

"DREAMS OF GLORY"

A Sermon By

Philip A. C. Clarke

Park Avenue United Methodist Church  
106 East 86th Street  
New York, New York 10028  
May 24, 1998

## "DREAMS OF GLORY"

### INTRODUCTION

A teenage boy of Italian descent once wrote in his diary,

"I wanted more than mere fortune. I wanted fame. I wanted love. I wanted my name to ring around the world. I shall never go home until I can go home somebody!"

And one day he did go home "somebody"....but not where it counted the most. At the age of 18, this young Italian immigrated to America and changed his name. At first he worked as a gardener and cabaret dancer before heading to Hollywood. After several years as a "bit player", he hit it big in 1921 and went on to star in such films as The Sheik. And billed as the "World's Greatest Lover", this young Italian immigrant was hounded by women who tore his clothes and even followed him to his bedroom. Lift a hand if you know who it is of whom I speak....and if you say Francis Albert Sinatra - you're wrong. It was....Rudolph Valentino.

He returned to Italy in 1923 and sadly discovered that he was still a "nobody" at home and this is what he wrote in his diary,

"No one paid any attention to me. There were hundreds of Valentinos in Italy far more handsome than I can ever hope to be. In America, my type stands out somewhat...but in my own country, I am simply one of many. Ten years from now I may be popular in Italy, but now they don't know me."

Valentino was never given the homecoming of his dreams. For three years later, at the young age of 31, he died of peritonitis. But 50,000 women tried to attend his funeral and mourners still go out to visit his grave. His funeral was here in the city. Frank E. Campbell's handled it and from that funeral, they got their reputation as Number One in their field...in their profession.

### TRANSITION

Have you ever had the dream of being famous...like Rudolph Valentino or like Frank Sinatra. I've known people who would trade everything to be famous...to achieve that kind of notoriety. There are those who would sell their souls to gain fame and to see their names in the Broadway lights. And it's somewhat...understandable. Who was it who said that "glory may be fleeting, but obscurity is forever.." I know of clergy who love to see their name in print, but I've always been content with the admonition,

"That the only time you should see your name in print is on the day you're born...again on the day you get married, and then, a third time...on the day you die."

Do you desire fame and glory? Don't apologize for craving such for it may drive you to accomplish things you would never accomplish otherwise. I can't help you with the fame part, but I can tell you this...that you and I are supposed to have glory. Listen to the words of Jesus. He is praying his famous prayer for the church and has this to say:

"I have given them the 'glory' that You gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and You in Me....."

THE GLORY JESUS SPOKE OF IS DIFFERENT

Now, obviously..this "glory" that Jesus was referring to was different from what you and I think of when we think of glory and it's important for us to see that. Jesus, referring to His followers, says, "I have given them the glory". Question: do you have yours. As followers of Jesus, do you have "the glory?"

Most of us will never know the world's glory. Chances are that no one here will ever be featured on Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous, but then I could be wrong. If there was a program called, Lifestyles of the Obscure and Innocuous, we'd have a chance to be written up.

But most of us are like Tony Campolo. Tony Campolo says that some years ago when his kids were in their pre-teen years, he took them with him on a speaking engagement. When they drove into the parking lot adjacent to the auditorium where, in just a few minutes, he was to speak, there were only three cars parked there.

"Dad!" exclaimed his son, Bart, who at this point of his life was somewhat impressed with Tony's role as a public speaker.

"Dad...nobody's come to hear you...and you're so famous!"  
"Come on, Bart....." responded his sister, Lisa, who Tony says has always been in the realist in the family. "If Dad is so famous....where are all the people?" "Knock it off, Lisa" answered Bart back. "It's pretty tough being famous when nobody knows who you are".

I think that's where most of us are....yes, it's tough, pretty tough being famous when nobody knows who you are...

You know, my dear friend, Giles Robinson, a former member and Lay Leader here, who died about six weeks ago down in Kentucky once confided to me that, his dream was to be so famous as an actor - entertainer....

"That as he walked down Broadway and around this city that people would stop and say....'there's Giles Robinson'... 'there's Giles Robinson....' and then he would be forced to put on his dark glasses...sun glasses...so that he could be anonymous...."

