we win by losing, we triumph through defeat, and we become rich by giving ourselves away. This goes against the ways of the world – but Christ came and flipped the world view upside down. We join Christ in doing the same.

I suppose Jesus had a choice...glory, or everything else.

But really it wasn't a choice at all. Coming off the mountain to bring salvation, peace, love and hope to the people – isn't a choice. Christ led the disciples away from safety, and into suffering. To be helpers. To bring hope to those who suffered.

Do we have a choice? Sure – but really as disciples of Christ – there is no choice. We come off the mountain and into uncertain parts of the world.

We help the helpless, give dignity to the shamed, heal the broken, bless the poor, welcome the stranger, be hospitable to the guest – that is who God creates us to be.

We don't love Glory. We love Jesus.

We don't listen to Glory. We listen to Jesus.

We don't follow Glory. We follow Jesus.