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Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, Santa Rosa, CA

February 15, 2026

Last Epiphany, Year A, Revised Common Lectionary

[Exodus 24:12-18](#)

[Psalm 99](#)

[2 Peter 1:16-21](#)

[Matthew 17:1-9](#)

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“The world is charged with the grandeur of God. / It will flame out, like shining
from shook foil.”

Famous words from the poet and priest Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose work is full of this kind of spirituality of transcendence in the ordinary, seeing glimpses of God’s brilliance in the most minute parts of the natural world. Hopkins wasn’t naïve about sin and suffering. In the same poem he writes, “Generations have trod, have trod, have trod, / And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil.” But he still insists that underneath it all God’s glory can’t be erased: “And for all this, nature is never spent; There lives the dearest freshness deep down things ... Because the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.”

You might say Hopkins looks at the world not so much through rose-colored glasses as through God-colored glasses, so that every atom and cell is somehow radiant with the imprint of God's creative glory, and even where sin and greed and hatred mar that imprint they can never fully take it away.

And of course for us as Christians we insist that that picture of the world is actually the true one. Every single blade of grass and every feather on every bird's wing is singing praise to God at every instant. So is every cell in your body. All of creation is bursting with glory simply because it is the good creation of the good God who is the endless fountain of creativity and love. As Martin Luther apparently once said, "If you could truly understand even a single grain of wheat, you would die of wonder." The glory is always there, but we don't always have eyes to see it.

For the last seven weeks we have been celebrating the season after the Epiphany, a season of illumination and revelation, when the glory of God is revealed to the world in the person of Jesus Christ. It starts with the light of a star shining above Bethlehem. It continues through the stories of Jesus' baptism and the beginnings of his public ministry. And today this season of light reaches its culmination, where Jesus becomes light itself, face and clothes shining with heavenly glory as his disciples suddenly see him revealed as one with the living God.

It's an epiphany beyond compare. It's a preview of the resurrection, when Jesus will again meet them on a mountain in Galilee, filled with the power and glory of risen life. It's also a sequel to the story that we heard earlier this morning, when Moses went up in glory to meet God face to face.

Like all good epiphanies, the transfiguration is a moment of special insight into a reality that has always been true. Jesus is the successor to Elijah and Moses, the great figures of Israel's prophetic past. And he's God's special and beloved child whose words are uniquely worth hearing. All this was true before he and the disciples trudged up the mountain, and it's true after. The only difference is that now his friends have been given new eyes to see it. In a brief moment, the disciples—and we with them—get to glimpse reality as it truly is: this human being, Jesus Christ, is the radiant glory of God in the world.

Scripture talks about glory as something that belongs to God: a kind of luminous, radiant quality that emanates from God's presence. The Hebrew scriptures talk about glory as something almost with weight and heft to it, something you could feel, like the heaviness of a royal robe. The glory of God in heaven; a glory that Jesus laid aside when he chose to take upon him the form of a servant, to be born in human likeness.

He came to a world where people chased glory much as they still do today. The glory of Rome was the glory of empire, the glory of a superpower, but also tinged with something of the divine status. Eternal Rome was favored by the gods, its emperors beginning even to call themselves gods.

But the glory of Jesus is something very different. It is power, but not coercive violent power. It is beauty, but not the glitzy beauty of display. It is the glory not of domination but of love.

By the end of our reading today, Jesus is hinting at darker realities ahead. Tell no one until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead, he says. That word—”dead”—must have struck his disciples with a jarring thud. Only moments ago they were on the glorious mountain, and now the shadow of death is on the horizon. There is a tough journey ahead of them.

And there is a tough journey ahead of us today. Too soon, our Lenten journey begins. We’ll be walking a path of following Jesus that will end, not on a glorious tall mountain, but on a small rocky hill outside the Jerusalem city walls. Instead of having Moses on one side of him and Elijah on the other, Jesus will be hung up between two no-name criminals. Instead of awestruck friends at his feet, he’ll have his disciples abandoning him while crowds of onlookers mock and laugh at him. Instead of dazzling white clothes and glory, there will be nakedness and shame. And yet, if we have eyes to see it, the glory of God is every bit as present on the cross at Golgotha as it is on the mountain of the Transfiguration. It may not be easy to look at a condemned criminal hanging on a cross of execution and see God’s glory: it’s easier to see it here on the mountaintop. But part of the true glory of God is that God does not shy away from human pain. And so the mountaintop is almost like an overlay for us: a transparency we can place on top of the scene of the cross in order to realize what’s really going on, so we can see God’s victory over death happening even at Golgotha itself. Or in a prison, or a refugee camp, or an emergency room. When our eyes are opened to the truth of God in Jesus, we can start to see God as present even in the darkest, most hopeless places and moments in our lives. The power of the resurrection of Jesus is always there with us. And even though it will take us our entire lives and into eternity to truly get it—even now, we can sometimes have eyes to see it.

As we embark on our journey to Jerusalem this Lent, may we carry this epiphany along with us to sustain us. And even in the midst of the ordinary, may we be given glimpses of the dazzling glory of God in Jesus.