

Christ Crucified

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[0:00] I think these last two lines that we were singing are a very good stepping stone into the theme for the service, this evening theme for the sermon. The sovereign Lord defeats the grave, he has the power from death to save. And our theme this evening is the glory of Jesus Christ. And as we saw this morning, there's no greater revelation, there's no greater, at one level there's no greater expression of his glory than on the cross at the crucifixion.

But if you look at Luke chapter 21 and the very end of the section we read together, verse 27, we're told these words, at that time they will, this is Jesus speaking, at that time they will see the Son of Man, he's prophesying about himself. They will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now here Jesus is near the end of his ministry and he is not revealing himself so much as a king at this moment, or even as a priest, but he is revealing himself as a prophet. And he is speaking about, well he's speaking about two things really, he's speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem, which is the first section that we read together right up to verse 25. And then he talks about the time when all the Gentiles are brought into the kingdom of God, when everyone who is to believe has believed and the end of time is to come. And at that point he says the Son of Man will be seen and he will be seen coming in the clouds with power and great glory. And I want to speak this evening for a little while about the glory of Jesus Christ.

I don't think we speak about it very much and I think we should speak about it more. I think we need to think about the glory of Jesus a little bit more. It's difficult for us because we are finite and He is infinite and we have a small capacity. Nobody here will listen for the whole half hour because we don't have that capacity to do so. Is that right? The charge is there. Everyone's backs have gone up and you're all sort of listening much more intently already. But the reality is your mind's wonder, don't they, in different ways. We have small capacity and it's very difficult because we're still sinners. It's difficult for us to see beyond ourselves a lot of the time and we're content with a small faith and a little Christ and we're also content with sometimes, maybe not even deliberately, but sometimes just giving our glory, or the glory, to someone or something else. What does it mean, the glory of God or the glory of Jesus? Or what does glory mean?

Because it's kind of difficult to explain. I think we probably all know somewhere along the line what it means. But it's quite difficult in words to explain what it means. But it really speaks about the worthiness of something or somebody, the honour that is due to them.

That's really what glory means. It's something that reveals their weightiness, their value. Now we ascribe glory all the time to people. To people we venerate, people we love, people we regard as important. Anything or anyone that we put before Jesus in our lives, and it's usually, if we're honest, it's usually ourselves, that's who we are giving the glory to. That's who we are spending time thinking about. That is who we honour in our lives.

[4:19] We very often reflect the amount of honour we give to someone by the time we give them or by the respect we hold them in. And what the Bible makes clear is that God ultimately is the only one worthy of our worship. He's the only one that you could all kneel down before tonight. And in many ways we should kneel down before Him tonight. He's the only one that we could lie prostrate over on the ground in front of. Because He's worthy of that, because He's glorious and He is worthy and because He is God. And we remind ourselves of that this evening for a little while because it's difficult to maintain our walk with Christ if He is inglorious to us, if He is not worthy of worship, if He is someone who is less than honourable. So I want to look at it in a couple of ways. First of all, recognising that in the Gospels the glory of Jesus is hidden, we don't see it very clearly, but that it spills out at various places in the Gospel story. But then I want to spend a little time speaking about the fact, and a very short time speaking about the fact that when He returns every eye will see His glory as we have in the text here. And then I want to finish with applying His glory to our lives, because that's the, in many ways, the day-to-day but very exciting reality about the glory of Jesus. So Christ in His humanity, His glory was hidden, isn't it? He humbled Himself and we don't see His glory very much in the

Gospels. In John 17 where He is speaking to His Father in prayer, He speaks about the glory that He once had when He was with the Father before and it's almost a wistful looking back to that glory. And it's been veiled in His humanity and for 33 years or so, it wasn't that obvious that He was worthy of worship, it wasn't that obvious that He was a glorious saviour and yet His glory still spills out. And there's a reason for that. There's a reason because His glory is veiled because He is our Redeemer and He is humbling Himself and He has a specific work to do as an obedient human where we have failed, He doesn't fail.

