

No Guts, No Glory  
First in a Lenten Series  
2 Cor. 4:3-6  
Feb. 14, 2021  
Pastor Jenothy Irvine

**Prayer** - by your Spirit Lord, open our spiritual eyes and bolster our vision of your glory. amen

**Intro:**

Welcome ladies and gentlemen to this week's episode of "No Guts, No Glory." The show where you decide who has the guts and who has the glory! Here's how it works, I show you a picture and you decide if it reveals guts or glory. One point for each correct answer.

Ready? Let's play!

\*music

Slide:

Photo 1



Now that's what I call guts!

Photo 2 - guts is the only thing holding them to the wall



Photo 3



The Glory of learning from those who are different

Photo 4



The glory of surrendering our own comfort for the benefit of others.

Photo 5



Guts

Photo 6



guts to speak up, ask questions and learn

Photo 7



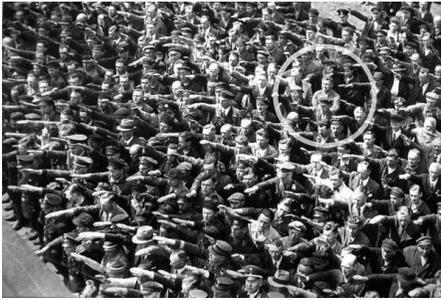
The glory to build embrace the other and build love

Photo 8



Guts

Photo 9



Guts

And finally, this photo 10



The glory of running the race with and for others.

How did you do? Thank you for playing.

Tune in next week when we ask, “Who’s listening to it anyway?”

**Message:**

Guts. Grit. Courage. Determination. Suffering.

Glory. Honor. Character. Legacy. Sacrifice.

In 1989, Matthew Broderick, Morgan Freeman and Denzel Washington starred in a film that was nominated for five academy awards and won three of them, including Best Supporting Actor for Washington. It tells the story of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, the second all African-American unit in

U.S. history, which began training in 1863 at Camp Meigs outside of Boston. The commander was a white officer, Robert Gould Shaw, about 23 or 24 years old.

When Union military authorities decided that Fort Wagner in South Carolina had to be captured, they sent in the 54th. Fort Wager was positioned on Morris Island to defend Charleston harbor, and the attack was a frontal assault along a narrow stretch of beach-front. They knew the casualties would be high - and they were. Colonel Shaw (played by Broderick) was killed, and the 54th lost about 40% of its men - either killed or missing in action and presumed dead. And they failed to capture Fort Wagner.

Yet, the heroism, courage, and sacrifice of these men inspired the North. President Lincoln commented on their bravery. African-Americans rushed to the recruiting office and more than 180,000 joined the army, with an additional 20,000 joining the navy.

Name of the movie? Glory.

These soldiers not only found glory, but also created a defining moment in black history, the Civil War, and the history of the United States.

Glory. We are fascinated by it. We are moved when we see it. We stand in awe of it.

So why is it when it comes to our faith, to the glory of God revealed in Jesus, and lived out in those who believe, that few of us have the guts to truly live it, and many fail to see it? The most glorious news one could share with someone

else, yet we don't have the guts to share it, or our guts only share it so far, within limits. The best news anyone could hope to receive - that they are loved beyond measure and their life has meaning and purpose yet they can't see past their circumstance, resentment, or regret; or past the judgement, criticism, and callus of believers.

Our eyes are wide open to the glory of an Olympic athlete getting a gold, the underdog winning the hard fought fight, an unknown poet taking the inauguration stage, or a former Colts quarterback making it to the Hall of Fame. We revel in such glory stories. Yet when it comes to the greatest glory story of all, we often treat it like another entre in the buffett line.

Today's text, a letter written by Paul to the church in Corinth, speaks of glory twice in four verses and challenges the church then and now to understand two things: 1) the concept of "no guts, no glory" and 2) the understanding that no matter what, there are times the glory of Jesus goes unseen to those whose eyes are focused elsewhere.

Read Text: 2 Cor. 4:3-6

There are two things going on here: a message to believers about how their lives are meant to be a lens through which others see the glory of God, AND a lesson to believers that there are people around them that cannot see such glory because they are looking elsewhere; distracted or focused on other things.

Let's start with the message that our lives are to be a lens through which others see the glory of God. When was the last time your life - what you do, where

you go, who you help, the way you treat people, where you spend your money, the words you speak, the projects you get involved in, the causes you support, and how you spend your time; was the lens through which someone saw the glory of God? The peace of Jesus? The presence of love? The attitude of humility? The grace of forgiveness?

When people look at you - your family, your lifestyle, your choices, your behavior, do they see glory? When people hear you - your opinions, ideas, conversations, do they hear glory?

