

Shared Glory

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[0 : 0 0] Tonight the title of our sermon is Shared Glory and as we look at that title I want us just to read again verse 5 of John chapter 17 where Jesus said, And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Glory is one of these words that we quite often hear in terms of reading the Bible and thinking about theology and talking about God.

When we think about what God is like, one of the words that we're definitely likely to see is that he is glorious. And it's a really important and a really rich topic for us to think about.

The Bible makes it absolutely clear that God is glorious. You see it emphasized in lots of different places in scripture. I'll put an example or two up here.

You can see on Exodus chapter 24 it says, Then Moses went up on the mountain and the cloud covered the mountain and the glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai.

[1 : 1 8] The cloud covered in six days and on the seventh day he called to Moses out in the midst of the cloud. And the same is emphasized in Psalm 138. All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O Lord, for they've heard the words of your mouth.

They shall sing of the ways of the Lord for great is the glory of the Lord. There's a lot of texts like these making it very, very clear that God is glorious.

Furthermore, the Bible makes it clear that that glory belongs to each person, father, son, and Holy Spirit. There's some verses there. You can see them in Matthew 16.

It talks about the father. It says, The son of man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his father. Sorry, pressed the wrong button there.

The son, we saw that in the verse we read at the start, that we've seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the father. And in 1 Peter 4, 14 we see the same being applied to the Holy Spirit.

[2 : 2 5] If you're insulted in the name of Christ, you're blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. So the Bible makes it absolutely clear that whenever we think of God, we should be thinking of glory.

But that maybe is an easy thing to say, but it raises the fascinating question, what does that actually mean?

What is glory? And that's the kind of question that's both easy and a little bit difficult.

At one level, it's quite an easy question because when we speak about glory, we know what we're talking about. Glory is pointing us to the idea of splendor, majesty, honor, excellence, all these kind of things that we know are true of God.

He is majestic. He's magnificent. He's preeminent. He's worthy of all our honor. And in many ways, glory sometimes functions as almost like an umbrella term to describe all these great attributes of God.

[3 : 3 4] So at one level, the question is quite easy when we say God is glorious. We kind of know what we're talking about. But at another level, the question is quite hard because we can quickly find ourselves actually going round in circles.

So we'll say, well, something like, you know, glory means majestic. So what does majestic mean? Well, majestic means magnificent. What does magnificent mean? Well, magnificent is talking about splendor. Well, what does splendor mean? Well, splendor means glory.

And you can find yourself almost going round in circles. We know that glory means that God is special and amazing.

But what exactly does it mean? Well, the Bible helps us an awful lot here.

And there's two key words that we need in order to understand what glory is. And they are the words heavy and bright.

[4 : 41] Now, you might be thinking, that's a bit strange. But I shall explain exactly why these two words are so important.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for glory is this word here, kavod. I make it look as though I'm a Hebrew expert, to be honest, I really am.

But this is the word you pronounce it kavod or kavod. It's in the name ikhabod way back in the Old Testament. And that word basically means heavy.

And then in the New Testament, the word for glory is the word doxa, which is where we get the term doxology from. You can see there doxa and that word, as I'm sure you've guessed, means bright.

And if I just take myself away from the screen for a second, I'll show you a couple of examples of this. So you can see it here in 1 Samuel 4, 18.

[5 : 43] It talks about Elias. As soon as he mentioned the Ark of God, Eli fell over backwards from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, but the man was old and heavy. That word there, that stands out heavy, is from the same word family as the word for glory, this word kavod.

And in Acts 21, Paul speaks about the fact that he could not see because of the brightness of the light. And that word is literally doxa. He couldn't see because of the doxa of the light.

And so it's been made very clear that behind these Hebrew word and Greek word for glory lies these two concepts of being heavy and being bright.

And so I want to just think about those just for a wee moment. Glory.

But the link between glory and heaviness is to be understood in terms of the idea of weightiness.

[6 : 52] So something that's glorious is something that carries weight, something that's substantial. So the thing that I often imagine is a bar of gold. Sometimes you'll see a bar of gold in a film and it looks really heavy when someone picks it up.