But it does break through. It breaks through in His birth. Now any child that's born, it's a glorious event to the parents and maybe to the family, to those who are near, those who know them. But there's never been a birth like Jesus' birth. We spend a lot of time saying that He was born in a manger and that He was unnoticed in the world and that He didn't have a home and all these kind of things which are true. But there's never been a birth where the heavens were ripped back and the angels sang glory to God in the highest and there was an eternal fanfare for the birth of this child. And there's this gentle reminder, there's this proclamation, there's this window of heaven opened up just to remind us that this is where Jesus has come from. This is the Redeemer that has come and this is the Messiah King who's been born. Yes, He's been born not like a king but in many other ways that have been recorded for us in the script, very much like a king, like no other king that there has ever been. As the heavens are peeled back, the heavens are going to be peeled back another time again, aren't they? We'll just mention that later on. That's significant. And the reaction to baby Jesus, the reaction to this child, the reaction to this birth is a very unusual one for the reaction to the birth of a child.

There's terror. There's terror in the shepherds because of what is revealed, because the glory that is revealed, we're not afraid of God anymore. And partly that is because we don't see His glory, because glory is at some levels terrifying. Yet the angels say to the shepherds who are terrified, don't be afraid. Good news of great joy. So, and you know, I've said this before but people are visiting, wouldn't have heard it so they'll think it's original and new. But there's 365 do not be afraid in the Bible. There's one for every day.

And the angels knew and God knows and the Holy Spirit knows again and again we're fearful. But I wonder how often we're fearful of God's glory, of God's weight, of God's honour, of God's majesty. And yet we have it slightly revealed in His birth. But also it's mentioned as it were, at His circumcision, at the time of His circumcision where He is brought to the temple eight days after His birth and He is introduced, or well Mary and Joseph and the baby meet with Simeon the prophet. And he speaks directly to this child again in an amazing way and having, there having been 400 years of silence from God in any kind of prophecy to the people. Here we have Simeon speaking directly of this child who will bring light to the Gentiles and be a glory to his people Israel. And there's a gentle reminder there that this is an ordinary child. This is glorious reveal, but it's glory, it's glory is hidden, but it's glory is also just in a very small way revealed through this prophecy of old Simeon. And what did he want from the, ah, just take me home now. I can die now because I've seen the Savior. Great attitude in that old prophet. But as we move on and these are glimpses that are taken from Luke's Gospel where we've been reading from.

[11:13] And we could have chosen many, I guess, glimpses of His glory. But a very clear one as we move on is the glory at His transfiguration, isn't it? Tremendous time. Ah, probably only second to the cross in its majesty, in its revelation of Jesus Christ. Because at that point, at that point of need, shortly before He goes to the darkness of Calvary Hill, we have Him exposed to the great light of heaven as heaven spills out on Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration.

And His glory, that's what the mountain is about. We don't understand transfiguration in many ways. Although we can visualize it because of modern technology and because of digital films and all the things that we see where that kind of image can be displayed so easily with the imagination. But I doubt any kind of digital imagery could match what actually happened in the Mount of Transfiguration where it's as well His, as if His real majesty is unveiled and a land far away is brought close at that point. His face shines and His clothes shine and we're told His glory is revealed. And Peter, who was there and was in a bit of a daze because of what he saw, reflects on that in his letter later on in 2 Peter 1. And it's a very significant experience that Peter had there at the Mount of Transfiguration because he said, we didn't follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the coming and power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because Peter goes on to speak a lot about the second coming in his letters. He says, it's not something we've made up because he says, we were eyewitnesses of His glory, of His majesty, for He received, Jesus received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the majestic glory saying this is my beloved Son. So it's a very significant and important event where the glory of Jesus is revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration so that later on Peter is able to speak about the second coming with a degree of authority because he's tasted it and he's seen it and he's understood it. Just before his terrible work, he has given this a taste of victory and a taste of what the second coming will be like because it's into the deep end as it were of his first coming and all the fear and terror and darkness of that and yet he has given a taste of the second coming and Moses there with him, a taste of that promised land eventually standing on the mountain. And again when that's revealed, that glows revealed, what do they do? Do they stand around and clap? Oh it's lovely, could we have some more of this? No there's terror, it's glory, it's the glory of God and there's terror with that but again it's terror or that is glory with love. It's what are we told on the mountaintop again, don't fear, don't be afraid. And these are important that we hear these voices saying don't be afraid because there's going to be a time when His glory will be revealed to you all and to me. And there's only one way that on that day we will hear the voice don't be afraid and that is when we come through Jesus Christ. Very significant.

