

Let us pray... Transform our hearts, O God, so that we may radiate your love through our very being and in our thoughts, words, and deeds... Amen.

This Sunday ends the farewell discourse with Jesus and his disciples and wraps up this beautiful season of Easter.

The farewell discourse, being the ending of Jesus' earthly ministry, opening up a new beginning and a new space for Christ to be with us through the mystery of God.

Because the farewell discourse is about new beginnings, and encompasses Christ's instructions on how we are to live and be in the world...

And beginnings can bring up an array of emotions... excitement, fear, sadness, joy, and so any more...

And beginnings are also an integral part of God, because God is always making things new...

Newness that started in Christ's life, continued into his death, and his resurrection...

For Christ has gone before us, radiating out the light of God from his very being...

Leaving us a trail to follow on all our paths and especially in all of our new beginnings, a trail that sometimes might not be very bright and may seem more like a faint glow of a flashlight...

Which is okay, as it is an invitation from God into curiosity and wonder....

Even if entails something we don't know or can't understand...

Because God is still there, even in the mystery, as that is a part of who God is.

Such as beginnings for when life ends... Or beginnings after baptism, or even the beginning of a new day...

Because one thing about beginnings, is that hope lives there...

Hope that we also heard in our gospel reading from today... As Christ is praying that we may be protected, and that we may be one, as Jesus is one with God.

And yet, this gospel is about more than hope... As it is getting at something that we can embody day after day...

Something that we can carry with us and share with the world... Which is God's glory... As we heard Christ say that his glory has been magnified in us...

And glory, is a term we do not talk about very much... And most of us, myself included, probably do not fully understand what Jesus meant by glory in this passage...

But thankfully, we have theologians and Greek scholars who can help us unravel these texts...

To share with us the original meaning of the word our gospel translated as glory...

As this word is trying to illustrate God's brightness and greatness and how it bursts into the world through God's love...

Which is one of the reasons why Jesus became flesh and lived among us... To show us in ways that we could understand, the magnitude of God's love...

And Jesus showed God's love simply through the way he lived... As this was what allowed the love of God to become manifest in the world.

Which makes sense, since Jesus is God, Jesus radiated God's goodness, brightness, and love in everything that he did...

And this is what his prayer is getting at today... Since Christ is one with God, and Christ is one with us, then we too are one with God...

And since we are one with God, our bodies can also radiate God's goodness, brightness, splendor, and love... or as our text translates, God's glory...

As this passage is getting at the fact that there is something truly special about you...

Not only are you a beloved child of God, but because of that love you embody God's glory, as it has been magnified in you...

So much so... that the glory of God radiates from you...

From the way you live, in the way you treat others, and in the way you love...

But as beautiful as this is, even God's glory can't stop the pain in this world...

Which is why Christ prays for our protection; and states that we are left in this world... Because Jesus knows first-hand that this is a world where hate, sickness, and death are very much a reality...

A world where there is hurt and heat ache, where life is messy, and where there are sad endings...

Which is why we are given hope, knowing that after every ending, there is always a new beginning... Until we meet our final beginning in Christ's resurrection.

Which is why we have baptisms, to hear these words, and to know that God's promises are real and are for you...

And later in this service we will baptize Hunter and we will pray, that through water and the Holy Spirit that God will give us new birth, cleanse us from sin, and raise us to eternal life.

Words, that for Hunter's family, hit especially close to home, as their beloved Sheldon passed away, a mere week ago...

An ending that came too fast, but an ending that opened up space for a new beginning...

In a space that Christ has radiated and saturated in God's love... A place where God's glory lives... As this passage is also about how Jesus becomes glorified in a new way, in a place not on this earth... In a place where there is only glory, goodness, peace, and love...

A place where all of our loved ones who have passed on, are also a part of.

A truth that gives us hope and in turn fuels the flame of God's love that burns inside of us...

Allowing us to burn bright with the loved ones that we hold in our hearts...

And even when you feel like your light may be dimming, remember that there is always a light in the darkness for you to find... A light that no darkness can overcome...

And that light lives in you, in the form of love, hope, and God's glory where the splendor of God lives....

And so, this week I encourage you to embrace that flame... As a reminder that you are loved by the Creator of the Universe and that greatness is a part of you...

Because even in the vastness of all the things you will encounter this week, every moment is a moment for you to both embrace God's glory and to share God's glory.

A flame that was given to you at your baptism... Where you are held in a promise so strong and pure that not even death can take that flame from you, for you belong to God... Amen.