



We Have Seen HIS

G L O R Y

**ADVENT  
DEVOTIONS**

A gift to you from  
Martin Luther College,  
the WELS College  
of Ministry



We Have Seen **HIS**  
**G**LORY

In the Old Testament, the LORD—Jahweh, the faithful God who keeps his promises—revealed his glory to his people in many ways. For generations, Christians have seen Christ in some of these revelations, specifically in appearances of the “glory of the LORD” and the “angel of the LORD.”

This devotion series will explore many of those Old Testament appearances that prefigured the ultimate revelation of God’s glory in Jesus.

We’ll also explore some New Testament passages where the inspired authors take

up the theme of God’s glory, specifically as they describe the person and work of Jesus.

Perhaps the apostle John’s words say it best: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

We pray that these devotions will strengthen and comfort you as you prepare for the humble coming of Christ this Christmas and for his glorious coming someday soon.

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*New International  
Version 2011*

**Hymns:**

*Christian Worship 2021*

## The LORD Appeared to Abraham at Mamre

*The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.*

Genesis 18:1-2

“The LORD appeared.” Do not quickly skip over those three words. Pause. Ponder. Praise God that we have a Lord who appears!

This was not the first appearance of the Lord to Abraham. God appeared to him when he was 75 years old, after he and his nomadic household had arrived in Canaan, and he promised him that his descendants would inherit that land. God appeared to him when he was 99 years old and promised him that he and his wife Sarah would have a son during the upcoming year, and he repeated his previous promises that Abraham would become a great nation and that his

offspring would be as uncountable as the stars. The verses that we are considering today, brought by three “men” who are actually the Lord himself and two angels, are the introduction to another repetition of the promise that Abraham and his wife Sarah would have a son even though they were very old.

The Lord who appears is the Lord who promises. The key point about a promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah is that he would be the ancestor of the Son who would be the culmination of all of God’s promises. Already in the Garden, God promised that the Offspring of the woman would inflict a mortal blow on Satan and his offspring. The problem: sin. The solution: the Savior.

During this season of Advent, we look ahead and prepare for the celebration of the birth of God’s own Son as that promised Offspring. The Messiah came and paid the wages of our sin. He embraced the deepest agonies of hell on

the cross for us and for all people. In his unimaginable grace, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We will see “the glory of God’s one and only Son” (John 1:14) in this series of Advent devotions, and we will rejoice that the Lord who appears keeps his promises.

**Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,  
make thee a bed, soft, undefiled  
within my heart, that it may be  
a quiet chamber kept for thee. Amen.**

*Rev. Dr. Lawrence Olson serves Martin Luther College as a professor of theology and director of both the Staff Ministry Program and the Congregational Assistant Program.*

GLORY

*But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.*

*"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."*  
Genesis 22:11-12

Sometimes when the Bible speaks of "an angel of the LORD" or "the angel of the LORD," it refers to "mere" angels: creatures of God who serve as God's messengers. However, other times we understand that term "angel of the LORD" to refer not to a creature, but to the eternal Son of God himself. This is one of those times. Here the "angel" speaks as God himself: "You have not withheld from *me* your son."

Ponder that for a moment. The Son of God, approximately two millennia before he took on human flesh as the Son of Man, speaks to his distant human *ancestor* Abraham. He stops Abraham from killing

his son Isaac and sacrificing him as a burnt offering to the Lord.

The Lord had commanded this to test Abraham's faith. Earlier God had promised to save this world of sinners through Isaac, Abraham's son. But now he had commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. It made no human sense. It went against every fatherly instinct.

But in his heart, Abraham passed the test. He was going to sacrifice his son. The Lord saw Abraham's heart and stopped Abraham from carrying it out. "Now I know that you fear God," he explained, "because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

How difficult it must have been for Abraham even to consider doing this to his only son!

Doesn't this thought become even more poignant during Advent as we meditate on the coming of Jesus at Christmas? Think

about it. This very "angel of the LORD" is the Son of God. He knew full well what would happen in the future. He, God's only Son, would be born of a woman. He would become a human being and he *would* be sacrificed. He would die in our place, to save us from our sins. God the Father would *not* withhold from us his Son, his only Son. God *so* loved the world.

**Dear Father in heaven, whenever I am tempted to test you and demand proof of your love for me, graciously remind me that you did not spare your own Son, but gave him up for us all. I need no further proof. Amen.**

*Rev. Ross Stelljes serves Martin Luther College as a professor of theology.*

## The Angel of the LORD Appeared to Moses

*There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." Exodus 3:2-3*

Moses wasn't overwhelmed—not at first. He was drawn by curiosity to an impossible bush. It remained intact while a flame danced within its leaves.

The Angel said, "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (3:6). Though the names were packed with promise and shared history, Moses covered his face in fear. Glory will do that to you.

This was no created angel. The ground itself was holy.

The word *angel* refers to someone commissioned for a special task. A close reading of Exodus 3 reveals that this messenger of God is himself God (3:2,4).

Our thoughts fly to the preincarnate Christ, to the divine Word, to all the Father has to say to a miserable world in Christ his Son. "I have seen the misery of my people. . . . I have come down to rescue them" (3:7,8).

Why a flame? Well, fire is immaterial, luminous, and pure, warm but not safe. So far, so good.

But there's nothing obvious about a burning bush. One Lutheran father mused at this spot about the two natures of the holy Christ Child at his incarnation. His humanity is full and real and somehow not consumed by the fullness of deity burning within. Astonishing.

God looked out through gray infant eyes to see our misery up close. A baby does not overwhelm. We are entangled by the mystery. Who is this? What sort of rescue can he bring?

*Nails, spear shall pierce him through,  
the cross be borne for me, for you.  
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,  
the babe, the Son of Mary! (CW 344:2)*

We answer, in the Spirit, with wonder and worship. Glory will do that to you.

The Book on your nightstand does nothing to overwhelm. But there's a fire within its leaves, the mysterious name of God that reads our minds and speaks to questions at the bottom of the soul.

O holy Flame, O Mary's Son, are you the God of my fathers? Are you attentive to my distress? Are you here to rescue me?

*I Am.*

**Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,  
your welcome shall proclaim,  
and heav'n's eternal arches ring  
with your beloved name. (CW 313:4)**

*Rev. Dr. Mark Paustian serves Martin Luther College as a professor of English and Hebrew.*

*By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.* Exodus 13:21-22

I borrowed my parents' vehicle a few months ago. While digging for a pen, I couldn't believe my eyes. There, in all of its dusty glory, was a roadmap. It's kind of sad that we don't typically use these anymore. Instead, our GPS speaks to us about each and every step, recalculating every turn, leading us to our final destination.

The children of Israel didn't have a GPS voice and satellite tracking to guide them. Instead, they had the glory of the Lord himself in a visual way, guiding their every footstep, by day and by night. We are numb to headlights and streetlights. The children of Israel likely marveled each day at the light that emanated from

the pillar of fire. No matter the time of day, they knew they were moving in the right direction toward the home God had prepared for them.

What's leading your life today? If you're anything like me, this living and active roadmap of God's Word sometimes gets dusty in life's glove compartment. So often, especially during this Advent season, we're tempted to venture off to follow the materialistic voices of this world. I ask for forgiveness for the many times this happens.

So what can we do? Does your faith life need recalculating like mine? Advent is all about preparing for Christ. During Advent, you'll see lights on trees, houses, and sometimes even ugly sweaters. It's a great reminder that our Light has not "left his place in front of the people." This light shines brightly in Scripture, where we see that Jesus has removed all the obstacles and lit up the pathway to heaven. By his

life, death, and resurrection, he's done it all for us.