There's also glory in His crucifixion. A kind of inverted glory in many ways, the glory of His darkest hour but there is great glory there, the lamb that's slain. There's glory in the cry of Delos, maybe not glory so much for Christ but there's certainly a sense of glory in His finished work as the wrath of God is pierced and broken and dealt with on the cross. This innocent child of glory has grown up, has become not quite middle-aged but who is there doing His great work and in many ways there's a kind of irony of the event because the glory is removed on the cross very largely so much so that the sun wouldn't even shine on the event but at the same time in many ways the glory of God is pinnacle there, the most outstanding revelation of His character and of His being because

His light goes into the corridors of the darkness of hell and shines there and destroys Satan and His power. There's glory in the extent of His love, there's glory in the cry, it is finished, there's glory in that great statement paid in full, the cross. There's glory in the unnatural midnight, there's glory in the curtain that's ripped from top to bottom, that great heavy 70-foot, however thick, I can't remember however thick it was, curtain that's ripped in two from top to bottom opening the way into the holy of holy, holy, there's glory in the earthquakes, there's glory in the dead who are raised at that point and the resurrection, there's a lot of glory and crucifixion even though it's a very dark event and there's also glory in His ascension. There's various points in the life of Jesus Christ where His worth, His worthiness, His value, His being, His character is revealed as worthy of worship. Glory in His ascension because after three days He is raised and then later on after 40 days He is taken up in a cloud of glory and is enthroned as king of kings and there this evening He intercedes for you and for me He's our advocate before

God, there's that great picture in Acts chapter 7 where Stephen is to be martyred. As last words are, Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God.

[18:22] Luke, he said, I see heaven open and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. Standing, interceding on the right hand of God. Son of man. The glory of that event is seen by Stephen at that significant time. So there's great glory in all of these events and there's great glory in the fact that He is there as the risen and sovereign Savior this evening and He is a glorious Savior and a worthy Savior and if there was nothing else about Him He would be worthy of our falling on our knees this evening to worship Him for all eternity. He'd be worthy of that, of us falling on our knees and worshiping Him.

But that glory that is burst out through the gospel events and the gospel story will be made clear in His second coming. At that time, verse 27, they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory and it will be an amazing time. It will be the end of the world, nothing else will matter, all the things that we hold dear, all the things that we spend time on, all the things that we think that are precious. Immediately we'll kind of all be subsumed into this moment and into the reality of seeing the living Savior. Revelation speaks about every knee bowing, every tongue confessing that Jesus Christ is revealed. At that point we will see what has been hidden. Certain things have been revealed but things will be made much more clear on that day. Things that are hidden will be revealed and truth, His truth and the truth of Christ will be vindicated on that day and history and all that goes with history will be rolled up like a scroll at that time. The sky receded like a scroll and every mountain and island was removed from its place. The wrath of the Lamb will be revealed. Who can stand? So Revelation speaks about that. Peter, as we mentioned earlier, speaks about the heavens will disappear with a roar.

