

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord our Rock and our Redeemer; Amen.

As I read our gospel lesson for today, as I prayed over it, studied it, did some Greek translation work, some strange thoughts came to mind; some rather interesting questions. And so, I thought to myself, why not share them with you, let you see if I'm as crazy as I feel? So here goes. Try not to laugh. If you had to buy milk and eggs, would you go looking for them at Dick's or Bass Pro Shop? If you wanted to feast on a delicious, juicy hamburger with melted cheese on top, would you stop by a sushi restaurant? If you wanted to travel to Australia from right here in Pennsylvania would you jump in the car? No? Well let me tell you about my great grandma.

My great grandma queenie was a woman ahead of her time, a member of the women's liberation movement before one even existed. She was born in 1918 and never really felt like she fit in. You see she wasn't interested in taking care of a house or having a lot of children to look after and raise. My great grandma liked to farm. She felt most alive when she was outside in the barn milking the cows, or feeding the chickens or when she had the wind blowing in her hair as she rode on my great grandpa's red farmall tractor.

She didn't like to cook or clean, so when you were in my great grandma's kitchen around dinner time things got interesting. You know, when most people open the door to their oven around six o'clock in the evening you would expect to find a nice casserole, or a roast, or perhaps even a piece of fish baking. However, if you were at my great grandma's house you'd be pretty disappointed when you opened up her oven...or at least your stomach would. Hiding on those wire shelves in my great grandma's olive green oven were chips, cookies, candy, crackers...all the junk food you could ever want, but nothing hot, nothing homemade, nothing baked. Nope, this didn't happen just one night a week. Not just once in a while. There was

NEVER anything hot inside her oven. Not even on holidays. At special family events and on special occasions my great grandma was known for her Sara Lee coconut cake. And yes, her name was Sara, but no she never made the cake. She simply pulled it out of the freezer and defrosted it. My great grandma was not what you would expect a woman raising a family in the 30's to be. She was the unexpected.

Just like you wouldn't go to a sporting goods store to find groceries or to a sushi restaurant in search of a hamburger, today we hear, in our gospel lesson, another unlikely scenario. If you were going in search of glory, where would you go? What would you do to find that glory? The world has many, many suggestions of where we would go to get that glory. You could excel as a young athlete, progress on to play college ball and be drafted into the NFL, the NBA, or the MLB. That's glory. You could graduate from an ivy league college and become the CEO of a major corporation. That's glory. You could play the lottery or power ball and have millions and millions of dollars to your name. That's glory. You could even be born to a famous lawyer, start clothing lines and cosmetic lines, have multiple plastic surgeries and Botox injections and we that would be recognized as glory. Yes, the world is clear where glory exists here. But our standards of "glory" and what our Gospel lesson tells us is "glory" aren't exactly the same thing. John tells us that we will find that glory in unlikely places. John teaches that real, authentic glory is found in both death and service.

Just days before the crucifixion, word came to Jesus that a group of God-fearing Greeks wanted to meet with him. It's it interesting how unnamed gentiles sought Jesus at the beginning of his life, through the wisemen, and now again at the end of his life, through the Greeks? When Jesus heard that this group of Greeks wanted to meet with him it reminded him that his earthly mission would soon be drawing to a close. And so he said: "The hour has come for the Son of

Man to be glorified.” When I read this I couldn’t help but wonder where the glory would come from? It certainly isn’t from Jesus becoming a CEO, or the winner of the lottery, or an NFL player. No, Jesus isn’t even in line to be the next Kardashian sister. So, how was it that Jesus would be glorified? Jesus explained: “I tell you the truth, 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.” In this thoughtful illustration it becomes clear that the way Jesus will be glorified was in his death.

I don’t know about you but when I think of death I don’t think of glory; I think of defeat. I think most of us don’t want to die. If we didn’t mind dying we would never go to the doctor when we got sick, we would never cry at a funeral. How is it that Jesus, our Messiah and Lord, can say that death is glorious?

If we think back to Jesus’ illustration, we think about the seed. The purpose of a seed is for it to be buried in the ground where it can germinate and grow into something productive. Through his words, Jesus shows us the purpose of his coming to earth was to be buried. But we are Easter people, we know that death would not be the end of Jesus. Just as a seed that is buried sprouts and grows to bear fruit, so Jesus comes back to life to bear fruit, eternal life for all. Therefore, Jesus death on the cross was not defeat, but part of the plan, an important step in accomplishing God’s mission, of bringing glory to the Father and the world and creation that he so dearly loves.

When we begin to understand the glorious nature of Jesus’ death, we begin to see how we too can find glory in our death. Our death is not the end, but the beginning of an eternal glory spent in God’s presence and in the presence of all our loved ones.

Death is not the only unlikely place a to find glory. We will also find glory in service. Jesus says, “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be.” While the world says if you have people serving you, then and only then you have arrived and found glory. Jesus says, “It’s the other way around.” Real glory comes from serving God and serving others. In fact, the word diakonos, the Greek word for servant in this text literally means “table-waiter”. This form of the word servant was used to describe Jesus as he spends his last night on earth washing the disciple’s feet. And then again Jesus uses it to describe the disciples, reminding them that this life of servanthood wasn’t just an internal community action, but this was their posture to the world, constant service to God and neighbor.

Today, Jesus teaches us that some things, like glory, are found in unlikely places. Real glory is found in death, in Jesus’ death and the death of his beloved followers. Glory is also found in us living out our response to God’s abundant grace through Jesus’ death on the cross in service to our neighbors and to the world. So stop looking to the world around you to figure out who you are. Stop looking in all the wrong places and see the claim God has over you through the waters of baptism because of his death and resurrection. And look around you for ways to show that grace and love through service to God’s people and his abundant creation, because glory comes not from us, but from Jesus working through us. Amen.