Somehow those two things never added up properly....his dream of glory and his desire to remain anonymous. Jesus never promised us that everybody would know our name. He just promised us a bit of glory, but what Jesus called glory was not what the world calls glory and maybe...that's just as well! Is the world "over-looking you?" Maybe, you're fortunate.

Terry Bradshaw, the former all-star quarterback of the Steelers, often spoke of what it was like being a hero one day and a heel the next day. On one day, the quarterback might be highly favored with the fans and media...the man of the hour. The next week, he could swiftly fall from glory and favor and fame. He once described the girl who ran the cash register at the parking garage where he kept his car. Sometimes she would greet him with a big smile and cheery greeting. If the game had not gone well that week, however, or the Steelers lost, she greeted him with a sneer.

"This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed His GLORY, and His disciples put their faith in Him...."

And we can, too. Glory is ascribed to God, but then glory is ascribed to Jesus. Why? Because as Paul later wrote, "God was in Christ....." God was in Christ, at work...redeeming, restoring, reclaiming....let us never forget that!

WHERE GOD IS, THERE IS GLORY

Can we have His glory? Yes, indeed, we can. How? By remembering this that where God is, there is glory. Glory, first, is ascribed to God. And then, secondly, always remember that anyplace God dwells, there is glory. God dwells in the heavens (said the Psalmist), and so they shine with God's glory. And God dwells in the temple, so the temple shines with God's glory. The Psalmist sings,

"I love the house where you live, O Lord....the place where your glory dwells" And, if God dwells within us, then our lives will shine with God's glory. And...

And St. Paul wrote,

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...who is in you...whom you have received from God?"

Now, follow carefully. When the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives, our bodies then house the living God and if God dwells in your life, then you have "the glory". You see....I think we often make the mistake of assuming that glory comes from something we do....that glory is something we accomplish. And that may be true in terms of the way the world regards glory, but what God calls glory is simply the "opening of ourselves" to God's indwelling presence. And may that always be your dream of glory.

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the world's great religious figures of this century. As you know, Gandhi never formally became a Christian, but the "imprint" of Christ on his life was real, unmistakable, profound.

Gandhi gained such immense prestige throughout India that many there were who regarded him as the "incarnation" of God. This "meaningless deification", as he called it, bothered him, but there was little that he could do about it. Generally those who deified Gandhi were uneducated, but not always...for instance,

One ~~day~~ ~~the~~ train that Gandhi was on came to a sudden stop. A passenger had pulled the emergency cord when he saw a lawyer fall headfirst from the train. The lawyer quickly somehow stumbled to his feet but maintained his balance and remarkably was not hurt. It appeared to be a case of "good luck" that he was not hurt....but the lawyer said "no"...."It wasn't luck". He told Gandhi that he had escaped injury because Gandhi was riding on the same train as the great Mahatma which made Gandhi laugh and remark, "Then you shouldn't have fallen at all."

Mahatma Gandhi knew better than to be taken in by such idle superstitions, but Gandhi knew something else and that something else was later revealed in a little story in the Smithsonian magazine. Let me share it with you.

Every January, in the city of Delhi, India honors its president and its government leaders with a ceremony that's called Beating Retreat. The centerpiece of this ceremony is an impressive marching display by the members of the military. The marching is highly stylized and performed to the accompaniment of instruments, especially drums. However, everyone waits in eager anticipation for the finale of the Beating Retreat. Instead of a traditional Indian song, or a military tune, the finale of the Beating Retreat is a Christian hymn. In tribute to Gandhi, the musicians play his favorite hymn, "Abide With Me". Although most of the spectators, participants and honorees in the ceremony are Hindu, Buddhist or Sikh, the climax to the Beating Retreat is this sacred hymn and always played with respectful fervor. Gandhi, you see, knew that the glory did not belong with him, but rather with God and that is why he could sing,

"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide.  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

CLOSING Remember then, as you go on from here....that real glory is not something we can accomplish. It is a gift and all we can do is open our hearts to it and receive it. This needs to be emphasized time and again....it's a simple truth. For within the Christian faith is found everything you need to feed your hungry, restless soul. There is a shining presence that can be yours by opening your heart to God who has come to us in Christ.