The elements will be destroyed with fire and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Jesus coming back for the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God the dead in Christ will rise first. He will come back. These things will happen. Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened and the stars no longer shine. The day of the Lord is great, it is dreadful. Who can endure it? The Bible speaks about these things and we are also those who will share in the glory to be revealed. So this is the reality that we see. It will be a kind of public transfiguration as it were, whether disciples and Moses and

Elijah saw on the Mount of Transfiguration will be there for everyone to see. Christ will be seen as He left, except He will be seen by all. It will not be a private showing, it will be an utterly, entirely miraculous, public, world-defying event. And again as that glory is revealed the response will be no different as it was in Scripture. There will be terror with that response. There will be terror when God's glory is revealed. But in Christ we have the words, do not be afraid. Without Christ there will be every reason to be terrified. For all out of Christ the big important people, the rich people, the individual, the people who have lived their own lives their own way, they will ask for the rocks to fall on them because the wrath of the Lamb will be a terrifying reality in that day. And so we recognize the significance and the importance of seeing and appreciating

Jesus not only as He has been but as He will come. He is glorious, He is worthy of our worship. We will all stand before Him. We are accountable to Him and we have one life, with one life. It would be great if we all had the opportunity of seeing Him return second time and seeing His glory and then saying, right, I live my life differently now. Give me a chance to live my life again. I promise I'll live it differently because we will see Him for who He is. But that isn't ours to do. We are to live by faith and to live by in that recognition of Him being worthy of our worship, not just for the hour we are here, but worthy of every aspect of our lives, of our worship and of our glory. And fly is important. I finish with this, couple of things. Because as believers, amazing thing is we share His glory. John 17, 22, he says, I have given them the glory that you gave me. We share that glory. What does that mean? It doesn't mean that we become gods. It doesn't mean we share His attributes. There's a uniqueness to God's glory. But it means we share, as it were, in the shadow of His glory. We share the benefits of His glory. We become children of God. We become joint heirs with Christ. We become inheritors. We are at one level of God's because we are indwell by the Spirit of God. And we have the hope of heaven. And that is a great thing that we share. God does this, He says, well the glory is all mine,

[25 : 06] I'm going to keep it. We get things. Very often people with the most wealth are most wealthy because they never share it. Because they want to hoard and the more they have the more they share. Not exclusively, of course. It's a very general statement but it can often be the case. And how do I know that? Because I see it in my own heart. Where we have, sometimes the less generous we become for some perverted, inverted, sinful reason.

And yet God is not unwilling to share His glory with us. He wants us to have it. He wants us to share glory of His friendship. He wants us to share the glory of peace with Him.

And of joy and of meaning and of divine union. You know we can't go about living like we're in the gutter. Because we have union with God and we have friendship with God and we have tasted what it means to know His peace and His joy in our lives and we shouldn't be satisfied with anything else. And it's sinful for us to be always moaning and grumbling and complaining that things are rubbish and things are miserable and I wish it was better to be a Christian. Because we are sharing in His glory. No matter what's happening in our lives we share the glory of being kind of brought into His friendship and brought into His knowledge and conversation and confidence. He brings us into His confidence and He shares us with us His truth and He tells us about the future we share with His glory. That's a great thing. We're very rich people as believers. We have great inheritance but we have a great blessing here and now. And we mustn't despise that. And we mustn't think it's rubbish and cheap and nasty. And that what this world can offer is much better than it. It's the glory of God. But more than that, even more than that, we are to not just, we don't just share in His glory but we have a responsibility to reflect His glory. And we have that responsibility, each of us in our Christian lives. 2 Corinthians 3.16. And we who with unveiled faces, we don't need to be covered because our sin has been dealt with. With unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into His likeness with an ever increasing glory.

We are being transformed into His likeness with an ever increasing glory. That's our task in life is to reflect Jesus as we're to look like, we're to be mirrors of Jesus.

