

Advent Midweek 1

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that ... the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

These words of the prophet seem all wrong to us. Wrong on two counts.

They prophecy, first, that the glory of God shall be revealed to us.

And second, that this is intended as a comfort.

But haven't we already seen God's glory when He appeared on Mt. Sinai?

Exodus 16 And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt:

And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD... And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

Secondly, from what is described of God's glory, it is anything but comforting.

Deuteronomy 5 And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, [even] all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die. For who [is there of] all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we [have], and lived?

But Isaiah can't be wrong. He means what he says.

So, let's look at these questions one at a time.

First: Has the glory already been revealed to all flesh?

This is really two questions. Has it been revealed? and Has it been revealed to all?

The Bible clearly says that Moses, Aaron, and all the children of Israel saw the glory of God on several occasions.

They saw it in the pillar of fire and cloud that led them through the Red Sea.

They saw it in the consuming fire atop Mt. Sinai.

They saw it descend upon the Holy of Holies whenever they set up the tabernacle.

But what ties all of these together is that it was a uniquely Jewish experience.

God did not manifest His glory generally around the world and to every nation.

But only to the Israelites.

And so, the first point about Isaiah's prophecy that points to something new is the open revelation of God's glory to the Gentiles — non Jews.

We sing of this most every Sunday following Holy Communion.

The song of Simeon says, "*For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation. A Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.*"

Isaiah spoke of our day—our opportunity to see God's glory.

But there is also another thing to talk about: even though the Israelites saw God's glory, there was something held back.

There is a sense in which they did not see God's full glory.

This is especially clear in the events of Exodus 33.

There Moses said to God, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And God said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, [there is] a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

Now keep in mind that this Moses is the one about whom the Bible says that He was closer to God than any other man.

Just 8 verses earlier we are told, "*the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.*"

And yet even Moses is only permitted to see God's glory partially. The back parts. And this, God does out of care for Moses and for his protection.

Which brings us to talk about the second point.

How can it be a comfort to see God's glory?

When the children of Israel saw it they shrank in fear begging not to see it again.

When Moses saw it, God mercifully shielded him from the fullness of it.

And now are we supposed to be blessed to see it? How are we to understand this?

First of all, we will understand it better if we quit second-guessing God.

Better said, You will understand it better once I quit playing the devil's advocate.

For rather than questioning God's wisdom, we shall take Him at His word.

And His Word is that the revelation of the glory of the Lord shall be a comfort to you in spite of the experience of Israel in the wilderness.

What is the full and true glory of the Lord?

Zechariah addresses this in the 6th chapter: "Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of his place [Jerusalem], and He shall build the temple of the LORD: Even He shall build the temple of the LORD; and **he shall bear the glory.**"

The BRANCH is a man, says Zechariah.

Specifically, a man who grows up out of Jerusalem.

It is this man who will build the temple and this man will bear the glory.

We know who this man is. It is Jesus Christ, our Lord.

We know what the temple is. It is His very body which was destroyed and built up again in three days.

And now, we know that He, Himself is the bearer of the full and true glory of God.

The full glory of God is not the fire on Sinai. Nor is it the thick, dark cloud.

The true glory of God is the Man, Jesus Christ as He hangs suspended on the cross.

The fullness of God's glory hangs displayed for all the gentiles to gawk at on Mt.

Calvary. It is here that "*all flesh shall see it together.*"

And this is the source of your comfort, of People of God.

For by this glorious sight, your warfare with God is ended. your sins are pardoned and in their place, you have been given a double portion of blessing.

For Jesus is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person.

He upholds all things by the word of His mouth. And has purged all your sins.