And we have an English word that conveys the same idea. It's the word impressive. So to be impressive is to be able to make a firm and strong impression on something.

So if you imagine that you're pressing on something, in order to do that, you need to have each apply weight. You need to be heavy in order to do that.

And maybe it's helpful also to just think in terms of opposite. So the opposite of weightiness is the idea of being flimsy or superficial or lightweight.

And so this idea of heaviness associated with the glory of God is describing the fact that when it comes to the attributes of God, his goodness, his holiness, his wisdom, his power, his truth, his justice, all of these attributes are as big and as heavy and as substantial as they can possibly be.

[8 : 03] I don't know about you, but I am often, I'm always very impressed by something that's big and heavy. So if you maybe go into your garden shed or your garage, you maybe got a reset of spanners that's maybe just about this size.

I remember the first time as an engineer, I went to work at the power station and there were spanners. Well, I'm going to go off the screen if I stretch my hands up, but they were huge. I'll have to stand back. They were enormous spanners. And I remember thinking, wow, that's so impressive.

And whether it's a big tractor or a big crane or big buildings or big boats, these things that are big and heavy can always strike us.

And that impressiveness, that immense weight, and that's what we mean when we talk about God's glory. And often you kind of try to think, well, what's the word or a phrase that captures this? But the thing is that really the truth that we're trying to convey here is something that we can't really express with words.

If you imagine you see like a massive building or a massive cliff, all you can do is just take a deep breath and say, wow. God's glory is so great, it's on a scale, all of its own. His goodness, his power, his wisdom, his love, all these attributes are at heavyweight level.

[9 : 32] And that, of course, is why Psalm 19 verse 1 makes perfect sense because it says, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. And it's reminding us that if you want to compare something with the glory of God, then only the universe is big enough to come remotely close.

When we think of glory, we should be thinking of heaviness. But at the same time, we're also wanting to think of brightness, this Greek word *doxa*. And the link between glory and brightness is maybe a little bit more familiar to us. It's pointing us to the fact that God's nature is radiant and spectacular.

So we imagine a bright sunny day like we've had this week. The light is dazzling, the world around us is radiant. In fact, we'll often say when the weather's really nice, we'll say, oh, the weather's glorious.

So God is not only glorious in terms of sheer, vast, impressive weightiness. He's also glorious in the sense that he radiates brightness and purity and splendour.

So God's goodness is so good that it dazzles in its perfection. His strength is so strong that it glows in its power. And his love is so great that it radiates and shines in its beauty.

[10 : 53] And that idea of brightness speaks to us in terms of the idea of something that just overflows in its abundance. If something is able to light up a room, it's because it's got an abundance of light.

If you look at that light that's above my head, you can see that the light bulbs and that light fitting, they're not just kind of glowing in their own weak corner. They're filling the whole room with light.

And it's reminding us that God's attributes are at the level of abundance. So his wisdom is abounding, his strength, his goodness and his love are utterly abounding.

And so that's what we mean when we say that God is glorious. And of course all of that should shape how we view God.

When you think of God, think of all this glory. Think of the sheer weightiness of God's nature and character.

[11 : 58] Think of the sheer brightness of his being and his attributes. But all of this should stop us in our tracks.

Because if you think about it, heaviness is awesome, but it's something that should make us very careful.

If you imagine you're carrying a really heavy chest of drawers or a piano down some stairs, you are going to be very, very careful. And if you think of that in a bigger scale, if you imagine you are lifting an enormous machine of a lorry or something like that, or lifting a boat onto a pier to be repaired, you will be so careful because it's so heavy.

And at the same time, brightness is beautiful and it's irresistible, but it's also unapproachable. You think of, I don't know if you've ever done any welding, but when you're welding, you've got a really bright light, but you can't actually look at it.

It's too bright. You have to protect yourself from the dazzle of the flame. And it's all reminding us that God's glory is something that we should marvel at, but it's also something that we should take immensely seriously.