It is so easy to go about life and forget why we are here - forget that God created us for good. Easy to fall into habits, patterns, and ways of living that get us by and yet do not reflect glory. We become entrenched in the day in, day out, routine of it all; going to school, getting a job, earning a paycheck, paying the bills, raising the kids, running the kids, cleaning the house, attending meetings, changing the oil, getting a loan, working on a project, taking out the trash, feeding the pets, checking the mail, and on and on it goes until perhaps we lose sight of the glory we have been given and are to be shining and sharing with others.

Paul is telling the believers then and now, that yes it gets hard, yes it gets uncomfortable, yes it can be mundane, yes there are no guarantees you won't get hurt or suffer, it's risky, and yes it takes guts AND we don't give up, we don't get too comfortable, we don't hide from the hard stuff, we don't silence or cancel one another out, and we don't go blind to the glory-filled things God is doing.

I think even for those of us who believe in Jesus, it is easy to take for granted that Jesus is walking beside us day to day, beckoning us to have the guts

to show his glory to the world even if and especially when that glory comes through suffering.

I'm not so sure it is all about God's glory in the good times, when we feel safe, secure, and grounded. I think it is more about God's glory in the hard times, when we feel scared, wounded, or upended; when it's risky, uncertain, or new.

One pastor I read when preparing this sermon said that the glory of Jesus was not found in his life, but in his death; the suffering he endured to bring about life for others is the glory of God revealed in him. It is hard for us to see suffering as a positive thing - its often painful; we often feel alone or abandoned, there is rarely an answer to the why questions, and the longer it goes on, it takes a toll emotionally, physically mentally, and spiritually.

It has been said that suffering and joy are two sides of the same coin. I wonder if that is like saying, "no guts, no glory."

If we do not recognize that God works in suffering we do not understand glory. If we are not willing to endure suffering in whatever form it comes and do not do so with courage, grit, and determination we may fail to see the glory on the other side. If we are not willing to take risks, great or small, we may lose the opportunity to experience and reveal how God's glory works. If we do not put in the heart work, and understand sacrifice as Jesus taught we may never be the lens through which others see such glory.

Hear me church, I know it is not easy. I know there are days you want to quit or feel like you just can't do it anymore. That is when God's glory can come through.

It takes guts to face uncertainty - say like while living through a pandemic. wondering, questioning, seeking.

It takes guts to live your authentic life in a world that tells you you can't.

It takes guts to endure pain and brokenness;

It takes guts to be patient.

It takes guts to break down barriers.

It takes guts to speak truth in love.

It takes guts to follow Jesus and mean it.

The second part of Paul's message focuses on the idea that some people do not see the glory of God because they are distracted or looking the other way.

There is much in our world today that keeps people from seeing the glory of God:

Pride - I don't need God, I am in control of my own destiny.

Pain - I don't feel God with me. I can't see evidence of God in the mess of my life. God must be gone, silent.

Anger - Why God?! Why me, why now, why her, why them? Why?

Busy-ness - I don't have time, what I do, where I go, who I am with are far more important.

Division and isolation - us and them, me against the world.

Fear - fear of fully embracing the claims of Jesus and living into his teachings; fear of, failure, ridicule; fear of being wrong, letting go of control.

Commentators agree that Paul was talking about the ways the evil one, the devil, tries to keep us from seeing God in our midst. It is the way evil keeps us veiled from the truth of God's love and grace revealed and given through Jesus - by keeping us focused on other things.

I can't help but wonder if they are also the ways that people use to avoid facing the truth of self or circumstance as well. What I mean is, could it be that we use distraction, anger, fear, arrogance, success, busyness, etc. To keep ourselves from looking at our own struggles, failures, and disappointments? To keep ourselves from addressing the difficult issues, sensitive topics, or painful truth? Because if we did look, we would have to see our flaws, admit we are not o.k., not as strong as we thought, that we can't do "it" alone, or that we were wrong? And by doing that we are exposed. In that moment, when we are vulnerable, is the moment God's glory means the most; can teach us the most, reveal the most, and transform the most.

Could it also be that Paul is not just talking about those outside the church, but perhaps some inside the church as well? Could there be believers who cannot see the glory of God because they are too caught up in being right, staying ahead of the game, planning for the next big thing, or worrying about things they cannot control? Could it be there are those in the church who do not see the glory of God because they become distracted by the very rules, traditions, protocol, and standards, they pledged to believe? I am not saying those things in and of themselves are bad, but can they hide the glory of God when that is all we look at or listen to?

For me, this is a both / and message of Paul. I believe he is telling the church and by that I mean those who follow Jesus, that their lives as a community - a body of believers (not just individuals) is meant to show the glory of God - our purpose is to live life together, in such a way that the glory of God shines through, even when its hard and even when people may not see what we are trying to do. We press on with guts and prayer trusting that God's glory, not ours, will prevail and that people will come to have eyes to see, including the eyes of some within the church.

The glory of God appears in a variety of ways - in expected and unexpected places. It takes guts to live a life that reveals such glory - it takes guts to see such glory. I pray dear church, we are up for both.

Amen