

The word “glory” can have many meanings. For Christians, it describes God’s obvious presence, and it also indicates the high worth and value of something. Furthermore, the word “glory” is also a synonym for heaven. As Christians we can reflect Christ’s glory by our own lives and actions, just as Jesus reflected the glory of his Father in Heaven.

In the Old Testament, many different Hebrew words are translated into English as glory. The most common Hebrew word is *khabod*, which means weightiness or worth and is used in the phrase “the glory of the Lord.”

In the New Testament, the Greek word *doxa* means opinion (always in a positive sense), praise, honour, glory. Typical usage includes honour, renown, glory, and the especially divine quality, the unspoken manifestation of God’s splendour.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus’ first miracle involves turning water into wine. This miracle is a manifestation of his glory. “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him” (Jn 2:11). As Christians, we are miraculously transformed by our relationship with Christ just as the water was turned into wine.

This desire for glory occurs too in today’s gospel reading. As St Mark recounts it, on their way to Jerusalem with Jesus, James and John ask to be given seats of honour when the Lord enters into his glory. But we see here that the disciples have “selective hearing”: they want to share Jesus’ glory, but do not appear to understand that his glory will be preceded by his suffering. Instead, many of Jesus’ followers hoped that Jesus would reign as an earthly king. James and John asked Jesus if they could sit with him as rulers “in glory” because they believed he would overthrow the Roman government.

In response, Jesus notes their lack of understanding and also predicts the suffering they will endure for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus says that the honour they seek is not his to give. When the other ten hear what James and John have asked, St Mark reports that they are indignant. And so Jesus takes the opportunity to teach them. He explains the importance of service and sacrifice in the life of a disciple. In today’s Gospel, Jesus contrasts the dynamics within his community of disciples with those shown by the rulers of the Gentiles.

Jesus, through his life and death, proposes to us the greatest ever example of “servant leadership”, something which people still find challenging in our day as well. May we always be inspired to follow his life of sacrifice and tremendous courage, first, to build the Kingdom of God on earth, and second, to be with God forever in the glory of Heaven.