Ruth Graham Bell, wife of evangelist, Billy Graham, shares this one with us. She tells about riding along a North Carolina road with her children and noticing a bulge in the pavement. The road apparently was new and the pavement had that fresh look to it...unbroken...but why the bulge. What, she and the children wondered, had the strength to push its way up and through ten inches of road binding and asphalt? Each day for several weeks, the little mound rose noticeably and the children all had their ideas of what was causing it.

"It's an oak tree" said one. "No...no, it's a locust" said another. "No, dummy...it's a walnut" said still another. Ruth heard little Bunny, the youngest exclaim, "I think it's a morning glory...and that's the GLORY coming up...."

My prayer....a most fervent prayer...is that you feel the glory of God swelling up in your life this day...this hour....and remember that glory is a quality ascribed in the Scriptures to God. Remember, too, that glory abides wherever God abides. I trust He abides in your life, in a very real way, and that you carry within yourself His dreams of glory....and that you share them with others that they, too, may feel the glory of God in their lives as well!

PRAYER O God, may we be sensitive to Your nearness and to Your presence in these moments. To you be the glory....for great things You have done....so loved this world and given us Your Son...who yielded His life an atonement for sin, and opened the life-gate that all may go in. To You be the glory - now and always. Amen.

"DREAMS OF GLORY"

A Sermon By

Philip A. C. Clarke

Park Avenue United Methodist Church  
106 East 86th Street  
New York, New York 10028  
May 24, 1998

## "DREAMS OF GLORY"

### INTRODUCTION

A teenage boy of Italian descent once wrote in his diary,

"I wanted more than mere fortune. I wanted fame. I wanted love. I wanted my name to ring around the world. I shall never go home until I can go home somebody!"

And one day he did go home "somebody"....but not where it counted the most. At the age of 18, this young Italian immigrated to America and changed his name. At first he worked as a gardener and cabaret dancer before heading to Hollywood. After several years as a "bit player", he hit it big in 1921 and went on to star in such films as The Sheik. And billed as the "World's Greatest Lover", this young Italian immigrant was hounded by women who tore his clothes and even followed him to his bedroom. Lift a hand if you know who it is of whom I speak....and if you say Francis Albert Sinatra - you're wrong. It was....Rudolph Valentino.

He returned to Italy in 1923 and sadly discovered that he was still a "nobody" at home and this is what he wrote in his diary,

"No one paid any attention to me. There were hundreds of Valentinos in Italy far more handsome than I can ever hope to be. In America, my type stands out somewhat...but in my own country, I am simply one of many. Ten years from now I may be popular in Italy, but now they don't know me."

Valentino was never given the homecoming of his dreams. For three years later, at the young age of 31, he died of peritonitis. But 50,000 women tried to attend his funeral and mourners still go out to visit his grave. His funeral was here in the city. Frank E. Campbell's handled it and from that funeral, they got their reputation as Number One in their field.

### TRANSITION

Have you ever had the dream of being famous...like Rudolph Valentino or like Frank Sinatra. I've known people who would trade everything to be famous...to achieve that kind of notoriety. There are those who would sell their souls to gain fame and to see their names in the Broadway lights. And it's somewhat...understandable. Who was it who said that "glory may be fleeting, but obscurity is forever.." I know of clergy who love to see their name in print, but I've always been content with the admonition,

"That the only time you should see your name in print is on the day you're born...again on the day you get married, and then, a third time...on the day you die."

Do you desire fame and glory? Don't apologize for craving such for it may drive you to accomplish things you would never accomplish otherwise. I can't help you with the fame part, but I can tell you this...that you and I are supposed to have glory. Listen to the words of Jesus. He is praying his famous prayer for the church and has this to say:

"I have given them the 'glory' that You gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and You in Me....."

THE GLORY JESUS SPOKE OF IS DIFFERENT

Now, obviously..this "glory" that Jesus was referring to was different from what you and I think of when we think of glory and it's important for us to see that. Jesus, referring to His followers, says, "I have given them the glory". Question: do you have yours. As followers of Jesus, do you have "the glory?"

Most of us will never know the world's glory. Chances are that no one here will ever be featured on Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous, but then I could be wrong. If there was a program called, Lifestyles of the Obscure and Innocuous, we'd have a change to be written up.

