

To God Be the Glory

✠ for giving His Son (vv.13-16)

✠ for showing forgiveness is won (vv.17-20)

In the name of Jesus that glorious name, dearly redeemed:

Wasn't that lightning storm last night glorious? For hours, bolts and flashes...not much noise. Want to get your heart pounding? Try deep sleep in an upper flat and a loud boom that rattles the house. Can't make that happen, can you? If God does, you feel a tiny speck of His glory in a shattering roar.

That's where the Apostle Paul found himself in our SECOND LESSON, the doxology (song of praise) that ends Romans 9-11. Pastor Gawrisch's sermon series these past two weeks, available online, expressed Paul's yearning for his fellow Jews to worship their own Messiah. So strange to think God would make His own people jealous by including us Gentiles, non-Jews, in His saving **Glory**. Such *"unsearchable...judgments and...untraceable ways!"* **To God Be the Glory!**

Today the dear Holy Spirit brings us to that bright, booming reality in the most hotly debated question of all time. With Moses we humbly pray, *"Please show me your glory."* (Exodus 33:18 EHV)

✠ for giving His Son (vv.13-16)

The question began in the very beginning when that fallen angel Satan asked Eve, *"Did God really say...?"* You can study his enemy tactics of doubt and lies in Genesis 3. Down through the centuries of earth's brief existence, God's loving response is truly glorious. God send His Word in Person (John 1:14). Now the question gets more personal: "Who is Jesus?" Next week more personal: "Who is Jesus *to you?*"

If you've suffered personal losses, a death in the family, COVID concerns, medical emergencies, it's so natural to get wrapped up in pain and anxiety that we miss the relief shining from God's answer to this question. Anger at God, rebellion against the demands of His Law, or pride against the assurances of His Gospel – all can rob you of the peace that comes from seeing God's **Glory**.

The Good News of full and free forgiveness falls like summer showers on the land. Like God's good rain and glowing sunshine it wants to come gently to every heart and home no matter the race or status of each soul. Sadly, some don't think they need it. Even worse, others don't want it for sinners they hate. Jonah wanted enemy Nineveh destroyed. Hatred and revenge still burn lives today.

Meanwhile, God's **Glory** is to love sinners as He pleases to forgive whomever He desires – the more wretched, the more grace. Grace-conquered hearts cannot help singing: **To God Be the Glory**.

After the death of His cousin John the Baptist, our Lord Jesus took time to teach His disciples far to the north in Caesarea Philippi. Scholars think this happened at springs where the Jordan River flows from a rocky hillside. There the Greeks and Romans built shrines to their false gods which are seen in ruins today. More important than the place is the question. Jesus skillfully softens the personal by asking more generally, *"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"* That was Jesus' favorite way of referring to Himself – a human being like us to suffer with us in order to save us. Answers varied as the disciples reported: John the Baptist or Elijah or Jeremiah or some other Jewish prophet. But then the question of the ages, the key that will open heaven or lock your soul in hell: *"But you, who do you say I am?"*

How would Peter know the answer? From childhood he had heard God's promises in the Old Testament Jewish Scriptures about the Christ, the Messiah to come. Then Peter was called by Jesus to be

an eyewitness of His miracles and an eager listener to sermons like no one else ever preached. Soon Peter will also be an eyewitness of Jesus' majesty in the Transfiguration. But at this point Jesus' words along with the miracles that confirmed them were enough for Peter to answer the question of the ages.

Jesus asked, "***But you, who do you say that I am?***" ***Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*** There's no waffling, no compromise in saying that Jesus is ***the Christ***. That means all the hundreds and hundreds of promises and Old Testament shadows pointing to the coming Savior, the Messiah, the Anointed One of God – Jesus is all that. But what was coming most clear like a bolt of lightning was that this Jesus ***Christ*** is also ***the Son of the living God***. That claim no one else can make, no other "prophet" can fake. **To God Be the Glory for giving His Son!** And...

✠ for showing forgiveness is won (vv.17-20)

This next paragraph deserves ten years of sermon series that would still only scratch the surface. Christians of all denominations and backgrounds would do well to consider carefully Christ's words here. Jesus does not accommodate Himself to tradition and false views on faith and human accomplishments.

He humbles Peter and lifts him up at the same time. Peter cannot claim credit for knowing the answer. ***Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."*** Peter cannot claim Christ's Church is built on him because Jesus literally calls him a "little stone" (Πέτρος) and says He will build His Church, not on Peter himself, but on the massive foundation (ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ) of this confession. We modern Christians can stop whining and wringing our hands that our sick society might destroy the Church. We're not on defense; we're on offense. Jesus says, "***You are Peter (little stone), and on this rock (massive foundation) I will build my church, and the gates of hell (defensive) will not overpower it.***" (the Church on offense)

If you wonder how Rome can claim papal succession and infallibility for their popes from this, remember. Rome puts their tradition and the pope's word on the same level as the Holy Scriptures of the Bible. Rome claims the sole right to interpret the Bible and thus ignore the verb tense Jesus uses here. He does not say to Peter, "I am giving you the keys," but "***I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.***" Jesus gives this power of the Keys to all His disciples in Matthew 18:18, and to His apostles Easter evening in John 21:21-23. The power to forgive sins is given by Jesus to all Christians as "***a kingdom of priests and a holy nation***" (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9). The key that unlocks heaven, locks hell shut for you who trust in Jesus. The key that locks the guilt of sin on every unbeliever also locks heaven against them and opens the gaping mouth of eternal torment.

Jesus wants all this to bring peace to your soul. Since Christ died for all, He surely died for you. Do you know anyone else who would do that? Suffer for your guilt to bring you to God forever and ever? Can you say this personally? **To God Be the Glory for showing forgiveness is won. "It is finished."**

Say you're born in 1820, catch a cold at six weeks. Visiting doctor tells your mom to leave his hot mustard poultice on your eyes. You're crying: It's working! You're blinded, he leaves town. Grandma becomes your eyes, describing God's gorgeous colors in nature, reading the Bible until you've memorized whole books. Age eight you write: "*Oh, what a happy soul am I! Although I cannot see, I am resolved that in this world Contented I will be.*" "*How many blessings I enjoy, That other people don't; To weep and sigh because I'm blind, I cannot, and I won't!*" You graduate and become a teacher for the blind, personal friend of presidents, the first woman to address a joint session of Congress. At age 44, you start writing hymns in your head for a friend to write down on paper. A musician says, "Fanny, God gave me this melody; will He give you the words?" You listen, "*That's Blessed Assurance!*" By 94, you've written over 8,000 hymns. A minister says it's too bad God didn't give you the gift of sight. "I'd have asked to be blind...for when I get to Heaven, the first face I will see will be the One who died for me." That's stanz 3 of our hymn **CW 399: To God Be the Glory!** Amen.