[13 : 28] God is glorious and God forbid that we are ever casual or careless about His glory.

So when you think of God as glorious, I want you to think of these two concepts, heaviness and brightness. But what I want us to think about a little bit more is that that glory that is an inherent part of God's nature is a glory that is shared between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And that takes us back to John chapter 17, verses 1 to 5. And I'll just read those verses again just so that we can just remind ourselves of what Jesus is saying.

When Jesus spoke these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you. Since you've given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you've given him.

And this is eternal life that they know you, the only through God and Jesus Christ whom you've sent. I glorified you on earth having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

[14 : 50] So there's a lot of emphasis on glory and there's also a lot of other things in these verses as well. I just want to highlight a couple of things. First of all, these verses reveal to us Christ's own eternal glory.

Verse 5 is one of these amazing verses that kind of just gives you a wee glimpse into heaven. It talks about, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

It's like a wee glimpse back into eternity, into the realm that existed prior to the world coming into being. Now, we don't know everything about that in so many ways. It's beyond us. But this verse is telling us one thing about that realm.

It's telling us that from all eternity, God the Father and God the Son have shared their glory. And this is why it's important for us to remember that the place where God's glory is seen most clearly is in Jesus Christ.

We see that emphasized to us in Hebrews 1 verse 2. It says, In the last days he spoke into us by his Son, whom he appointed the aid of all things through whom he created the world. It says, he is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature.

[16 : 16] And if you notice there, that's really interesting because you've got brightness there in terms of radiance and you've got heaviness there in terms of like an imprint, a press. And the same thing is emphasized in the verse that we read at the beginning that when Jesus became flesh, John says, we've seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

And this is where we learn an important lesson. Often when we speak about Jesus coming to earth, we'll often say that he laid aside his glory.

Don't we? So we talk of Jesus leaving heaven, coming to earth and we say that he laid aside his glory. And that's a very helpful and accurate phrase because Jesus did come into the world without much of the glory and splendor of heaven and he was born in poverty and obscurity.

And when we say he laid aside his glory, it is speaking to us about the humiliation of Christ. But we have to be a wee bit careful with that phrase. I still think it's a good phrase and I use it myself, but we just have to be a tiny bit careful with the phrase because we must not think that Jesus came into the world without glory.

So yes, Jesus came, he laid aside the glory of heaven and he was born in poverty and in humility, but in doing so, he did not lay aside the glory of God completely because it's in him that we see the glory of God.

[18 : 07] Jesus Christ is the very place where we see the glory of God revealed to us. And so while yes, he did lay aside much of his glory in his humiliation, let us never forget though that if you want to see the glory of God, the place you need to look is at Jesus.

The other thing that verse five tells us, which I think is very important, is that it talks about the fact that Jesus's pre-existent glory was not just his glory.

He doesn't say, give me back the glory that I had for myself. He says, he speaks instead about the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

And that's pointing us to the fact that the glory of God is always a shared glory. And that of course means that it's never a selfish glory. And this is where we see that God is so different to the world because so often our glory is very self-focused.

So we see it in celebrities, they want status and importance and recognition for themselves. We see it in businesses where one business wants to do better than the other and have a status that's all on its own.

[19 : 30] And you can even see it in churches where congregations or individuals will want their glory for themselves. But Jesus is different. He speaks about a glory that he has with his father.

And in other words, Jesus is saying, I don't want any glory without you. I don't want any glory other than that, which is totally bound up in the fact that you are my father and I am your son.

And this is where we see so clearly in these verses just a beautiful description of how the father and the son glorify each other. So you see in verse one Jesus lifted up his eyes. Let me just turn the screen around so you can see it a bit more clearly.

He says he lifted up his eyes and he's placed the father, the elders come, glorify your son. Sorry, glorify your son that the son may glorify you.

You see the same in verse four, I glorified you having accomplished the work you gave me to do. And then verse five says, now, Father, glorify me. And you see this brilliant balance where the father wants to glorify the son and the son wants to glorify the father.

