

See Jesus's glory!

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Date: 09 March 2025

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[0 : 00] I wonder if someone asked you to provide one photo of yourself that showed who you are and what you're about. What kind of photo would you choose? What one particular photo?

When they publish your autobiography one day, what photo will you choose to go on the front of the book that captures you? Like Beth Mead here, England footballer, Lioness, My Journey to Glory. That's the photo. There she is in an England white with her ball in hand. Maybe more realistically for you and me. How about picking a Facebook cover photo which displays you to the world. What do you choose? What did you choose? Maybe for you a moment of triumph or glory. You winning the cup final and roaring with joy.

Or you on graduation day in your black robe. Or sitting in your first car you've bought with your earnings. This is me. Maybe you pick a holiday snap on the beach.

[1 : 02] A wedding day photo. Or you on the sofa surrounded with family. Or a picture of you absorbed in your work doing what you do best. That shows who I am. What would you go for?

One picture, one moment that displays to the world who you are. Well here's the actual question this morning. What if God the Son were to pick his own Facebook cover photo?

What if Jesus Christ were to pick the ultimate glory moment from his life that captures and displays who he really is? What would it be?

Chapter 12 verse 23 in the verses we've just read gives us the answer. Look at this. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

That is, this now is his moment. And all of Jesus' life in the Gospels to this point has been building up to the hour.

[2 : 03] At the beginning of his public ministry at the wedding in Cana, Jesus said to his mother, My hour has not yet come. In chapter 7, his disciples urged him to go up to Jerusalem and show yourself to the world.

He said, My time is not yet here. In chapter 8, no one seized him because his hour had not yet come. Finally, in chapter 12 verse 12 onwards, Jesus comes publicly into Jerusalem.

The Sunday before Easter Sunday. Blessed is the King of Israel, people shout. And crowds spread the word and people go out to meet him. Jesus is going public in a big way. He's going global.

In verse 20, there are some Greeks among them who went up to worship at the festival. And they come to Philip with a request. End of verse 21. We would like to see Jesus. Show yourself to us.

To which Jesus replies finally in verse 23, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. To be glorified, it means to be displayed for who or what you really are.

[3 : 17] Think of a diamond hidden in the earth and then dug out and displayed in all its glory. Think of a person.

Think of King Charles III. I mentioned this a couple of months ago. King Charles III. Sometimes walking around just looking like any old, friendly, quite posh gentleman.

And yet the hour came when he was glorified. He was shown to be who he really is in all his majesty and splendour. Jesus says in verse 23, The hour has come for the Son of Man, for me to be glorified.

This is my photo moment. This is my glory moment. Now you will see me in all my kingly splendour, displaying to the world who I am. And yet the twist and shock of the gospel and of John 12 here is that you see Jesus' glory as he dies on a cross.

That is, it is as he is crucified and dies in agony and shame that you see the Son of God in all his glory and splendour.

[4 : 35] See how Jesus spells this out. In verse 23, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. How? Verse 24, Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it

remains only a single seed.

But if it dies, it produces many seeds. He will die. In verse 27, The hour having come, Jesus confesses, Now my soul is troubled.

And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. This hour of glory troubles Jesus and shakes him.

For he will die. And die an appalling death. For, verse 32, I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

John says he said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. What kind of death? He will be lifted up on a cross. We say this every so often.

[5 : 47] Familiarity with the cross may dull us to the horror of crucifixion. When Emily's football team plays games, they're always instructed just before the match to remove all jewellery.

But still every week, all the girls turn up with nose rings and multiple earrings and necklaces. And there's a great removing of jewellery moment before the match.

And a while back, one girl took off just before the match a stunning silver cross necklace with diamond-like stones set in it. And the manager turned and handed it to me to look after because I'm a vicar.

And he said, you take the cross. He said, it's beautiful, isn't it? And maybe it wasn't quite the moment and I wasn't thinking so clearly as I should have done. But I said, no, no, it's an instrument of torture, this necklace.

And it is. For having been flogged brutally, the criminal or victim would be led out in public and his body held down and stripped naked.

[6 : 44] And most likely they drive nails through his hands, wrists into the cross piece and nail his feet to the upright. And then having been impaled, he would be lifted up to hang there, lifted up.

And in this grisly method of killing, there is shame too. As he's lifted up for all to see, there's no hiding. A crucified one pinned becomes dehumanised, degraded, less than human scum in front of the eyes of those who gather to mock and gasp.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified, says Jesus. Now you will see Jesus in all his kingly splendour. Writing 50 years ago, Malcolm Muggeridge said, This king of the Jews has no crown, no jewels, no orbs, no scepter, no ring.

