

This morning I want to briefly explore three things from our reading and they are in the last sentence.

*We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

What would you describe as glorious?

Perhaps a sunset, or the Great Park, or the sea? Or an occasion like a wedding or a graduation. I can easily imagine a colleague of mine using the word to describe an exceptional glass of red wine.

The word – for us – denotes something above and beyond the ordinary. Exceptional.

The bible uses the word glory in a bigger way than we do.

Think of the Angels who appeared to the shepherds singing "Glory to God in the highest, we've sung it ourselves this morning.

Glory is attributed to God, for what he has done in sending his Son. Something wonderful and exceptional and amazing has been done and the glory for this belongs to God.

Our author said "we have seen his glory".

What does that mean? It can't mean the baby in the manger – none of them were there.

If you scroll back through what you know of Jesus life – you might think of the Transfiguration.

On our pilgrimage we went to the mountain where it happened. In the accounts given, Jesus is seen in all his glory – his whole being is like light, he is completely transformed – this is what he's REALLY like.

Perhaps that's what it means – we have seen his glory – we saw the transfiguration - what he was really like.

But later in John's gospel Jesus says something that would seem at odds. Chapter 12

*<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.*

He's referring to the crucifixion. It's hard to see how something so brutal and tragic could be glorious. That's not how we would describe it. What did Jesus mean? How does his death and resurrection bring glory?

The saving act of Christ on the cross is the means of our salvation. It's the place where payment is made, in full, for everything that harms and hurts. It's where true freedom begins.

And, we are part of His glory. The seed that dies producing many seeds??? His death brings us life.

I wonder how many people have received a Christmas present today and are shocked at what it is and how much it cost and that they really don't feel they deserve such a gift.

"Oh, you shouldn't have – I don't deserve this".

Of course there will also be presents that people are shocked by because they really don't want them and have to try and find something to say about it. Awkward moments!

The very great joy of Christmas is not that we earn our presents or even deserve them, but that love and grace wants to give them.

Grace. Jesus came full of grace and truth. The undeserved blessing freely given to us by God through Jesus.

One of the problems people have reading the whole bible is the image created of God in the Old Testament. God can be seen as vengeful and filled with wrath, always ready to smite someone.

But Jesus came to set the record straight. In Hebrews chapter 1 it says *The Son is the radiance of God's glory* (there's that word again) *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.*

If you want to know what God is like – then look at Jesus. And when we do we see someone filled with grace and truth.

Filled with God's underserved yet freely given blessings. The sick were healed, the hungry fed, outcasts were treated like favoured guests and the best bit of all was that those who felt excluded and that God was not for them had a new truth whispered to them. The Kingdom of heaven is near – and it's for you.

As a lyricist puts it in a song.  
All the claims of Satan's curse  
Lifted through His offering,  
Satisfied through suffering;  
All the blessings He deserves  
Poured on my unworthy soul.

Jesus came full of Grace – offering to us God's undeserved favour. He was also full of truth.

What does truth mean??

You and I probably think that the word truth means something that is undisputable, that can be proved and known and is unarguably right.

Water freezes at zero degrees centigrade. That's true.

Unless it's salt water which freezes at minus one point eight.

SO – FRESHWATER freezes at zero degrees centigrade. That's true

*(Thomas Whale, from the University of Leeds, explains how freezing water works. "Contrary to popular perception, pure liquid water does not usually freeze at 0°C, and can instead supercool to temperatures as low as -38°C. For ice formation to occur (a solid particle), called a nucleator, is required to trigger the initial nucleation event that must precede growth of ice crystals. Examples of nucleators include mineral dusts and biological substances.")*

SO – fresh water with bits in it – freezes at 0 degrees. That's True.

Truth is a problem for us in the age of social media.

You may know of Alex Jones. Through his radio broadcasts he promoted the idea that the shootings in a school at Sandy-Hook were fake and staged by the authorities as an excuse for control of gun-ownership.

He brought the most immense harm and suffering to the parents, teachers and authorities dealing with the event by perpetuating a complete lie. At one point as many as one in five people believed him.

We live in a post-truth age...truth is whatever you think it is, or are told it is, or choose to believe, or so it would seem.

Jesus was full of grace and truth. Jesus said I am the way the Truth and the Life.

Exploring the nuances of the word truth in Greek and Hebrew and Latin is really fascinating for example...

The root word in Latin is VER – thus we have a VERdict in court of we explore the VERacity of something.

The truth is we haven't time to explore all the interesting root words and meaning of truth – but I liked one way the Greeks thought of it.

Truth is the really real and Jesus is revealing the really, real. It would accord with that verse from Hebrews I read earlier *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.*

Jesus reveals to us the really real who is God. We discover he is love and grace pouring on us undeserved favour and blessings.

And we offer our worship and ascribe to him glory because of who he is in his character. Faithful, generous, compassionate, forgiving. He is the God WITH us – Immanuel.

The birth of Jesus Christ ushers in a new age where the truth of God is revealed, His grace is made known and our response to Jesus bring glory to God.

Enough from me – lets lift our voices again in adoration and worship...

He rules the world  
with **truth** and **grace**,  
and makes the nations prove,  
the **glories** of His righteousness,  
the wonders of His love.

Let's sing Joy to the World.

**Revd. Jon Hutchinson, 25/12/22**