So, friends, dust off that roadmap! Not the one in your parent's glovebox, but the one on your bookshelf or in your Bible app. Dive into the Word, which reminds you of the clear path to heaven found in Christ alone. Open your map this Advent season and beyond.

**Lord, lead me this Advent season to daily recalculate my life through regular reading of your Word. I trust in you to bring me home. Amen.**

*Professor Theodore Klug serves Martin Luther College as director of Admissions.*

GLORY

## The Glory of the LORD Appeared in a Cloud

*Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’ While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud. Exodus 16:9-10*

One could argue that the most accomplished grumblers ever were the children of Israel. They won the gold medal in grumbling year after year! Seven times in Exodus 16 Moses mentions the people’s grumbling, noting that while they grumbled against him and Aaron, the finger of their grumbling was actually pointing at God himself.

Why all this grumbling? The answer is as sinful as it is shameful. They grumbled because they had no confidence in God’s care. They weren’t pleased by God’s promises. They found no satisfaction in God’s strength. And they put no hope in

the advent of God’s Savior. They grumbled against God because they didn’t put their trust in him, and they grumbled against Moses and Aaron because they couldn’t find any love for God’s leaders in their self-pitying hearts. Their lack of faith resulted in a lack of love and—*voilà*—they grumbled!

But in the midst of their horrible grumbling, these selfish sinners saw the glory of God shining! Here is our lesson: The great glory of God is in the salvation of sinners through Christ. God’s bright and shining glory is in his gift of life to dead sinners for Christ’s sake. And the life God gives through Jesus is never absent of meaning and purpose and joy. I can put it to you this way: God did not simply create us to live or exist—no, God created us to *live and love!*

So while it’s true that we see God’s glory in the work he does *for* our lives, it’s equally

true that we see God’s glory in the work he does *in* our lives. God takes people dead in sin and on their way to a bottomless grave in hell, and he makes them alive in Christ. God takes people who grumble and complain—and who hate and envy and lust—and he makes them love in Christ.

In this Advent season, we too look to the skies for Christ to come in his glory with his bright and shining gifts of life and love.

**Forgive my grumbling and complaining, Lord Jesus, and satisfy me always with the glory of your grace and the promise of life lived in perfect love. Amen.**

*Rev. Jeff Schone serves Martin Luther College as vice president for student life.*

GLORY





## The Glory-Cloud of the LORD

“The glory of the  
LORD settled on  
Mount Sinai. . . .  
To the Israelites the  
glory of the LORD  
looked like a  
consuming fire  
on top of the  
mountain.”

## The Glory of the LORD Covered Mount Sinai

*When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Exodus 24:15-17*

Fires consumed the hills and mountainsides. Smoke traveled for miles. It lasted for days. Millions looked on in fear. This is the scene of my childhood in San Diego in 2007. Wildfires that lit up the night sky could be seen from the highways as millions of acres of land and homes were consumed by fire. Destruction, devastation, and death were the words repeated on the radio and news channels. These fires were an amazing sight for a young child, a lasting memory.

We find a similar mountainside scene in Exodus. The Israelites were led out of

Egypt in fantastic fashion and were now journeying to their promised land. The Lord had them stop at Mount Sinai. This is where he would establish his covenant with his people. Moses was now to come up this mountain covered by the glory of the Lord. To the Israelites, the glory looked like a consuming fire.

In this fire, the Lord was confirming his covenant with Moses, the great mediator for his people. Israel was to obey all the laws he gave through this mediator, Moses. If they didn't, sacrifice was necessary.

This covenant set Israel apart so that a greater mediator would come through them. Moses and the people saw the consuming fire of the glory of the Lord, but one day, the full and frequent use of this glory would be set aside. The greater mediator would take on human flesh. Our all-consuming sin would be placed

on him. Jesus, our mediator, would fulfill the covenant given to Moses so that destruction, devastation, and death would be done. His necessary sacrifice and his glory covered over all our sins. The new covenant is confirmed for us, an everlasting gift. The glory of the Lord now shines in our new hearts. We are consumed by the fire and zeal to spread that message this Advent season.

**Dear heavenly Father, we praise you for your glory. We give thanks for your mighty acts. Defend us from the sin that tries to consume our lives. Give us faith that is consumed by your glory, your love, and your Word. Amen.**

*Rev. Philip Schroeder serves Martin Luther College as an instructor and dormitory supervisor.*

GLORY

# The Glory of the LORD Filled the Tabernacle

DECEMBER

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*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Exodus 40:34-35*

“The LORD’s right hand has done mighty things” (*Psalms 118:16*). Was this ever more evident than when God rescued his people from their slavery in Egypt with miracle after miracle? The Israelites had seen the power and glory of the Lord on full display. But along with his power, God also displayed his grace and care for the people he loved.

God spoke to his people through his servant Moses. “The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend” (*Exodus 33:11*). And God gave them a visible display of how he was present with his people. Moses set up the tabernacle with the sacred elements

that God had prescribed. And then God covered the tabernacle with his glory.

Only this time, Moses couldn’t enter. He had spoken to God before, so why now was he prevented from entering it? Because God hadn’t called him into it this time. As special as the relationship was between Moses and God, he was still sinful. He needed a Savior too. Yet God made his dwelling among them. His glory covered the tabernacle.

We also have evidence of the power, glory, and grace of God around us. He has promised that he is with us to the very end of the age. And even in the midst of a sinful world, the blessings of God abound. But consider: if even Moses was prevented from being in God’s presence, what hope do we have, who often resemble the grumbling Israelites much more than Moses, the servant of God?

Just as God dwelled in the tabernacle, so Jesus dwelled among us. Jesus took on flesh so that we would have a visible display of the glory and grace of God. But more than that, he came to make it so we could dwell in his presence forever. Jesus was born to live for us and die on our behalf so that our eternal home would be the same place the glory of the Lord dwells. No longer is the place where God dwells closed. Through Jesus it is open to us.

**Dear Jesus, thank you for dwelling among us so that we might dwell with you forever. Amen.**

*Rev. Nicolas Schmoller serves Martin Luther College as a professor of theology and Greek.*

## Fire Came from the Presence of the LORD

*Moses and Aaron then went into the tent of meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown. Leviticus 9:23-24*

It was the Fourth of July, and my wife and I were standing in our driveway watching the fireworks filling the sky. Our friends across the street had been lighting some small rockets, when suddenly one of them misfired and came skidding across the street right toward us. We quickly jumped out of the way as momentary fear suddenly gave way to laughter.

The glory of the Lord appeared in fire one day in front of the people of Israel. There might have been a moment of fear for them too, but when they saw the fire, “they shouted for joy and fell facedown.” Why?

Aaron had just been ordained as high priest. Now, from the raised platform of the altar of burnt offering, he blessed the assembled children of Israel, perhaps using the familiar blessing we often use at the end of our worship services today. Then Aaron and his brother, Moses, went into the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they again blessed the people. Suddenly, the glory of the Lord appeared—in fire!—and totally consumed the offerings on the altar.

Why did this happen? Why did the glory of the Lord totally burn up the offerings? The offerings had already been burning on the altar, but God dramatically demonstrated his acceptance of them by consuming them suddenly and completely. It was a visible sign of the Lord’s gracious presence and activity on behalf of his people.

When they saw the glory of the Lord in fire, the people shouted for joy and fell on their faces because of the greatness and holiness of God.

As we look into the face of the baby whose birth we are about to celebrate, we too see the glory of God. We see his gracious presence and wonderful activity on our behalf. We see the one who came to save us from sin and take us to heaven. Filled with joy we too bow in humble adoration before him.