He is a worthless, wasted, broken, naked body. And yet this moment of unimaginable shame, it really is his supreme moment of glory.

In verse 27 again, as Jesus shakes at the prospect of what's now here, Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

[8 : 13] Father, glorify your name. I will go to die, Father. How brave Jesus is here. I will go to die.

And as I do, glorify your name. As I love you, Father, and obey you and lay down my life in death, may you display who you truly are.

You who loved the world and sent me. And then a voice came from heaven, I have glorified my name and I will glorify it again. It might be you're here this morning and you're quite new to the Christian faith.

And you're investigating what the Bible says and Christians believe. And you do want to know. You could be out in the sun on a Sunday morning, but you're not. You're here because you want to know God.

You want to see Jesus, who he really is and what he's really about. If you want to see Jesus' kingly glory, look at him dying in shame on a cross.

[9 : 22] The cross is his throne. The crucifixion is his lifting up. It's his coronation. He reigns in glory from the tree as he hangs there.

To which we might say, Christians long in the tooth and those investigating, I hear that.

But how can it be? If I understand even just a little of the shame and horror of crucifixion, how can it be that this moment of death and defeat and degradation, how does the cross display God's glory, Jesus' glory?

Well, listen to Jesus' words again here. See Jesus' glory as he dies on a cross and gives life to many.

In verse 23 onwards, Jesus teaches us how to really see what is going on as he is lifted up and dies in shame. And you're meant to see that it's glorious.

[10:37] Look first at verses 23 and 24. How his death gives life to many. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Here it is, the moment of his crucifixion.

Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

It bears much fruit. You do not need to be a gardener or a farmer. I am not a gardener or a farmer. I'm always asking Kate what's going on in her garden and which way the flowers go.

You don't have to be a gardener or a farmer to get the point of this. There can be no fruit. There can be no harvest without the death of a seed.

Here's a single grain of wheat. Just holding a single grain in your hand, the life in the seed will never be released. You'll never get a feed full of wheat.

[11:40] I think that's right. That's basic farming. Only with the seed falling to the ground and dying and buried in soil will life be released.

And many seeds come up, a whole field full. Jesus is teaching here that the Father sent his son, a grain of wheat who has life in himself, into the world.

And he sent his son to save the world so that an uncountable number of many people would receive eternal life through him.

Life in relationship with God. Life that stretches beyond death and into eternity. That has been God's eternal plan. To produce a kind of whole, as far as you can see, field full, a whole world of people like you and me.

Natural born rebels heading for death and yet now forgiven and restored to God and enjoying life with God for all eternity. Jesus's point here is that without the death of Jesus, without the death of the seed, there can be no life released.

[12:57] No fruit, no seeds, no field full. Without his death on the cross, no seeds, no fruit, no life. But with his death, many seeds, much fruit, a whole world full.

Next time you have a whole wheat sandwich, think to yourself, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, no wheat field, no sandwich.

Look around you at St. John's. Think of dear Christian believers all around the world, once cut off from God and dead, yet now with the life of God in them.

Why? Because he died in agony and shame, yet through this one death, life.

That is true for you personally this morning. Why are you able to sit here today and say, why is Alan able to say, my life's been turned around, I'm spiritually alive, I'll live forever, I know my father.

[14:04] Why can I have that wonderful experience today? Why? Only because 2,000 years ago, Jesus bravely decided to allow them to nail him to a cross.

You're meant to say, you're meant to say, wow, how stunningly glorious Jesus is. In a sense, the cross is deeply unsettling, mysterious.

His death looks like one thing, and yet it's another. The cross is his throne. It's a place of shame, yet it displays God's glory.

The cross is death, yet from it flows life. In verses 31 and 32, Jesus continues to teach why his cross is the great moment of glory.

God the Father, having spoken from heaven, I will glorify my name. Jesus says to the crowd in verse 30, this voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world.

[15:19] Now the prince of this world will be driven out, and I, when I'm lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. As Jesus dies on the cross, look at this in this verse here.

At first, see him in his glory, judging this world. You would think as he was lifted up and executed that the world is judging him.

Arrested, questioned, charged, condemned, handed over to be crucified. The world surely standing in judgment over Jesus, but no. As he hangs on the tree, now is the time for judgment on this world.

Because in the events of the cross, the dark heart of humanity is publicly exposed and laid bare.

Though the world was made through him, John says, the world did not recognize him, but the world crucified him.

Given the chance to murder our maker, the world, the human race in rebellion against God, of which we are born a part, we took our chance, publicly, openly, before his very eyes.

[16:39] It's hard to know if in reality, were we to have been there, we would have joined in or not.