But most of us are like Tony Campolo. Tony Campolo says that some years ago when his kids were in their pre-teen years, he took them with him on a speaking engagement. When they drove into the parking lot adjacent to the auditorium where, in just a few minutes, he was to speak, there were only three cars parked there.

"Dad!" exclaimed his son, Bart, who at this point of his life was somewhat impressed with Tony's role as a public speaker.

"Dad...nobody's come to hear you...and you're so famous!"  
"Come on, Bart....." responded his sister, Lisa, who Tony says has always been in the realist in the family. "If Dad is so famous....where are all the people?" "Knock it off, Lisa" answered Bart back. "It's pretty tough being famous when nobody knows who you are".

I think that's where most of us are....yes, it's tough, pretty tough being famous when nobody knows who you are...

You know, my dear friend, Giles Robinson, a former member and Lay Leader here, who died about six weeks ago down in Kentucky once confided to me that, his dream was to be so famous as an actor - entertainer....

"That as he walked down Broadway and around this city that people would stop and say....'there's Giles Robinson'... 'there's Giles Robinson....' and then he would be forced to put on his dark glasses...sun glasses...so that he could be anonymous...."

Somehow those two things never added up properly....his dream of glory and his desire to remain anonymous. Jesus never promised us that everybody would know our name. He just promised us a bit of glory, but what Jesus called glory was not what the world calls glory and maybe...that's just as well! Is the world "over-looking you?" Maybe, you're fortunate.

Terry Bradshaw, the former all-star quarterback of the Steelers, often spoke of what it was like being a hero one day and a heel the next day. On one day, the quarterback might be highly favored with the fans and media...the man of the hour. The next week, he could swiftly fall from glory and favor and fame. He once described the girl who ran the cash register at the parking garage where he kept his car. Sometimes she would greet him with a big smile and cheery greeting. If the game had not gone well that week, however, or the Steelers lost, she greeted him with a sneer.

He tells of the time he was pulling out of a local gas station and two teenagers stopped him and excitedly knocked on his car window. He rolled down the window, thinking that the two wanted his autograph. Without warning, they proceeded to spit in his face. NOW...what the world calls glory is not what Jesus called glory. Question: what kind of glory are you seeking?

BIBLICALLY....GLORY IS A QUALITY GIVEN TO GOD

Biblically, glory is a quality ascribed almost

exclusively to God. Those magnificent passages back there in the Old Testament come to mind....particularly those in the book of Psalms.

"The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the world of His hands. Day after day, they pour forth speech; night after night, they display knowledge"  
(Psalm 19)

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates. Be lifted up ye ancient doors, that the King of GLORY may come in. Who is this King of GLORY? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in Battle."  
(Psalm 24)

"I love the house where you live, O Lord, the place where Your glory dwells"  
(Psalm 26: 8)

You see...most of the time when we read in the Bible about glory, it is something that people have ascribed to God and it's true in our hymns as well.

Group magazine did a survey among Junior High teenagers in youth groups across the country. "Describe the God you believe in" they were asked and hear some of the things they said.

"He'll always be there when you don't think He is...He's not a man or a woman...He's a spirit...a light that's everlasting. Strong...powerful...loving...caring...forgiving...mysterious...the God who loves us no matter what we do - the one, true God....awesome. God's a 100% guarantee of a problem free life.....(don't you wish)...." And others said things like, 'I believe in the God that sent His only Son to die on a cross....He loves all people....even me...kind, just and merciful and stern....fun, and has a sense of humor. He wants me to obey Him."

Those Junior High kids have a pretty good grasp on who God is and certainly God is all those things and many more - and all are "wrapped up" in God's glory.

And, of course, Jesus shared in God's glory. In fact, the prologue to John's Gospel puts it this way:

"The WORD became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen His GLORY, the GLORY of the One and Only...who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14)

And after the wedding where Jesus turned the water into wine, John is led to write:

"This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed His GLORY, and His disciples put their faith in Him...."

And we can, too. Glory is ascribed to God, but then glory is ascribed to Jesus. Why? Because as Paul later wrote, "God was in Christ....." God was in Christ, at work...redeeming, restoring, reclaiming.