**Lord Jesus, thank you for revealing your glory by coming into this world to save us. Amen.**

*Rev. Dr. Mark Lenz served Dr. Martin Luther College and Martin Luther College as a professor of theology.*

GLORY

# The Glory of the LORD Appeared Above the Temple

DECEMBER

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*The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever." 2 Chronicles 7:2-3*

Could anyone imagine a better moment in Israel's history? Nothing was wrong. King Solomon reigned in Jerusalem. The borders extended far and wide. Gold and silver flowed like water. The temple of the Lord stood, steadfast and strong, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. The people praised God's goodness and love.

But . . . we all know the history. The line of David failed. The nation crumbled. The riches, taken away. The temple, destroyed. The glory of the Lord departed. The Israelites could not walk in the way of the Lord; they turned to other gods.

Sadly, this mirrors our own life. We fail to walk in God's commands. We inherit a rotten heart from our parents. Our patience crumbles too soon. We spend our wealth without thinking of God and his church. Our will to honor God is destroyed at the first inconvenience of the day. We turn away from God to follow our own sinful desires. The glory of the Lord *ought to* depart from our hearts and leave us exiled in darkness and despair.

But it doesn't. There is one thing that happened in 2 Chronicles 7 that *didn't* fail: "He is good; his love endures forever."

On that Christmas day in Bethlehem, his goodness and love appeared. A son was born. A true man to live and die in our place. A true God whose blood covers the whole world. A Savior to forgive sin, conquer death, and grant eternal life. The Word become flesh to bring glory to God.

That day in Israel, with faces bowed down, the Israelites saw only a glimpse of God's glory. Today, we look intently into the Word of God and see God's full glory. We behold God exactly as he wants to be seen: Jesus Christ crucified for us.

This is God's glory. This is God's goodness. This is God's love. This endures beyond all ages: Jesus Christ crucified and risen for us.

**Keep us always in your gracious love and goodness, O Lord. Grant us hearts that bow down and worship your glory and grace for ages without end. Amen.**

*Rev. Orié Thomford serves Martin Luther College as an instructor and dormitory supervisor.*

# David Worshiped the LORD—the King of Glory

*Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty—he is the King of glory.*  
Psalm 24:9-10

It wasn't as easy as knock-knock to get into cities in ancient times. There hadn't been the invention of the doorbell that might alert people that you were at the door and wanted to come in. Camera doorbells were nowhere to be found. The city gates were there to protect those inside the gate by keeping enemies out.

A king would lead the army out to battle while the watchmen would wait, hoping to open the gates for their victorious king. When the king returned, the battle was over. The battle was won.

Our king went to battle for us. That's one of the many reasons we praise the King of glory.

When sin entered the world, God did not deal with Adam and Eve in a harsh way. Rather, he was calm and loving as he heard their confession and promised them a Savior. When God promised to go to battle for us, praise be to the King of glory.

The Word became flesh. The Son took on our flesh and blood so that he might be our substitute. Praise be to the King of glory.

While Jesus lived a perfect life for the world, there were those who wouldn't recognize him as the Messiah. There were those who wouldn't give him glory. Still, Jesus endured. Still, the King of glory came and lived and died. Praise be to the King of glory.

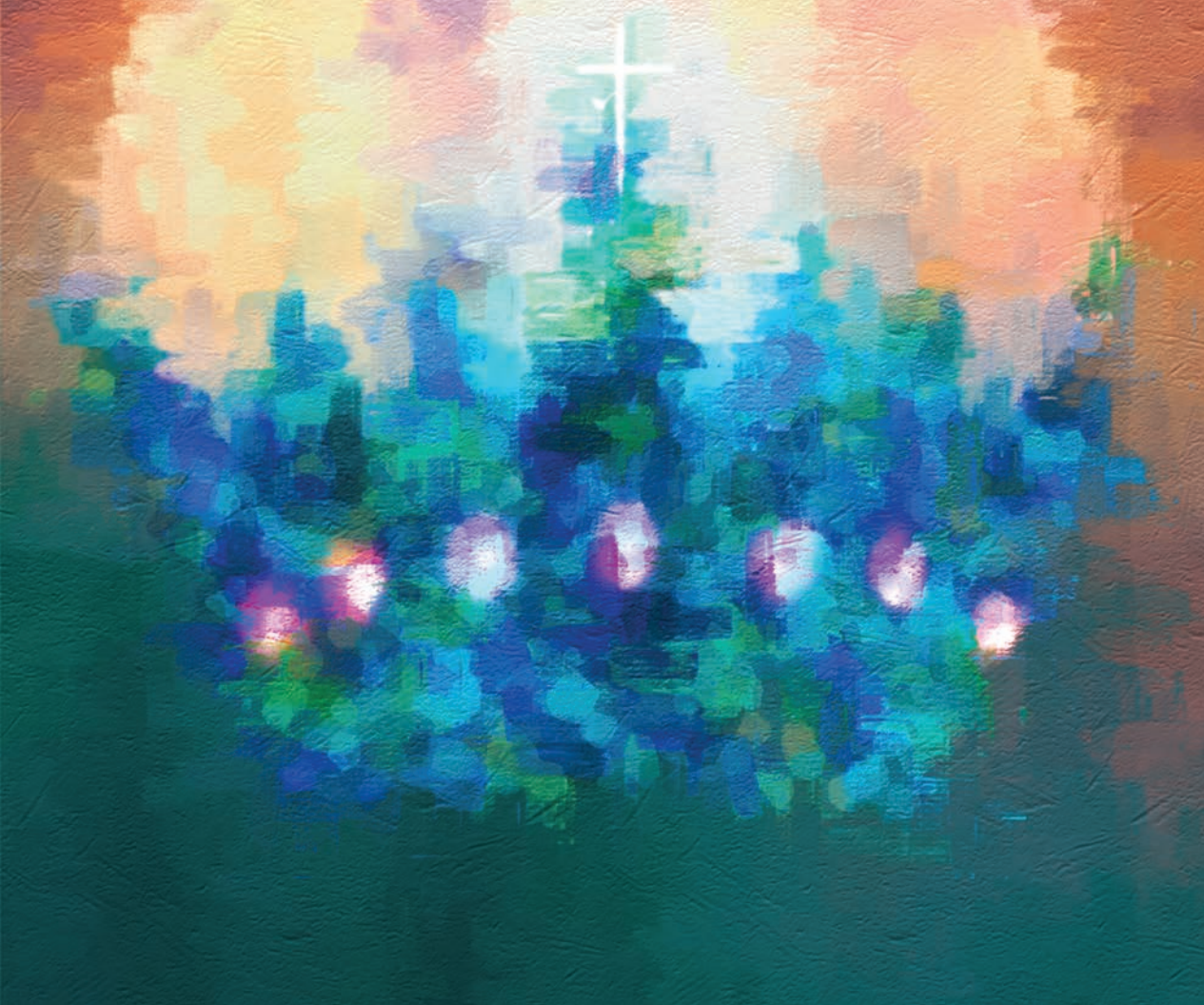
During this season of Advent, we focus on his coming then and his coming again, and we give him praise. Because the God of all creation came in humility, lived in

humility, died and rose glorious, we, like David, praise the King of glory who has gone to battle for us—the King of glory who won the battle for us so that we may enter his heavenly home.

**Almighty God, forgive us for the times we fail to give you glory for all you have done for us. Send us your Holy Spirit that we might sing your praises and worship you now and forever with all of the saints and angels in heaven, because you are the King of glory. Amen.**

*Rev. Aaron Robinson serves Martin Luther College as a professor of English and as cultural diversity coordinator.*

GLORY



## Christ, the King of Glory

“Who is he, this  
King of glory?  
The LORD  
Almighty—he is  
the King of glory.”

# The Glory of the LORD Will Bring Transformation

*The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God. Isaiah 35:1-2*

Where is this desert and parched land?  
If I visit the Dead Sea, will I see it on the southern shore?

