

Daniel watched visions in the night, and Peter saw with his own eyes the majesty of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John opens with John saying that the Word became flesh and “we beheld His glory”.

These passages from Holy Scripture confront us. We have a choice to make: either Daniel, Peter and John are telling the truth, or else they were deluded or hallucinating, or they made it all up.

And now we have Matthew also retelling the account of what Peter claims to have seen on the mountaintop: the Transfiguration of Jesus, how “his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light”.

I think we have to ask ourselves whether eyewitness testimony is trustworthy or not. What weight does eyewitness testimony have in a court of law? If a man says under oath that he saw the defendant commit the crime – what happens? The jury either believes him, or they don't.

If Peter is telling the truth, if he really did see Jesus transfigured, if he really did see Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah – hallelujah! Because if we can believe Peter’s eyewitness testimony about the Transfiguration, then on what grounds could we deny the rest of the eyewitness testimony in Holy Scripture, especially regarding the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ? We ought to believe that what we read in Holy Scripture about miraculous things is true just like it says.

People saw Jesus die. There was no question He had died. It was beyond all doubt: He could never have survived the scourging, beating, and crucifixion He suffered. And then those same people who knew Him before report that they saw Him again after He had died.

And then we have all the things Jesus said about Himself, and we are confronted again: is it just a story someone made up? Is it fiction? Or was Jesus crazy? Or is He telling the truth? As C.S. Lewis wrote, He is either Lord, lunatic or liar.

Maybe it's unfair. How come Peter, James and John, and Daniel and others got to see, but the rest of us were not given the same opportunity? Well for one thing, according to Jesus, if we believe, those of us who were not given the same opportunity to be eyewitnesses are blessed! Jesus said to Thomas, "blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe".

But maybe we are also selling ourselves a little short. I say we have seen. We who live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have seen with our own eyes the glory of the Lord. We have seen His majesty. Maybe we just don't recognize it for what it is because it comes to us in a different form or circumstance.

We who were born in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries were born into a very special and unique world, a world where things happen that those who came before us didn't get to see. For us, mechanization, heavier-than-air flight, mass electronic media and communications, advanced medical technology, mass transportation, space travel and other technological marvels are common. What would have stopped our ancestors in their

tracks, what would have left them stunned and speechless, we take for granted.

Maybe the effect of all this is that it has desensitized us to the miraculous. And by “miraculous” I mean the glory of the Lord. All the miracles of Jesus were done in order to reveal His glory. Maybe because we in 21<sup>st</sup> century Western culture think we’ve got it all figured out, that we are capable of such technological marvels that we see ourselves as gods, we don’t recognize the glory of the Lord even when we see it with our own eyes. But there are things happening all around us all the time that could only be the working of God if we could only see it.

One of those things is the Church itself. The birth, initial rapid growth, expansion and global presence of the Church is miraculous. It shouldn’t have happened. Not in the sense that it’s not good that it happened, but in the sense that the odds were so very much against it. The Church was born at a time when things were not in its favor. The Apostles had very limited resources. Many were executed by the authorities. It was dangerous and in many cases life-threatening to convert. Nero threw Christians to the lions.

The world had plenty of religions at the time the Church was born. There really wasn't room for another one, especially a religion that made such wild claims as a man rising from the dead, and that demanded such radical change and morally upright living. Other religions let you get drunk and partake in all sorts of depravity.

And yet here we are today. We ought to be able to see the glory of the Lord because the Church is still here. The gates of hell have given it their best shot and still the Church stands. Is the Church still standing today because we, its members are so strong and good and upright that the gates of hell cower and retreat at our presence? Or is it the glory of the Lord very much present in His Church that the gates of hell cannot conquer?

I say that conversions to the Christian faith are miraculous signs of the glory of the Lord. Earlier I mentioned C. S. Lewis, and his is a case in point. Here was a man, an Oxford don, a professor of English literature who was very well read, a contemporary man with an atheistic worldview. But then one

day he came to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He is who He says He is and Lewis came to believe Holy Scripture and he became a Christian in the Church of England.

If there is no God, if Jesus is not the Son of God, or if He never existed, then what happened to C. S. Lewis? After his conversion he was still himself, he kept his academic career, got married, and lived a normal life just like before, except now He was a Christian. How do we account for the change in him if it's not a glorious and miraculous act of God that we can see with our own eyes?

And for that matter everyone else who converts to the Christian faith undergoes a radical transformation in their lives. Their values change, their behavior changes, they make new friends and form new relationships. They begin praying, going to Church, giving to the poor, and so on. What accounts for these changes?

And what about the saints that we have seen with our own eyes in our lifetime? What makes someone like Mother Theresa live

a life like the one she lived? She devoted herself to a life of ministry to the poorest of the poor in imitation of Christ.

There's the glory of the Lord for all to see.

We see the glory of the Lord whenever any one of us forgives someone. We see the glory of the Lord when we come to confession and receive absolution and forgiveness for our sins.

We see the glory of the Lord when a baby is born. We see the glory of the Lord where broken relationships are restored, where peace is made. We see the glory of the Lord when we gather together in His name to hear His Word and to receive Him in Holy Eucharist.

These things don't just happen on their own. They don't happen just because of us. They happen because Christ is risen and alive and at work in us and in our world.

Daniel saw it in visions. Peter, James and John saw it in the Transfiguration and the other miracles of Jesus. They saw it in His resurrection and the birth of the Church.

The glory of the Lord could be seen then. But it didn't go away. Neither the Lord nor His glorious, miraculous work have ever left us, nor will they ever leave us. His glory is still there for us to see, His love is there for us to know and His mercy is there for us to receive, and His Kingdom awaits us. Amen.