It's quite an awesome thought. It's quite a heavy responsibility. We wouldn't do it in our own strength. But everything we are to do is to reflect the fact that we are children of the living God that we're being transformed by Him changed. People say, well, there have been change from the inside. There's a radiance from within that is beginning to emanate out in our lives so that we're reflecting Him. And our task in life is to become more like Jesus Christ, to be pure and holy and compassionate and merciful and gentle and gracious and long suffering, considering others better. And all the things that we've talked about over this last year and the last 20 years or 40 years or 60 years that we've heard preaching and read the Bible, to be like Christ. That's our responsibility. We reflect His glory as ourselves in our own unique and individualistic way. We do that. We reflect His glory. And that requires time in our lives. Salvation is free. He's done the work. But we must put in the effort having been redeemed. Work out your own salvation, fear and trembling. That's what we're to do. Having been saved, we then continue to work out. It's going to take this year. It's going to take time for us to reflect God's glory. It's going to take time to understand what it means to share in His glory. It's going to take commitment. It's going to take you putting Him first, not second, not third, not last, first. It's going to take energy.

[29 : 56] It's going to take time. And it's going to take the Holy Spirit cooperating in our lives. So recognize the privilege we have as Christians. Please don't take Jesus and His glory into the gutter. Don't take Him places where He shouldn't be in our minds. Don't think things that we shouldn't think. Don't shove Him from His rightful place and dethrone Him and put something there that's cheap and nasty and grubby. Don't put ourselves first and think that that's really what this world is about, revolving around ourselves. But may it be that we put Christ first and then know life to the full as we do so, knowing what it is to share His glory and knowing therefore the privilege of reflecting His glory. So hard though it is to think about the return of Jesus, it may seem very in a sense esoteric and impractical and far away from our life. It could of course happen at any time. But we do need the Spirit of God to imbue that truth into our hearts and to enable us to live by it and to have that right perspective as we go into a new year. Because as time goes on it reminds us that a thousand years is like a day to the Lord. That a day is like a thousand years that He doesn't reckon on time the way we do. But nonetheless He is sovereign and the world is moving forward linearly to His tune. And we look forward to His return and may it be that each of us is ready for that. And that as Christians we live our lives sharing His glory but also seeking to reflect His glory. And there's a congregation that we would be a people, because it's not just in our own we do it. It's as a people we will reflect His glory. Unveiled faces, each of us, it would be a transformed people also.

I mean let's bow our heads and pray. Heavenly Father we do ask that you would apply your word to us by your Holy Spirit. We recognise that sometimes we hear the truth and we know the truth but we don't let it soak into our consciousness. We don't pray over it. We don't think it through. We don't regard it with great significance. We don't talk about it.

We very quickly dismiss it and forgive us when we do so. Forgive us when we don't meditate on you and on your glory and on your finished work, on your great salvation, on the amazing promises that are ours by faith for you sharing in an unselfish way your glory with us and for our responsibility to in Christ and through Christ reflect your glory. May we be filled with the Spirit. May we be hungry and thirsty after righteousness. May we be prayerful.

May we be godly and holy people and passionate and loving and in the world, very much in the world but not of the world, that we would love people and know people and care about people and share Christ with people and that we would reflect Christ to people. It's nice being together. It's good being part of a community but it's not just to reflect Christ to fellow Christians that we are to live. We surely must reflect your light in the darkness of the lives and hearts of those who are lost in a compassionate and loving and gentle and gracious way. So help us. May this be a year of evangelism for us. It's a congregation, it's a people. A year of learning, a year of teaching, a year when we value the scripture, when we memorise its promises, when we understand your love more deeply and when we see many people coming to know Jesus Christ. Through the work of the Kingdom here and we pray for every congregation that's represented here tonight. We also pray for the areas, Christian congregations in the city of Edinburgh here that we love. We pray for the gospel to be blessed in all of these congregations. We long for each of them to be bursting at the seams with people coming in to ask what must they do to be saved. We long to see that's plenty of room. There's plenty of room and there's lots and lots of people who never come to church in this city and we ask that we would play our part in reaching out to the many in the city who need to hear the gospel. And may we do so with graciousness and with dependence on you and with a simplicity of life, uncluttered and unaffected by all that would steal our hearts away from you. Help us God, we pray to do that. Forgive us when we failed and when we have so often displaced you. And given the glory that is due to you alone, we're giving that glory to another. Forgive us we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.