Not likely. The desert is my heart. "All have sinned," the apostle postulates, "and fall short of the glory of God" (*Romans 3:23*). Ever since Satan slithered into Eden's scene, and Adam and Eve succumbed to his seduction, I find myself under God's ineluctable judgment: Cursed! My darkened heart and its every urge are evil from the get-go. My moribund mind and its depraved dalliances are at odds with my Creator.

Yet the compassionate and gracious Lord, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love (*Exodus 34:6-7*), doesn't condemn me. Through his spotless body-double life and substitutionary God-satisfying death, Jesus exited his tomb, declaring me forgiven, God's child, justified freely by his grace (*Romans 3:24*), an heir of heaven and recipient of the glory of God.

God didn't send Jesus to condemn the world but to save the world through him (*John 3:17*). He made him who had no sin to be sin for me, so that in Jesus, I might become the righteousness [splendor, glory] of God (*2 Corinthians 5:21*).

That's news to sing about and rejoice over. Still, I desire to dawdle in the desert, don't I? Sashaying, even sprinting toward my secret sins, I scarcely give thought to what my salvation cost my Savior. For my sake Jesus became poor, so that I through his poverty might become rich (*2 Corinthians 8:9*).

Daily I need to drink the Bible message of full forgiveness and peace with God through Jesus Messiah as I read his Word and meditate on his goodness to me. The Word alone drags me from my desert of depravity back to the glory of God. Jesus' gospel working on my heart brings him glory, gets my mind right, and makes me want others to blossom, burst into bloom, and rejoice with me.

**O Spring of Joy, rain down upon our spirits;  
Our thirsty hearts are yearning for your Word.  
Come, make us whole, be comfort to our hearts.  
For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits.  
Truly my hope is in you. Amen. (CW 325:2)**

*Professor Alan Uher serves Martin Luther College as a field supervisor of teacher candidates.*

GLORY



*Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*  
Isaiah 40:4-5

In Isaiah chapter 40, one can't help but notice the stark contrast between the "glory" of man and the glory of the Lord. Against the backdrop of eternity (or even the sweeping scope of history), against the backdrop of the nature and power of God, man is nothing nor his glorious achievements lasting. Indeed, just after these words, Isaiah soberly reminds us: "All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them." (40:6-7)

The world labors under the curse of sin. At the time of the fall, God "subjected the creation to frustration," St. Paul tells us in Romans 8. We look around and see that frustration on people's faces and in their lives. Without God, life is a meaningless existence with little to no point, and the gnawing uncertainty of what happens after death both angers and terrifies the human mind.

Even God's people feel this burden. We strive and work our entire life only to watch accomplishments, recognition, wealth all melt away. "We finish our years with a groan," Moses said, as sin causes us to crumble back into the dust from which we were taken, along with any so-called glory we had here on earth.

But Isaiah rightly turns our eyes away from ourselves and the vapidness of life to the works of God, which bring true peace and joy. Above all, it is the person and

gospel of Jesus Christ that sets our hearts at rest in God's presence. Winning our salvation, forgiving our sins, bringing us to faith, keeping us in faith, and spreading the light of his grace throughout the world—this is the true glory of God. Isaiah foretold it, and we now witness it: our glorious Savior has come, and his glorious works endure forever. Throughout the world, people—and, by God's grace, you and I—have seen this glory of the Lord revealed in his Son. And our salvation in him is firm and secure, for his own mouth has spoken it.

**Lord Jesus, lead us by your grace and Spirit to rejoice in your glory and to spread its saving light throughout the world. Amen.**

*Rev. Dr. Keith Wessel serves Martin Luther College as a professor of Latin and Greek.*

# The Glory of the LORD Dispels the Darkness

*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.* Isaiah 60:1-3

A quick Google search of recent societal trends reveals a dark picture: high numbers of divorce and out-of-wedlock births; rising levels of crime and imprisonment; unprecedented rates of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. Sin and its effects surround us.

Darkness permeates our personal lives too: relationships strained and broken; fears about the future and guilt over the past; daily struggles with anger, lust, envy, and pride; the secret sins that burden my conscience.

The bleakness of this world, the gloominess of my heart, the thick darkness . . . at times, it can simply overwhelm.

And then we read Isaiah's glorious vision. On the one hand, he's prophesying the future: "Nations *will come* to your light." On the other hand, he's describing the present: "Your light *has come*." The prophet continues to alternate between these two timeframes over the course of the chapter.

The future depicted by Isaiah expresses our Christian hope: the new Jerusalem, where believers from every people and nation will gather around the throne of our Savior-God in eternal worship and praise, finally freed from death, mourning, pain, and sin. This heavenly city, Isaiah tells us later in this chapter, will be devoid of earthly darkness, because "the LORD will be your everlasting light." The future is bright for those who trust in the God of Israel.

But what about the present? What solace is there for believers living *now* in this sin-darkened world? What comfort does our God offer Christians struggling *currently* with temptation, anxiety, and

despair? Isaiah tells us, "The glory of the LORD rises upon you."

God's brilliant, radiant grace has been revealed in Christ Jesus. His gracious, sovereign reign has been inaugurated. Though at times the darkness might appear to have the upper hand, our Savior has already won the victory. His glorious light is bursting into broken lives, illuminating sinful hearts, and guiding and protecting his chosen people. The glory of the Lord is not only our future hope, but our current reality.

**Lord, dispel the darkness from this world and the sin from my heart. Bring the people of this earth to the light of your glorious gospel. Amen.**

*Dr. Timothy Grundmeier serves Martin Luther College as a professor of history.*

GLORY

*I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.*

Ezekiel 1:27-28

The prophet Ezekiel was living in exile. That's important to know. The people of Israel had been taken from their homeland by the Babylonians, and they lived without the freedom and familiarity they once enjoyed. But, then again, exile is what they deserved. God had warned them. Continuous rebellion against his perfect will and disregard for his loving promises would mean destruction and captivity.

How difficult to live as a believer during the period of exile! How could God make

all things right again? He would allow the very place of his glory—the Temple in Jerusalem—to be demolished. Where was God in this bleak world? The Lord, the God of Israel, was mocked by the pagan peoples who captured them and despised by many of his very own people. Didn't God see this? Didn't God know? When . . . how would salvation come?

The exasperated believer still cries out, "O Lord, quickly come!" We long for peace and the comfort of our salvation. As we wait—Advent is our season of waiting—we need to learn the lessons from Ezekiel.

The scene is bright and brilliant. The "glory of the LORD" appeared to Ezekiel. "Son of man," the Lord said, "I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation. . . . Do not be afraid. . . . You are a watchman for the house of Israel. . . . Then they will know that I am the LORD." Ezekiel did prophesy.

A "performance prophet," he used words and actions to prophesy both judgment and hope to work repentance.

The Lord was—and remains—in control. The vision was awesome reassurance. Ezekiel's prophecy supplies plenty of evidence that the Lord is always true to his Word. It concludes with an extended vision of God's glory returning to the Temple. The Savior Jesus, foreshadowed by that Temple, rescued us on a cross just outside Jerusalem's walls. And the curtain of the Temple was torn in two. Finished.