The day of judgment proper will come at the end of the age. Yet Jesus says, now is the time of judgment.

For as he is crucified and the world judges him, so the cross exposes the evil and passes judgment on this world. Guilty, condemned are we.

See Jesus in his glory, judging the world. Second, driving out Satan. Verse 31 again, now the prince of this world will be driven out.

The prince of this world is Satan, the devil, he who is against God. You know this, I know this. In the UK, over the past century or two, we've laughed at the idea of spiritual evil, of a devil.

And yet there is evil and deception everywhere. In John's gospel, through the whole Bible, in reality, Satan is the great deceiver and accuser and murderer.

[17 : 47] He loves to wrap people like us up in our sins and addictions and trap us under God's condemnation and see us die cut off from God.

And surely in the death of Jesus, it looks like evil has won and Satan is victorious. There's a terrible scene in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* when Aslan, the lion, he's the Christ figure.

He is tied down to be killed at the stone table. And surrounding him are, quote, ogres with monstrous teeth and wolves and bull-headed men, spirits of evil trees and poisonous plants.

And right in the middle, standing by the table, was the witch herself. And as the witch raises her knife to slay him, she stooped down and said in a quivering voice, and now, who has won?

As Jesus dies on the cross, it looks as though the devil has won. Except no. As this king hangs on the tree, now the prince of this world will be driven out.

[19 : 00] Bearing our sins for us, dying in our place, the Lord Jesus, through his death, once and for all, breaks Satan's power. Martin Luther, the great German reformer, put it like this, this king Jesus is and shall be called sin's devourer and death's strangler, who removes sin and knocks death's teeth out.

He disembowels the devil and rescues those who believe on him from sin and death. That is what Jesus is doing on the cross. Smashing death's teeth out for us, disemboweling and driving out the devil for us.

He's a hero. The cross is his glory moment. As he drives Satan out so that lastly here in verse 32, he might, when I am lifted up from the earth, draw all people to himself.

I love that image. In the moment, crowds gathered to stare and mock as he was lifted up to die in shame. Yet as Jesus was raised high, dying and reigning in kingly splendour, he was acting.

He was doing something. He was in charge. He was going about his work. Arms wide on the cross, if you like, drawing people from every nation to him.

[20 : 32] Such a beautiful image. He hangs there, pulling people from all around the world to him. Drawing millions of spiritually dead people to himself to receive the eternal life which flows from him as he dies for them.

this is John 12, something of John 12. I was just asked at the beginning, what would be your Facebook cover photo?

What would you pick from your life? If you had one picture, one glory moment to stick on Facebook or wherever that displays to the world who you are. The Greeks say, sir, we would like to see Jesus. Do you want to see him in all his glory? You've got to look at the cross. At the moment that were we to have been there we would have turned our eyes away.

You've got to look at the cross for there is his glory. Look at the cross and see Jesus' kingly, beautiful splendour as in loving obedience to his father he so bravely dies in agony and shame to give life to many judging the world and driving out Satan and drawing all people to him.

[22 : 01] Feast your eyes on this diamond, this saviour as he dies in order to give life. But don't just look at him.

We've got to believe in him. In verse 34 having listened to Jesus the crowd spoke up we have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever.

So how can you say the son of man must be lifted up? Who is this son of man? And then Jesus told them you're going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light before darkness overtakes you.

Whoever walks in the dark doesn't know where they're going. Believe in the light while you have the light so that you may become children of light. Don't walk in the darkness in ignorance, in rebellion against God with his wrath remaining on you.

Seeing who he is, understanding what he does, you've got to come running to him. because today the crucified and lifted up Jesus, he is alive and reigning in heaven and he continues to open his arms wide and give eternal life to all who believe in him.

[23 : 23] Can I say to some of us today, don't just learn about Jesus. Don't just be on the edges of a Christian community. Don't just look at Jesus. Accept him.

Turn to him. Come to him. Bow before him. Take him as your Lord and your God who died for you. Believe in him. And if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ today, remain in him.

Stick with him as your Lord and your God who died for you. Because through him, this glorious king who dies, you and I receive eternal life and we become children of light.

We become children of God for all eternity. Let me lead us in a prayer. Let's pray together. Now is the Son of Man glorified.

God and Father, we praise you this morning for the stunning, shaming death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[24 : 39] Thank you for his brave obedience to your will. Thank you that though all things were made through him and all power was with him, he allowed himself to be crucified.

Thank you for his glory as he dies to give life to many. And help us, we pray, in these weeks leading up to Easter in all of our lives, to see Jesus Christ in all his crucified glory.

And may we and many, many around the world come to him and run to him and receive the life that he so wonderfully offers. We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.