

SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 5:11-14

Now when the priests came out of the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to their divisions), all the levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kindred, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with one hundred and twenty priests who were trumpeters, it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the Lord, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever', the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.

SERMON: "Glory of God for All to See" The Rev. Brent Damrow

I don't know what you came to see today. There are many reasons to want to come and be here, and to be able to see with your own eyes. Maybe you wanted to see each other. Maybe you wanted to see this perfectly glorious Fall day. Maybe you wanted to see those stars (made by the children), maybe you wanted to see those singers (today's quartet), maybe you wanted to see this communion meal. Maybe you wanted to see Don Eaton dance with a tambourine in his hand! All those reasons are good reasons, and yet there is something else I want you to see here today. It is the very thing that the people of God saw there in Second Chronicles. It is the very glory of God.

There they were. Chronicles tells us they all came out. They came out, you see, to see the dedication of Solomon's great Temple, for that is what is being talked about in this passage. Whether they came to see the building, or on that day in the verses preceding this, the Bible tells us they brought two other things. They brought the Tent of the Tabernacle, that traveling tent that had served as their worship spot for so long. They brought that tent into the Temple. And they brought the Ark of the Covenant up and into the Temple.

I don't know what the people came to see, but what they ended up seeing was the glory of God. They ended up seeing God. Not just in imagination, but really seeing God. Seeing God so profoundly that the priests couldn't do their work anymore. The priests decided they needed to just step aside, and simply let the people see the glory of God.

Do you think the world could use a little bit of being able to see the glory of God right now? We can. For you see, human beings have been seeing God – their called theophanies – people have seen God for millennia. And we still can. There were times of difficulty, like the Burning Bush, where God was seen in that flame that did not consume. There were times of personal difficulty, like when Paul saw the glory of God in the form of Christ on that road to Damascus. There was Hildegard of Bingen -- who suffered mightily from health conditions throughout her life, most likely tied to migraines -- who had the most glorious visions of God that led her to say "All will be well, indeed, all will be well." People have been seeing God for a long time. Anne Lamott will tell you that she saw Jesus as a cat, that kept chasing her and stalking her, until she finally invited that cat in, and in Jesus came.

I'm going to ask you a risky question right now. I'm going to ask you to raise your hands. Because here's the thing. In our modern day, I think God is very much around, very much visible, very much able to be seen. And yet I think our world sometimes tells us "Hmm, be careful about that, be quiet about that. If you see something, it might be something, but I'm not sure you should say anything." So I'm going to ask you to be bold. If at some point in your life, you have seen the holy, you have seen the divine in any shape or form, if you have seen God in vision or seen God on the streets, would you raise your hand? (note: a significant number of hands are raised)

Here's the amazing thing, and it's not a judgment thing, but it is that we are afraid to say such a thing. And I think sometimes we're afraid to look for such a thing, because we're nervous about what others might say about us. But in these times, I am convinced that more than anything, what we need to be able to do is get a glimpse of the holy. And I promise you that the whole world could get a glimpse of the holy. And you have a part to play.

I want to talk about two things that are absolutely core to our way of understanding God. Word and deed. Deed and word. One of my touchstone theologians is a guy by the name of Edward Vacek. He comes out of the Catholic tradition, and he says this. He says that some people, many Christians, first understand that we accept God's love, and then we are called to share that love with other people. But he says this, too. He says that some people in this world who need it most, who have never heard of God, who have never thought of God, who have never dared to imagine that something as amazing as God exists, come to see God, know God and understand God because of the love of human beings. That when we love each other as Christ loved us, when we love each other in outpouring ways, in ways that simply are for the betterment of others, people come to catch a glimpse of God, and people come to follow God. So if we want people in this world to see God and to be open to the possibility of seeing God all over the place, one of the things you and I can do is to be that visible manifestation, to embody the very love of God and let others see and find God through our love.

There is another person that is quickly becoming a favorite of mine. His name is John O'Donohue. You might know him. He is a Catholic priest, poet and philosopher. And even better, he has a great Irish brogue, so when he speaks all of that wisdom sounds all the more beautiful. Here's what he says. He says that human beings are sacraments. That each of us makes the invisible visible in our very existence. That we make that invisible grace of God visible by our very presence. But he goes past that. He says that beauty of God, that breath of God that was breathed into us at Creation, that that indwells within us. And it is the Word, the Word spoken, just like Christ was God's Word spoken, it is the Word spoken that takes everything we are and understand, the very clay we stand on, the very clay we are made out of, and it transmits to the world that which is invisible and makes it visible.

On that day at Solomon's Temple so long ago, the people came looking for something. I don't know if it was hope, I don't know if it was teaching, I don't know if it was possibility, or just to be community. But what they saw at the Temple that day was the very glory of God. The glory of God that interrupted everything and brought their focus on something new.

It is what the world needs now more than anything. And so as you go forth from this place today, in your deeds, in your love, in the way you live, may people catch a glimpse of God through you. In the words you speak and in the way you embody, may people catch a glimpse of God through you. For I know that since the beginning of time, people have caught glimpses of God, and it has changed the world. It has brought liberation. It has brought peace. It has brought possibility. And I know God is still showing up. Do we have eyes to see? I pray so. Amen.