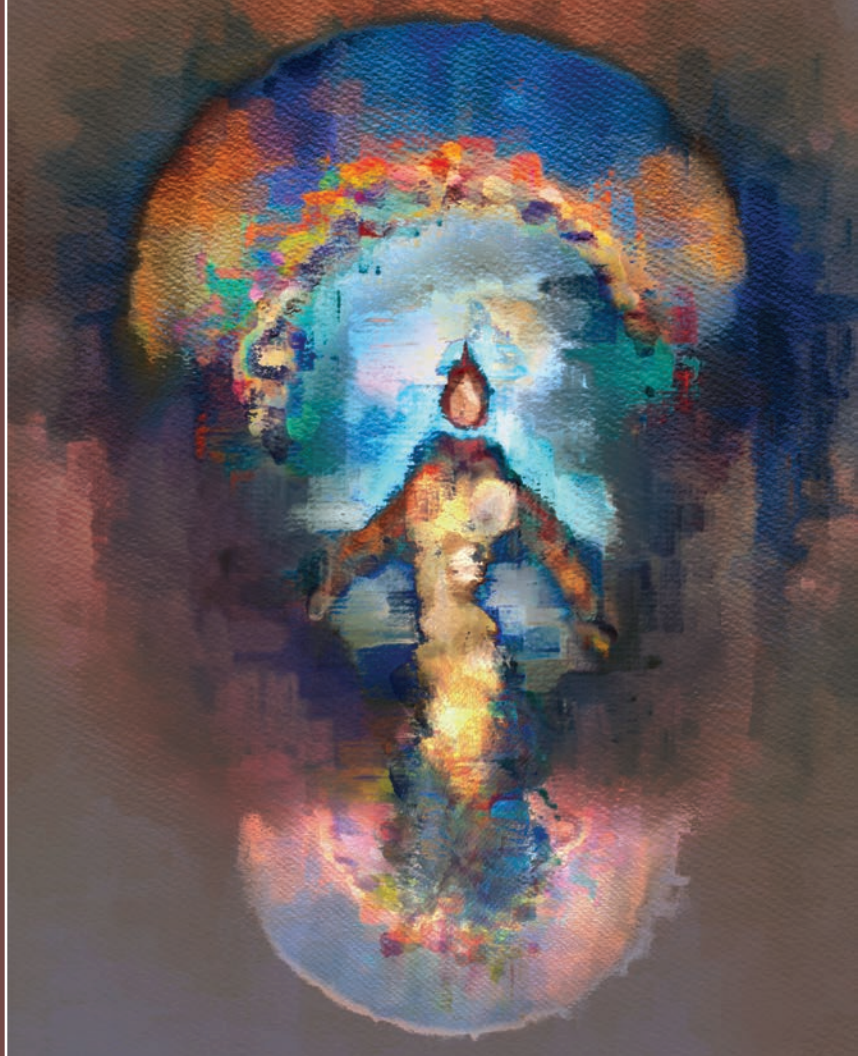
Our Savior lives! He will—mark Ezekiel's words—come again in glory! Rejoice!

**Keep me patient, Lord, as I wait for your salvation. Amen.**

*Rev. Paul Koelpin serves Martin Luther College as a professor of theology and history.*

## The Glory of the Son of Man

“He looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire . . .  
and brilliant light surrounded him.  
Like the appearance of a rainbow  
in the clouds on a rainy day,  
so was the radiance around him.  
This was the appearance of the likeness  
of the glory of the LORD.”



*In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.* Daniel 7:13-14

*What does the future hold?* God gives a glimpse of what the future holds through Daniel's vision.

His vision reveals a troubling future. Daniel saw the rise and fall of world powers, pictured as ferocious beasts (7:1-8). He witnessed someone putting himself in the place of Christ and oppressing Christ's believers (7:25). He viewed those persecuting or misleading God's people.

Jesus said that God's children can expect that kind of trouble. We can anticipate calamities in nature like earthquakes and disease. We can plan on social problems like war and poverty. We can expect attacks on the church like persecution and heresy. We can anticipate many falling away because of a godless world (*Matthew 24:1-24*).

But God allowed Daniel to see something other than coming trouble. He revealed to him the coming of Jesus, the King of glory. Unlike the earthly tyrants who devour nations around them, this King would rule like "a son of man" (7:13). He would share in our humanity and all its struggles yet do so without sin (*Hebrews 4:15*). He would "not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (*Mark 10:45*). Unlike earthly kings whose kingdoms rise and fall, this King would establish "an everlasting dominion" (7:14). He would protect his loyal subjects until they stand with him in glory.

*What does our future hold?* God does not share every detail. But he does tell us this: "[Our King's] dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away" (7:14). Our future rests securely in Christ the King's hands. Those hands he stretched out to save us from sin and death—those hands will welcome us into his eternal kingdom of glory and wipe away all tears. Those hands rule now and forever over all things for our good.

**Dear Lord,  
Your kingdom come, we humbly pray,  
that Christ may rule in us today  
and that your Holy Spirit bring  
still more to worship Christ as king.  
Break Satan's pow'r, defeat his rage;  
preserve your Church from age to age.**  
(CW 720:5)

*Rev. Brian Hennig serves Martin Luther College as a professor of theology and social sciences.*

# Knowledge of the LORD's Glory Will Fill the Earth

*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.*

Habakkuk 2:14,20

Injustice, destruction, violence, legal paralysis, the righteous hemmed in by the wicked. These words may conjure modern troubles, but they were uttered by the prophet Habakkuk 2600 years ago. In a dialogue between the Lord and Habakkuk, the prophet questioned why evil went unpunished among God's people in Judah. The Lord's answer was not what Habakkuk expected. God would use the nation of Babylon to punish the sins of his own people. Shocked, Habakkuk asked how the holy God could tolerate this wicked nation punishing believers. The Lord's answer: Babylon too would be punished for their wickedness, overthrown and disgraced, but his kingdom would remain, and the righteous would live by faith.

In his answer, the Lord offers woe to Babylon and all who conquer or oppress through power and bloodshed. God offers comfort as well. In his command of history, he has a greater plan for the world. He will triumph, not under an imperial banner or national flag, but through his Word as his church covers the earth. Although human kingdoms will fall and their works disappear, knowledge of the Lord's glory will last forever.

The Lord further encouraged Habakkuk, promising that Babylon's faith in idols would prove empty. Statues could not come to life. They gave no answers and offered no help. But God was alive and present, teaching, guiding, and protecting his people. Woe to those who deny God and trust in themselves, their personal strength, or their accumulated wealth. These will fade and fail, but God is eternal.

The glory of the Lord is displayed as he punishes the evils of this world in his time and on his terms. An even greater glory

was demonstrated as he sent his own Son to live a perfect life on our behalf. God upheld his justice, allowing our punishment to fall on Jesus. Jesus' resurrection confirmed the victory over evil, the conquest over sin, death, and the devil. Now, through faith, God grants his mercy to sinners.

Seek the Lord. Wait confidently on his promises and glorify his name. This Advent, know that the Lord is in his temple as you ponder the manger in silence.

**Dear Lord, we thank you for making us yours through faith. We stand in awe of your glory and grace. Use us to joyfully share the knowledge of your Word, all to the glory of your name. Amen.**

*Dr. Benjamin Clemons serves Martin Luther College as dean of Education and Staff Ministry and as director of Urban Ministry.*



GLORY

# We See the Glory of the Lord in God the Son

DECEMBER

17

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 1:14

The apostle John was not with Bethlehem's shepherds the night that an angel appeared and "the glory of the Lord shone around them." But he did see glory of the Lord. He saw it 30-some years later, when he witnessed the bright white light of Jesus' divine glory, revealed as John stood with Peter and James on a mountain. John saw the Son of God in all his transfigured brilliance talking with Moses and Elijah.

John saw also another side of Jesus' glory up close, as for three years he followed Jesus as his disciple. John watched him care and cure, tell and teach, and fulfill the promises God had made that a Savior, the Messiah, would come to redeem the world.

And John wrote down what he had seen. Today's verse comes from the beginning of that record. Near the end John commented that he could have written about many more "signs"—proofs by word and deed—that Jesus is the Savior, but the ones described were "written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (*John 20:31*).