[20 : 54] Each delights in the glory of the other. Each delights in each other's exaltation. And the Holy Spirit is part of this as well. We see that beautifully in the previous chapter in John 16.

Jesus says, when the spirit of truth comes, he'll guide you into all truth. He'll not speak in his own authority, but whatever he hears, he'll speak and he'll declare to you the things that are to come. And then he says, he will glorify me because he'll take what's mine and declare it to you.

It's all reminding us that God's glory is never a selfish glory. Many people can make this mistake of thinking that God is kind of self-interested, almost egotistical.

That is totally untrue. And it is an utterly incorrect way to think of God. We must never think of God in those terms. That's the way people think. That's the way the world thinks.

We must not think of God like that. God's glory is our shared glory. And when we think of the doctrine of the Trinity, it's showing us just how precious and beautiful God's glory is.

[22 : 03] It's a glory that's mutually shared, a glory that's lovingly promoted in each person, a glory that exists in perfect fellowship. In Jesus, we see the glory of God and we see that it is a glory that is beautifully shared.

But just as we kind of round things up for the last wee bit, I want to ask the question, where does God's glory reach its climax?

In other words, where is the pinnacle of God's glory? Where do we see it at its greatest?

Well, lots of things probably come to mind. You think of heaven. So you think, for example, of Isaiah's vision in chapter 6, where he kind of sees into the throne room of heaven and it's utterly glorious what he sees.

You think of creation. Psalm 19 spoke about that, didn't it? You know that the heavens declare in the glory of God. You think, well, you look at the vastness of the galaxies. That's maybe where you see the pinnacle of God's glory.

[23 : 21] Or you can think of the big moments in the Old Testament where astonishing things happen, the flood or the Exodus or Mount Sinai. Or you could think of the temple, the cloud of God's glory that was overwhelming and in unapproachable.

All of these things come to mind when we think of the pinnacle of God's glory. But I don't think any of those places are the actual answer to that question because we'll see that if we look again at John chapter 17 verses 1 to 5.

Because if you look at the beginning of that, it says, when Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son that the sun may glorify you.

So you can see in those verses that Jesus is making an association between glorifying the sun and the sun glorifying the Father. And that's all being associated with this thing here, the hour.

Jesus is saying that the hour has come for the Father and the sun to be glorified. And I think that we can say that these verses are talking about the pinnacle of God's glory. All through John, there's been this kind of anticipation of the hour.

[24 : 58] Jesus often says, my hour has not yet come, but now he says the hour has come. And these verses are talking about the moment when God's glory is going to be shown at its greatest level.

We are about to see the pinnacle of God's glory. But what is Jesus talking about when he talks about the hour? He is talking about the cross.

He's talking about his death and his resurrection. And it is here in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that the glory of God reaches its climax.

And we know that because all the great glory moments in the Old Testament, whether it's the flood or Sinai or the Exodus or any of these great events, they are all shadows of this one. Everything is pointing towards this moment.

In the death and resurrection of Jesus, we see the pinnacle of the glory of God the Trinity. And it all makes perfect sense because in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there we see God at his heaviest.

[26 : 26] Because he crushes Satan and destroys the power of sin and defeats the kingdom of darkness once and for all. And in the death and resurrection of Jesus, there we see God at his brightest, where God abolishes death and brings life and immortality to light through the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

And now he calls to eternal life all who come to him. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4-6, he says, For God who said, Let light shine out of darkness has shone into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

That glory reaches its climax in the saving work of Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. That's why when Jesus speaks of his approaching death in John chapter 12, he says, The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified.

And do you know what that means? It means that in scripture, the moment when the glory of God reaches its pinnacle is in the moment when he came to save you.

And all of this is revealing to us the astounding truth that the Triune God does not just want to share his glory with himself as Father, Son and Spirit.

[27 : 56] The truth is, he wants to share that glory with you. And that's why the pinnacle of God's glory is not his unapproachable magnitude and brightness.

The pinnacle of God's glory is when he takes you into his arms and he makes you his own and he comes to dwell in your heart and he transforms you into the image of his Son.

