

The Rev. Theresa Lewallen, Deacon
Preached at Church of the Resurrection, Alexandria, VA
February 15, 2026

Last Sunday after the Epiphany

Exodus 24:12-18

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9

Psalm 99

I traveled frequently for work and during one trip, to a place I had not been before, I had the chance to take a day off. I needed to get away from the city and the crowds to think about the difficulties I was experiencing in my life. My “off the beaten path” guidebook took me down a typical suburban, very flat street to a parking lot. I read the information sign and walked a little farther. I was soon standing on the ridge of White Oak Canyon, 1,000 feet above a gorge created by a combination of the Rio Grande River and volcanic activity.

No photo can do it justice.

The view took my breath away. Spread out before me was the glory of God.

Decades later, I still remember my responses. I had no words, only prayer. I soon realized that I was dancing. I took my mandolin out of the car and played. Then I sat in silence allowing myself to soak up the glory of God that surrounded me. It was a moment that changed me as I connected with God and allowed God to open me more fully to God’s presence.

On this last Sunday of Epiphany, Matthew again offers us a manifestation of God in Jesus. Glory is a word we use frequently in our worship and to describe things in the world. We talk about glorious sunrises and sunsets. We pray the Gloria; we sing about glory. In our reading today, Matthew uses the word for glory which signifies God’s revealed presence.

Before this story, Peter has told Jesus that he believes that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus responds by telling the disciples that he will be killed and will be raised after three days. He is at a point of discernment about what to do next. As Jesus often does at these moments, he goes away to pray.

Jesus brings three of the twelve with him to the mountain top, a place away from the crowds who follow him. Perhaps Jesus intends to talk through his thoughts and plans with his friends, knowing their journey to Jerusalem will have an impact on his disciples that they don’t seem to fully comprehend.

While he prays, the truth of the incarnation becomes visible to Peter, James, and John. They are the eyewitnesses to the glory of God, God’s presence revealed through Jesus. As he prays, Jesus changes before them. The men see Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah who had their own experiences of being changed as they were in the presence of God’s glory which they reflected throughout their ministries.

Perhaps Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus' about Jesus' departure, his exodus. As liberators of God's people maybe they are talking about the freedom from bondage that will come through Jesus' life and death.

Peter, James, and John see the manifestation of God even if they don't fully comprehend what is happening. Terrified, they hear the words of God, that Jesus is God's Chosen Son. Jesus heard similar words before, at this baptism. Now his friends receive affirmation of Peter's professed belief that Jesus is the Messiah. And, in the presence of God, seeing God's glory, they are silent.

This morning, we baptize Talisha, Summer, Armani, and India. We offer our prayers for them. We participate as witnesses and as their community of faith. We share with each of them our belief and experience that God's glory and liberating love, God's presence in and among us, changes each of us.

We continue to share with them through our worship, our prayers, our turning and returning to God our understanding that our lives in Christ are lived in community.

As a faith community, we commit to support Talisha, Summer, Armani, and India in their lives in Christ and will continue to pray with them. We will share our faith stories with them and listen to their stories about God. Together, we will talk about the times in our lives that we felt the transforming love of God and about the times when we have experienced God's glory in the midst of our deepest fears and pain.

Although Jesus tells the disciples not to speak about what they experienced, it is important for us to share with each other the times we are at prayer and feel God's presence deeply. It may be when we see God's glory in the face of a stranger or a loved one, or through someone we disagree with.

Talisha, Summer, Armani, and India you will remind us about the presence of God at your baptism which we share in community. In your baptism, God reminds you that they are God's beloved and always will be. In your baptism, God reminds each of us that we are God's beloved and will always be.

My dear friends, we do not need to travel to some far-off place or have an experience of God by taking ourselves out of the world to be in God's glory. We do not need to be on a mountain top to recognize that Jesus is God among us and within us.

We give thanks to God for Talisha, Summer, Armani, and India, for their family, and for each other as we, like they, share the glory of God's transforming love with each other, in the community and in the world.

Now, I am going to ask you to turn to the person on either side of you and say "You are God's beloved. Now say out loud, "I am God's beloved"

May we always remind each other that you, that we, are God's beloved.

And may we always speak to each other about our experiences of God's glory. For when we do, we will more and more reflect it to others through our very being.

Please pray with me using words by the poet Jan Richardson

Gracious God remind us
*That when glory comes,
we will open our eyes
to see it.*

*That when glory shows up,
We will let ourselves be overcome
Not by fear
But by the love
It bears.*

*That when glory shines,
We will bring it
Back with us
All the way
All the way
All the way down.*

Amen.

Richardson, J. (2015) **Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons.** Wanton Gospeller Press: Orlando, FL