John saw the Lord's glory: the creating, promising Word made flesh; God's Son born our Brother. Grace and truth—the content and the character of God's pledge to rescue—marked Jesus' every step, as the Messiah walked among us. John had walked with him.

As those steps ended, John saw that glory at its greatest height. John was there at the foot of Jesus' cross. John heard him shout—and was the gospel writer who recorded—"It is finished!" as God's Son

was about to die. Three days later John ran to see the Lord's glory in an empty tomb that proved forever that the Messiah had kept God's promise to save.

So again this year, let's go to Bethlehem. Let's tremble again with awe and joy. Let's hear the angel melodies thunder. Let's squint at a night sky gone noon bright. And let's remember, as it begins, how the story of Bethlehem's baby ends. Then let's say with John, "We have seen his glory . . . full of grace and truth."

**Savior Jesus, help me see your glory at your manger, before your cross, beside your empty tomb, and forever in heaven. Amen.**

*Rev. Daniel Balge serves Martin Luther College as a professor of Greek and German.*

# Jesus Revealed His Glory Through Miracles

*What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.* John 2:11

During Advent, we remind ourselves not to let shopping, decorations, and party planning distract us from our true focus. Advent and Christmas are about Jesus, the Savior revealed to us in God's Word.

But could God's Word itself become a distraction?

Let's recall the account of the wedding at Cana and some details that might catch our attention. By his attendance, does Jesus teach us to honor marriage? Yes, he does. Does he provide gallons of excellent wine for the occasion? Is wine a good gift from a generous God? Yes and yes. Does this story help us understand Mary, the mother of Jesus, without making too much of her? It does.

All of those lessons are valuable in their place, but they would become distractions if we would miss the main point of the story. To help us see the main point, John finishes the story with these words: "What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

The miraculous sign of changing water into wine revealed Jesus' glory. Important as it is that he is our human brother, that fact by itself would not enable him to save us. We need a brother who is also God's divine Son, so that his obedience, death, and new life have divine power to save us.

When Jesus does miracles, this revelation of his divine glory produces and strengthens the faith that connects us to him and his blessings. The disciples believed in Jesus, and so do we. Faith is essential to our Advent preparation. Faith finds and keeps the blessings of Christmas.

When we read or hear God's Word, we do not seek random bits of information or ideas for a do-it-yourself religion. We keep in mind what John wrote toward the end of his gospel: "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (*John 20:30,31*).

**Lord Jesus, let nothing distract us from seeing your glory with the eyes of faith, so that we may serve you now and see you face to face in the glory of eternal life. Amen.**

*Rev. Joel Fredrich serves Martin Luther College as a professor of Greek.*

GLORY



# We Reflect the Lord's Glory Through Faith in Christ

DECEMBER

1  
9

*And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.* 2 Corinthians 3:18

There will be a full moon this evening, December 19. If it's clear and you're living in an area covered with snow, tonight's full moon will allow you to see with great detail. The light of the moon reflected by the snow allows you to see the landscape, the forests, and even individual houses.

The light of the moon can never match the glory of the sun. But the light reflected by the moon is glorious nonetheless.

In 2 Corinthians Paul writes, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Like the moon reflecting the light of the sun, we believers also reflect the glory of the Son, Jesus Christ. Perhaps we have not physically viewed the Lord's glory as the shepherds did that first Christmas. But we've seen the glory of the Lord's great love. Through the words of Scripture, we've seen the glory of God's great love, which led Jesus to be born and to take the punishment for our sins upon himself.

You and I have seen the glory of the Lord. We know we are forgiven through Christ's blood!

We also, like the moon, have an opportunity to reflect that glory of God's love by the life we live.

As our relationship with Jesus grows deeper, the apostle Paul states that we are being transformed to better reflect God's glory by the life we live. We reflect the glory of the Son by our attitudes, by our words, and by the way we treat one another.

Like the moon reflecting the light of the sun, we'll never match the glory of God's love in God's Son, Jesus Christ. But like a full moon shining across a snowy landscape, we can reflect the glory of the Lord in the love we show one another.

**Dear Jesus, help me by my attitude, my words, and my actions to reflect that I have seen the glory of your love for me. You demonstrated that love when you came to be born, to suffer, to die in my place, and to rise again. Help me reflect the glory of your love in all I do and say! Amen.**

*Rev. Joel Thomford serves Martin Luther College as an admissions counselor.*

## We See the Glory of God in the Face of Christ

*For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.*  
2 Corinthians 4:6

Where do we look for light in our lives? We may look for light in the face of a child, but then the child shows us another face at 3 in the morning! We may look for light in the face of our work, but then our energy dwindles and the glory of productivity fades. We may look for light in the face of pleasure, but pleasure always ends.

Do you see the problem? We may look for light in many things, but often that glory is a fading glory. Sometimes we look for light by saying, “Look at my great life, look at my great works, look at my great abilities.” But what does the apostle Paul say? Very simply, he says, “Look at my Jesus.”

At creation, God spoke the words, “Let light shine out of darkness,” and this dark world was flooded with light. Two thousand years ago, God again spoke the words, “Let light shine out of darkness,” and he flooded this world with the light of his Son.

God’s glorious light is found in the face of Jesus, yes, even as an infant in a manger. Jesus’ face is the message that God thinks your life is more precious than his own. Jesus’ face is the message that the one who didn’t need to die *chose* to die because he loved you so much. Jesus’ face—the face that smiled to bless the little children, the face wet with tears at the death of his friend, the mouth that spoke the words, “It is finished,” all in love for you—this face is the face of God.

Just as God spoke, “Let light shine out of darkness” at creation and at Jesus’ birth, so there is a third time those words rang

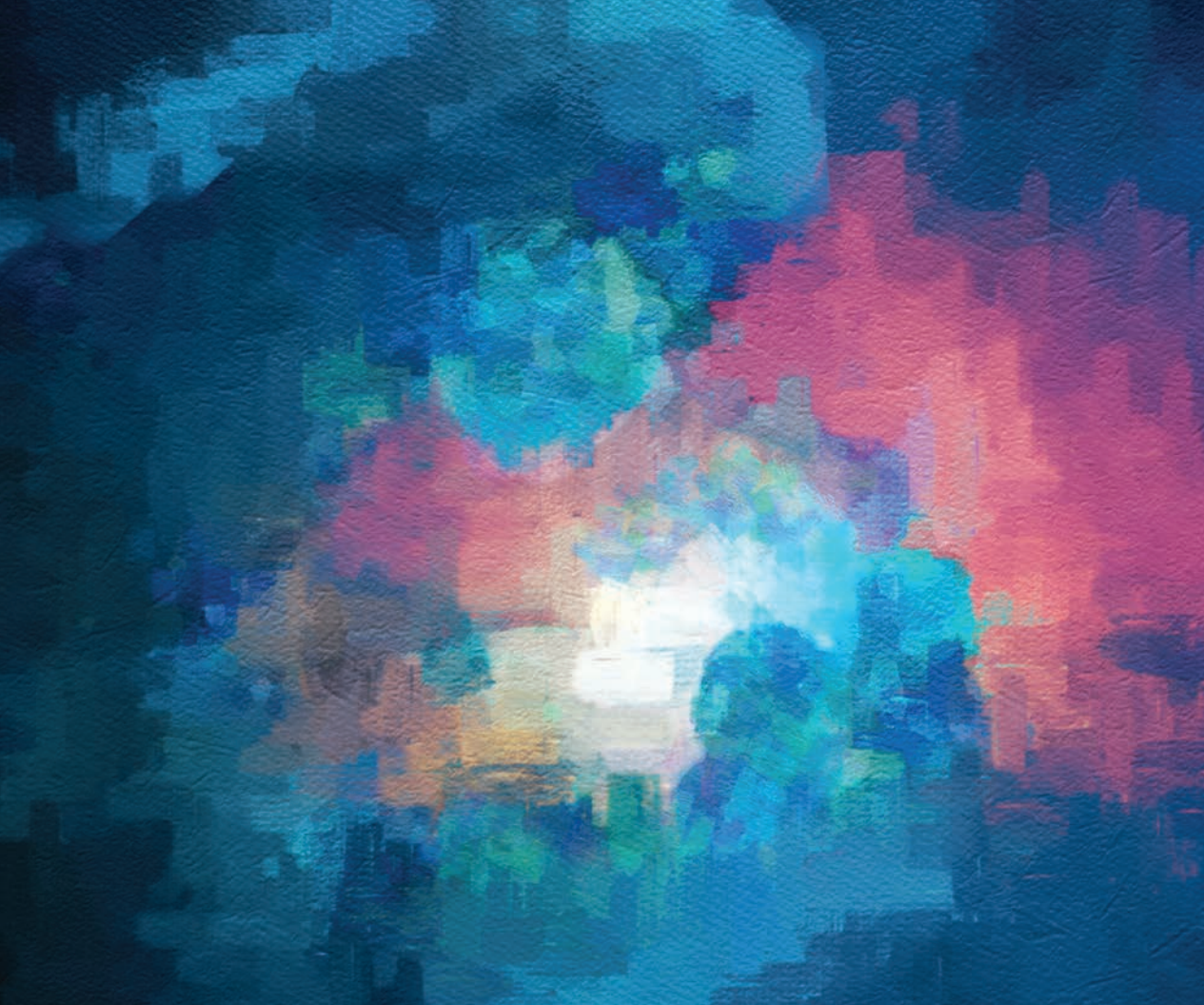
through eternity with no less impact. And he spoke them just to you. Do you remember God’s words? “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” With that, Jesus’ face smiled on you with eternity-shattering light. With that, he spoke the most powerful words to you: “I forgive you.” Now, we have light.

