

## **In a word – GLORY**

Here is another of those familiar words. “What does it mean?” “Well, it means ...er ...I don't know how to explain it. It's ...er ...I know what it means but I can't put it into words.”

Of course it is not only a Bible word. Perhaps you join in “Land of Hope and Glory” on the last night of the Proms – great tune, but whatever do the words mean? You may know Kipling's “The Glory of the Garden.” Perhaps you tried to learn it at school. Perhaps you think of the rays of the sun as its glory.

So what do we mean when we say or sing in church, “Glory be to the Father”? Or when we say “for the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory are Yours”?

The dictionary helps with words like “honour, praise, majesty, splendour.” It's a start.

St Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth, about “God, who has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” This is the Christian's experience. We understand and appreciate the majesty and splendour of God through our knowledge of Jesus, and give him the honour and praise.

But wait a moment. The Isaiah prophesied that “he had no beauty that we should desire him.” People did not flock to Jesus because of his physical appearance. On the Cross he was despised and rejected, mocked and derided. Yet Christians see that very figure on the Cross as demonstrating the glory of God!

The Jews gave it a name – the Shekinah. It was the physical manifestation of the presence of God, such as they saw in the desert, the pillar of fire in the night, going before them in their wanderings. Remember that it was also a pillar of cloud during the day. The glory was the fire and the cloud. God manifests his glory both in the raising of Lazarus to life, and in the Crucifixion.

God is present with us in the “fire” situations and in the “cloud” situations – hadn't you realised? You may have had a wonderful experience, sometimes called a mountain top experience, when Jesus was very close to you – a “fire” situation. Many also experience an awful trauma, one never to be sought after or repeated, they hope. Then as they look back weeks or years later, they see it was a “cloud” experience of the glory of God, when Jesus was just as close.

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Thank you to the anonymous contributor of this grace.

**Be with us, O God at the breaking of bread,  
Be with us, O God at the close of the meal,  
And grant to us, Father beloved,  
From whom these gifts come,  
That reach day we may with thankful hearts  
Rejoice in your bountiful care.**