

The Rev. Dr. Janet Waggoner  
St. John | San Juan Episcopal Church  
Olympia, WA  
Sunday, March 3, 2024  
Lent III – Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

*I speak to you in the name of our loving, liberating, life-giving God. Amen.*

Good morning!

Standing here before you today takes my breath away. I am so thankful to be invited to partner with you in ministry. I very much look forward to getting to know you, to hear the stories of your lives and your relationships with God, and to discover how it is that we might follow Jesus better together.

As I have met with your wardens and vestry and with Canon Alissa and Bishop Melissa, I very much have the sense that I am jumping aboard a moving train.

The song that has been playing in my head these past couple of weeks is “This Train,” the traditional American gospel song first made popular by Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the mother of rock and roll. “This train is bound for glory, this train. This train is bound for glory, this train.”

You know, that’s a word we don’t use much these days. *Glory*. What does the word “glory” mean, exactly?

To begin to grasp what glory is, we have to reach back beyond simple dictionary definitions to our Christian and Jewish heritage. We use our English word “glory” to stand in for the Hebrew noun *kabod*,<sup>1</sup> but we seem to have left the essence of the word behind. In Hebrew, the word *kabod* points to a physical phenomenon by which the presence of God was made known. A powerful, awe-inspiring phenomenon – like thunder and lightning. Like the burning bush that stopped Moses in his tracks. Like the pillar of cloud that led the wandering Israelites by day and the pillar of cloud that led them by night. *Kabod*. An experience of God’s presence that shakes us, that commands our attention. Glory.

In the midst of these times of social and economic disorientation, of political divisiveness, of warring restlessness, we need an inbreaking of the glory of God now more than ever. However, caught up in the perpetually churning news cycles, caught up in our worries and fears, caught up in our own sense of self-importance and self-sufficiency, we sometimes forget to notice . . . God.

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford Reference re: glory. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095855571>

As I prepared for worship today, I was particularly struck by our opening prayer. As you've probably noticed, the opening "collect" with which we begin worship is not a throw-away opener, something that takes up a minute or two so that late-comers don't miss the important stuff that comes later in the service. The collect *collects us* and gets us all on the same page. It's a prayer in which we succinctly say to God what it is that we want and need and hope for in our relationship with God right now, today.

Today's collect is printed on the front page of your leaflet (8:00 am) [on page 2 of your bulletin (10:00 am)], or if you don't have a leaflet [bulletin] – did you know that all of the collects we pray week by week are in your Prayer Book? Today's collect is on page 218 of your red *Book of Common Prayer*.

As we gathered for worship today, here's what we asked God for . . .

*Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul.*

Dear People of God, as we gathered together today we asked God to "keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls" so that . . . so that . . . nothing separates us from the love and power and glory of the one true and living GOD.

Soooo . . . how can God help you, keep you so that you are re-oriented, so that you are open – body, mind, and spirit – to *glory*?

Perhaps you need God's help keeping God at the center of your life. Moses returned from his encounter with God to remind the people, God is God and you are not. Stop using force to get what you want – working when you should be resting, stealing and coveting when you should be treating others with respect. God entrusted each and every one of us with God's own power to create and to relate. We experience God's glory when we use that power for good and not for selfish gain.

How can God help you, keep you so that experience God's glory?

Perhaps you need God's help letting go of needing all the answers. In his letter to the rascally, restless, not-fully-believing members of the Church in Corinth, Paul said, "to those who are called . . . Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God." Perhaps you need to let yourself answer God's call – and then trust that God will provide what you need as you go along.

Or perhaps . . . perhaps you need God's help relinquishing the idea that transformation can happen without rocking the boat. Jesus was a faithful Jewish boy, who grew into a faithful Jewish man and, as a faithful Jewish man, Jesus caused a ruckus in the temple and flipped over tables because the status quo was leading to increased suffering rather than to increased transformation. Jesus started bearing the weight of the cross long before he was forced to carry

wooden beams through town. May you rely on God's sustaining strength as you press on for truth and justice.

In the next days and weeks of Lent, may the glory of God stop you in your tracks, command your attention, and draw you to focus on that which is most important. This train is bound for glory - All aboard!

Amen.