See God’s glory in the manger this week and live in that light!

**Dear Jesus, let your light shine in my heart as I see your glory in the manger this week. Amen.**

*Rev. David Scharf serves Martin Luther College as a professor of theology.*

GLORY



## Mary and Baby Jesus

“Who, being in  
very nature God . . .  
made himself  
nothing by taking  
the very nature of a  
servant, being made  
in human likeness.”

## Jesus Veiled His True Glory to Serve as Our Savior

*[Christ Jesus], who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.* Philippians 2:6-7

Six-year-old Lilly could not stop talking about Christmas. As her grandparents talked to her via Zoom, Lilly burst out, “I can’t wait for tomorrow. Grandma, you and Grandpa will be here. And we’re going to sing in church and have a birthday cake for Jesus.”

“And what do you think you’ll get for Christmas?” Grandma asked.

Lilly responded, “I don’t know, but I can’t wait for you to see what I gave you.”

“I can’t wait for you to see what I gave you.” Our Savior Jesus says the same thing to you this Christmas.

What did he give you? Paul wrote, “Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God . . . made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

We cannot even imagine the glory of heaven. Yet Jesus was the center of heaven’s glory, the eternal Son of God. In eternity, the Father approached the Son with a plan. “Son, the only way to save sinners is for you to leave this glory and become a human being. You have to shrink yourself into a woman’s womb and be born as a helpless child. As you grow up, you must keep your divine nature so that you can be the perfect substitute for sinners under the law. Yet you cannot make full use of your divine nature. And you must do the impossible: die for their sins.”

Such grace. Human parents helped their Omnipotent Son. Religious leaders taught the Omniscient One. He didn’t say, “Well,

they made this mess—they’ll have to clean it up.” He willingly traded in his crown for a cross.

This Christmas celebrate Jesus’ gracious gift to you. You could not know him without it. You could not conceive of such a gift—not just because sin corrupts our thinking, but because God’s grace in Christ is beyond human comprehension. But he is yours. And so are his gifts: forgiveness, new life, and eternal salvation. Today Jesus resides in the heavenly glory he left behind. And so will you.

**Lord Jesus, help us to fill this Christmas with thanks and praise to you for giving yourself to be our Savior. Amen.**

*Rev. Dr. John Boeder serves Martin Luther College as campus pastor and a professor of theology.*

GLORY

# The Fullness of God's Glory Is Found in Jesus Christ

DECEMBER

2  
2

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*  
Colossians 1:19-20

Looks can be deceiving. Take the manger in Bethlehem for example. When we look into it, all our physical eyes see is a tiny newborn baby. Helpless. Hungry. Tired. He's dressed in rags. His parents are peasants. His first visitors stand on the lowest rung of the economic ladder. It hardly looks like the kind of birth that should have been announced to the world by angels from heaven. But looks can be deceiving.

For when we look into the manger in Bethlehem through the words of Holy Scripture, what our eyes of Spirit-worked faith see is entirely different. We see the Christ Child. God's Anointed One. The Messiah. God's greatest glory. "For God

was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him." All of it. There in that manger lies God from God. Light from light. Very God from very God. This is the One by whom and for whom all things were created. The Eternal One who holds his entire creation together.

But why? Why in all the world would the divine, eternal, omnipotent Creator be lying in a filthy feedbox in a tiny, two-bit town? The answer is almost more astounding than the miracle of the incarnation itself. "For God was pleased . . . through him to reconcile to himself all things." Because the world couldn't come to him, because it wouldn't come to him, because in its sinful state, the world seethed with nothing but pure hatred for him, God came to the world. "To reconcile to himself all things."

In the person of Jesus Christ, God came to reconcile the world to himself "by making peace through his blood, shed

on the cross." Yes, even at Christmas we can't avoid it. Blood. Jesus' blood would be shed on a cross so that we can say, "Lord, let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation."

**O Savior, child of Mary,  
who felt our human woes,  
O Savior, King of glory,  
who conquered all our foes,  
bring us at last, we pray,  
to the bright courts of heaven  
and to the endless day. Amen.**  
(CW 360:4)

*Rev. James Danell serves Martin Luther College as dean of Preseminary Studies and a professor of German.*

## Through the Gospel We Share in Christ's Glory

*He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:14*

Have you ever imagined what you would do if you won the lottery? If you're anything like me, we justify the fantasy by telling ourselves, "Of course I'd share lots of it, especially with the church, non-profits, and the needy." Part of us knows that, if we become wealthy, we really ought to share the wealth. And we'll often praise rich people who do share the wealth.

Who's wealthier than God? He's the Lord of the universe, the owner of everything. And not only is he the richest person imaginable, he's also a God who shares his riches. Paul says God shares with us "the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*2 Thessalonians 2:14*).

What's included in the glory of Christ? Well, since we've been made children of

God the Father, we get the same glory God the Father gives his Son. Future glories include our eternal glorious inheritance and a state of glorious perfection. And we have glories right now. When Jesus was praying to his Father in Gethsemane, he spoke of a "glory you have given me" that "I have given to them [the disciples]" (*John 17:22*). The disciples had already received glory from God through faith, that is, the salvation that immediately becomes ours the moment we're brought from spiritual death to life.

But we've been given another glory that we often forget is glorious. On the eve of his passion and crucifixion, Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (*John 12:23*). The most glorious Jesus we know of is the Jesus of the cross, because hidden behind that sacrificial death is everything that made it possible for God to share so much with us.

Is it possible that, when Paul says we might share in the glory of Jesus, he also has in mind our own crosses as Christians? When we suffer for his name, aren't we sharing in the glory of Jesus our Redeemer? After all, what's more glorious than being given a heart like Christ's, a heart ready to serve rather than be served, a heart ready to share?