God's glory is utterly astounding and yet his great goal, his great work is to save you so that he can share all of that glory with you.

Now, you might be thinking to yourself, well, that just seems a bit too much. You know, you look at these verses in John chapter 17 verses 1 to 5 and it's talking all about stuff that almost just seems to belong to.

To God, glorifying the Son, the Son, glorifying you, the only true God, glorifying me in your presence with a glory that I had before you, before the world existed. It all kind of seems in a category that we don't really belong to.

[29 : 07] And it's almost as though, you know, when we talk about God's glory, yes, we're talking about something wonderful, but it's something that just seems to be in a kind of category of its own. So if you imagine, we're almost down here and you've kind of got this realm of God's glory up here that, you know, maybe by God's grace we can admire.

But in so many ways we are just standing at a distance, just looking at it in wonder, but it seems beyond us.

That's not actually true. Because God's great goal is not to just display his glory to us. His great goal is to share that glory with us.

And you think, well, how can that be possible? How can that be true? How can we know that that's true? Well, we know it's true because of what Jesus says later in this chapter. And Paul says, the glory that you have given me, I have given to them that they may be one, even as we are one.

And the rest of the New Testament says the same thing. Paul says, we all with unwavering face behold the glory of God. We're being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

[30 : 31] God's glory is a shared glory. But it's not just shared between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

It is also shared with you. God wants to share his glory with you. He is bringing many sons and daughters to glory.

And when Christ, who is your life, appears, you also will appear with him in glory. And all he asks us to do is put our faith in God, the Son.

But there's one final thing to say. In Jesus, we see the glory of God. And in Jesus, we share in that glory as Christians.

But the Bible reveals a vital consequence of that for our lives as Christians. Because not only do we share God's glory, we are also to display it.

[31 : 35] Jesus says the glory that you've given me, I've given them that they may be one, even as we are one. I am them and you and me that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you've sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

God wants the glory that he has shared with you to be seen by everyone that you meet. And that means that our lives should be weighty.

Lived in a way that honours God. That isn't superficial or half-hearted or casual, but a lifestyle that's weighty. And our lives should be radiant.

A bounding in love and joy and peace to all that we meet. And it all makes perfect sense because we were talking about that.

You can think of God's glory in this category of its own. It seems miles away. We're standing here. We think that we're watching it and maybe admiring it from a distance.

[32 : 51] But Jesus is actually telling us, no, the glory is being shared with us. So God's glory isn't way up here and out of reach. It's actually now coming to be in us as well.

And so it all, I should maybe change the colour, shouldn't I, just to make it more interesting. Do you imagine this is your friend, this is your colleague at work, this is your classmates at uni, your friends at school.

This is the people that are in your family or your neighbours. When they look at you, what should they see?

They should see that. They should see the glory of God in your love and your goodness and your patience and your warmth and your kindness.

And that is not to make you feel like, you must do this, you must do that in the week ahead. It's not to lay on a massive sense of responsibility. It's to tell you what an incredible opportunity you've got tomorrow.

[34 : 01] You can go to work or go into your Zoom meetings or into your family or wherever you go. And you can display the glory of God through the way in which you live your life.

And in a world where people are addicted to their own glory, maybe that's on social media, on Facebook or whatever, or through their own possessions that they want to show off or their own achievements.

In a world that's addicted to displaying self-glory, we want to be different. Our goal is that people will look at us and see nothing less than the glory of God.

Amen. Let's pray. Father, we just marvel at your glory, at your weightiness and your brightness.

And we thank you that you have revealed that glory in your Son, Jesus Christ. But we thank you even more that you've shared that glory with us so that we can be those who can now go and live our lives in a way that displays your glory to those around us.

[35 : 11] And we pray that that will be true of us all, that we would realise the opportunity that we have every day and that our words, our actions, our conduct, our attitudes would all display your glory.

We thank you so, so much for everything that you've done for us. We thank you so much for the glorious saving work of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

We pray in His name. Amen.