WHERE GOD IS, THERE IS GLORY

Can we have His glory. Yes, indeed, we can. How? By remembering this that where God is, there is glory. Glory, first, is ascribed to God. And then, secondly, always remember that anyplace God dwells, there is glory. God dwells in the heavens (said the Psalmist), and so they shine with God's glory. And God dwells in the temple, so the temple shines with God's glory. The Psalmist sings,

"I love the house where you live, O Lord...the place where your glory dwells" And, if God dwells within us, then our lives will shine with God's glory.

And St. Paul wrote,

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...who is in you...whom you have received from God?"

Now, follow carefully. When the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives, our bodies then house the living God and if God dwells in your life, then you have "the glory". You see....I think we often make the mistake of assuming that glory comes from something we do....that glory is something we accomplish. And that may be true in terms of the way the world regards glory, but what God calls glory is simply the "opening of ourselves" to God's indwelling presence. And may that always be your dream of glory.

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the world's great religious figures of this century. As you know, Gandhi never formally became a Christian, but the "imprint" of Christ on his life was real, unmistakable, profound.

Gandhi gained such immense prestige throughout India that many there were who regarded him as the "incarnation" of God. This "meaningless deification", as he called it, bothered him, but there was little that he could do about it. Generally those who deified Gandhi were uneducated, but not always.

One day train that Gandhi was on came to a sudden stop. A passenger had pulled the emergency cord when he saw a lawyer fall headfirst from the train. The lawyer quickled somehow stumbled to his feet but maintained his balance and remarkably was not hurt. It appeared to be a case of "good luck" that he was not hurt....but the lawyer said "no"...."It wasn't luck". He told Gandhi that he had escaped injury because Gandhi was riding on the same train as the great Mahatma which made Gandhi laugh and remark, "Then you shouldn't have fallen at all."

Mahatma Gandhi knew better than to be taken in by such idle superstitions, but Gandhi knew something else and that something else was later revealed in a little story in the Smithsonian magazine. Let me share it with you.

Every January, in the city of Delhi, India honors its president and its government leaders with a ceremony that's called Beating Retreat. The centerpiece of this ceremony is an impressive marching display by the members of the military. The marching is highly stylized and performed to the accompaniment of instruments, especially drums. However, everyone waits in eager anticipation for the finale of the Beating Retreat. Instead of a traditional Indian song, or a military tune, the finale of the Beating Retreat is a Christian hymn. In tribute to Gandhi, the musicians play his favorite hymn, "Abide With Me". Although most of the spectators, participants and honorees in the ceremony are Hindu, Buddhist or Sikh, the climax to the Beating Retreat is this sacred hymn and always played with respectful fervor. Gandhi, you see, knew that the glory did not belong with him, but rather with God and that is why he could sing,

"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide.  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

CLOSING Remember then, as you go on from here....that real glory is not something we can accomplish. It is a gift and all we can do is open our hearts to it and receive it. This needs to be emphasized time and again....it's a simple truth. For within the Christian faith is found everything you need to feed your hungry, restless soul. There is a shining presence that can be yours by opening your heart to God who has come to us in Christ.

Ruth Graham Bell, wife of evangelist, Billy Graham, shares this one with us. She tells about riding along a North Carolina road with her children and noticing a bulge in the pavement. The road apparently was new and the pavement had that fresh look to it...unbroken...but why the bulge. What, she and the children wondered, had the strength to push its way up and through ten inches of road binding and asphalt? Each day for several weeks, the little mound rose noticeably and the children all had their ideas of what was causing it.

"It's an oak tree" said one. "No...no, it's a locust" said another. "No, dummy...it's a walnut" said still another. Ruth heard little Bunny, the youngest exclaim, "I think it's a morning glory...and that's the GLORY coming up...."

My prayer....a most fervent prayer...is that you feel the glory of God swelling up in your life this day...this hour....and remember that glory is a quality ascribed in the Scriptures to God. Remember, too, that glory abides wherever God abides. I trust He abides in your life, in a very real way, and that you carry within yourself...."dreams of glory"....and that you share them with others that they, too, may feel the glory of God in their lives as well!

PRAYER O God, may we be sensitive to Your nearness and to Your presence in these moments. To You be the glory....for great things You have done....so loved this world and given us Your Son...who yielded His life an atonement for sin, and opened the life-gate that all may go in. To You be the glory - now and always. Amen.