**Heavenly Father, thank you for forgiving my sins fully and clothing me in the glorious robes of Christ. Motivated by your grace, I pray you also help me bear my cross as the glorious calling it is, mirroring and pointing to the cross of Christ, the source of my eternal glory. Amen.**

*Rev. Luke Thompson serves Martin Luther College as a professor of theology.*

GLORY

# The Son Is the Radiance of God's Glory

DECEMBER

2  
4

*The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.* Hebrews 1:3

Who can resist a baby? Its smile captivates. Its warmth invites. You just want to hold it.

Simeon too wanted to hold a baby, but a very special baby. He trembled when he took that child in his arms. When he looked into the child's face, he confessed, "My eyes have seen your salvation" (*Luke 2:30*).

He saw because the Spirit opened his eyes. Stirred by that same Spirit, he recalled the ancient blessing: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace" (*Numbers 6:24-26*).

In a way Simeon had never dreamed of, the Lord had enlarged that blessing. In this child, the Lord had turned his face toward him and shined on him. What generations had waited for he had held and seen.

In this same child, the Lord has made his face shine on us. For we too have seen the salvation of the Lord. To see him is to see the face of a Father's love, a love so deep, so profound, that he sent his only Son to be one with us. He sent him so that, by his sacrifice on the cross, he might destroy sin and death. At his resurrection he triumphed over them. Sin and death have lost their power. Now he sits in glory and majesty at the right hand of his Father.

But for a short time during this season, we still see him as a child. Today he reaches out to you. Take him into your arms. Hold him close. Look into his face. Look into the face of a Father's love—even more, a Brother's love. Be warmed and comforted.

We often hear that Christmas is about family. It truly is. You belong to a family, all of whom love you dearly. Reserve a special place for the Christ Child. Make room for him in your heart. Then take heart, for you will never be alone.

**Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,  
prepare a bed soft, undefiled  
within my heart, made clean and new,  
a quiet chamber kept for you.**  
(*CW 331:13*)

*Rev. David Gosdeck served Northwestern College and Martin Luther College as a professor of theology and as librarian.*

# An Angel of the Lord

“An angel of the  
Lord appeared  
to them,  
and the glory of  
the Lord shone  
around them.”





*An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Luke 2:9-12*

Christmas is history’s center. It’s not just our dating system that centers in Christ’s birth. All history after Adam’s fall prepared for this day “when the time had fully come” (*Galatians 4:4*).

It’s not surprising then that Christmas brings another glimpse of the heavenly glory that has filled these devotions as glorious angels terrify sleepy shepherds.

But after those angels announce the great joy of the Savior and Messiah’s birth, what is stunning is what the shepherds would

find in Bethlehem. The sign they tell the shepherds to look for is not a shining figure filling Bethlehem with light and shaking the hills with his divine majesty.

The sign is amazing not for its majesty but its humility. What will they find? A baby. And not in shining heavenly attire but in the common diapers of the day. And not even in a house. His poor mother and stepfather couldn’t obtain normal shelter. The Messiah, the Lord, is resting in a feeding trough.

But don’t be fooled: there’s glory there in abundance. It’s the glory of the God who didn’t come to terrify and condemn us (though he had every right to do so), but to rescue us. It’s the glory of his divine majesty hidden to restore our created majesty lost.

The glory of Christmas doesn’t drive us to our knees in terror. It brings us to our knees in wonder and praise. Thank

God that you have seen the glory of that swaddled baby in a feeding trough!

**O Jesus Christ, your manger is my paradise at which I am reclining. For there, O Lord, we find the Word made flesh for us—your grace is brightly shining.**  
*Amen. (CW 342:1)*

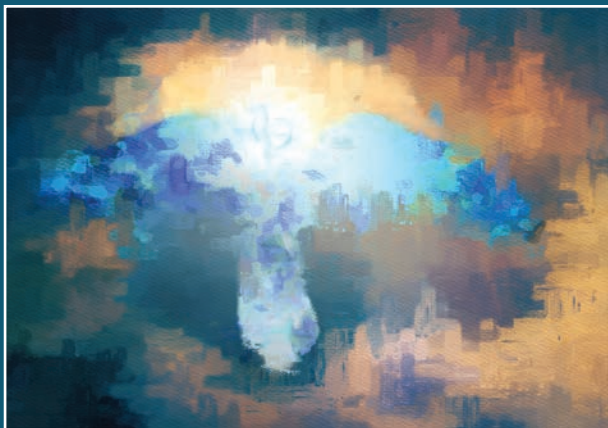
*Rev. Dr. Richard Gurgel serves Martin Luther College as president.*



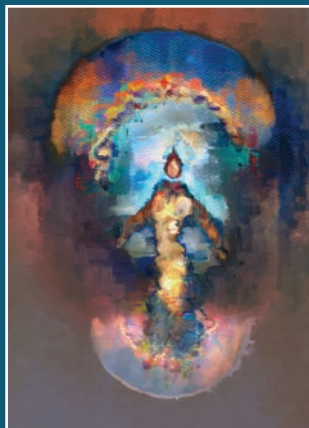
We Have Seen HIS  
GLORY

**A note on the art:** We are grateful to Megan (Czer) Schable for her beautiful art adorning our pages. Megan's impressionistic style and vibrant colors point in a striking way to the glory of God. Of course, they're not meant to portray, in every detail, what God's people actually saw in the glory-cloud or the Bethlehem sky. We simply can't know that. But perhaps they give us a hint. Perhaps they help us imagine the grandeur and transcendence of the glory of God.

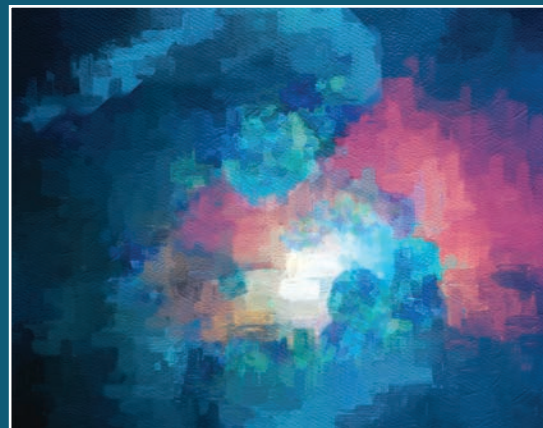
*Cover: "Glory in the Bethlehem Sky"*  
by Megan Schable



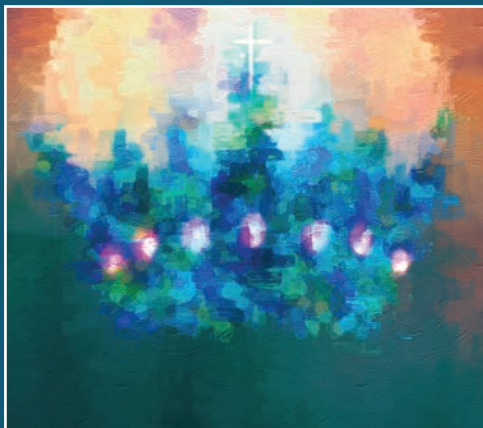
An Angel of the Lord



The Glory of the Son of Man



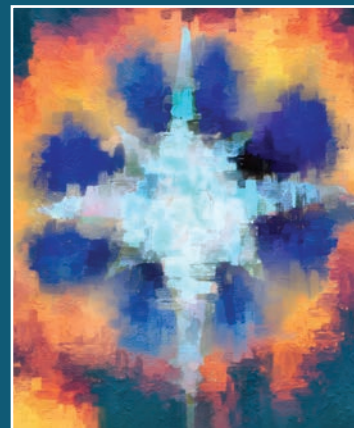
Mary and Baby Jesus



Christ, the King of Glory



The Glory-Cloud of the LORD



Glory in the Bethlehem Sky



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