

The Man of Glory

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Date: 19 June 2016

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[0 : 00] This morning we begin a new sermon series. We're going to be in the Psalms for six weeks. Short but sweet. And the six Psalms that we have chosen, they've been selected in order to dovetail with the last two sermon series that we've had. The one that we had in 2 Corinthians and the one that we've been in in the Gospel of John. And they dovetail with these sermon series by picking up and highlighting and continuing what was a central theme. And that's the glory of God.

Beholding the glory of God. So that's why the series is entitled Glimpses of Glory. Some months ago we were in 2 Corinthians and in chapter 3 verse 18 of that book, Paul says this.

He says, And so we're going to look at six Psalms that highlight for us, that draw our attention to different facets of God's glory because we believe that the purpose of the Christian life, of the church, and of what we do on Sundays is to behold God's glory so that we are changed and transformed by it. We want to see God's glory. So we're going to look at six Psalms that show it to us.

And it's very helpful, I think, that Psalms are poetry. They're poetry. Poetry. Which means they don't simply declare the glory of God or describe it for us.

But they have a way of drawing us into it, in a sense. Poetry doesn't just fill our minds with truth. It reaches into the depths of our hearts and causes our affections to come out.

[1 : 51] It gets into our desires and our emotions as well. And so as we come to the Psalms, we're not just going to hear about the glory of God. We're going to be invited to pray in response. We're going to be invited to sing and praise God for his glory.

We're going to be invited to get down and bow in awesome reverence before him because of his glory. And we're going to be invited to delight in him who is glorious. I think this is going to be a lot of fun the next six weeks.

A bit scary, but fun. So let's get into it, starting with Psalm 8. Psalm 8 is all about the majesty of God and the dignity of man.

The majesty of God and the dignity of humanity. And like a good symphony, Psalm 8 begins and ends on the same note.

And it's a note of unbridled adoration. Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

[3 : 04] Begins and ends with words of adoration. And it's adoration directed towards the majesty of God. Majesty communicates something of the awe-inspiring grandeur and greatness of who God is.

Communicates something of his beauty and holiness that causes the deepest longings of our hearts to rejoice. Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

And notice that it's the majesty of a name. Our psalm, if we were to read it in Hebrew, we would see begins with the very name of God.

It's the first word in the psalm. Oh Lord, our Lord. And we would also discover that those two occurrences of Lord at the very beginning are actually a translation of two different Hebrew words.

And when we dive into the nuances of them a little bit, it actually draws us into the depths of the majesty of God. The first one, oh Lord. This is a reference to God's personal self-given name.

[4 : 17] And it speaks of God's personal character and his commitment to his people. So if you were reading this with the Israelites back in the day, you would have two images that flash into your mind the second you read those words, Oh Lord, God's personal name.

And it would begin with Exodus chapter 3. God appears to Moses in a burning bush and summons him into his holy presence. And he says, Moses, I want you to go to the leader of the world.

I want you to go to Pharaoh and tell Pharaoh to let my people go. Moses goes, whoa, who am I to do this? And even if I do show up, Lord, the people are going to ask me what your name is, who

you are that's going to deliver them.

What do I say to them? And the Lord says this, I am who I am. And then he declares his personal name to them. He says, the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

This is my name that I want to be remembered by for all generations, he says. That's my name. And then if you flash forward to Exodus chapter 34, this name is declared by God once again.

[5 : 32] This time the people whom God has delivered so generously have rejected him. They've turned their back on him in idolatry. And Moses, in the wake of that, has the audacity to ask God to show him his glory.

And God says, well, I'll give you a little glimpse. And as God passes by, God gives him a little glimpse and he declares his name once again, twice. The Lord, the Lord.

A God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. It's the personal name of God that speaks of his commitment and his joy in being generous to his people.

Oh, Lord, our Lord. How majestic is your name in all the earth. And the second thing there, our Lord, is a word that refers not to a specific name, but to a title or to a position.

It's a royal title. Our Lord. It refers to God being the sovereign king of all creation. And we could tease this out for a long time.

[6 : 48] How God orders all of creation. How he puts the moon and the stars in place. How he divides the waters into rivers and oceans and seas.

How he causes foxes to come out of their holes and birds to swoop down from their nests. He is the Lord of all creation. We could also tease it out in the sense that he is the Lord of all history.

He makes nations to rise and to fall and he rules all the happenings of the world. And we could tease it out in the sense that he is the Lord of his people. He defends them from their enemies and he carries their burdens.

Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. There's no one like him.

No one compares to him. And so the whole tone of the psalm is one of ardent, intimate and reverent adoration. Adoring the majestic name of God.

[7 : 54] And you don't need me to tell you that in our own lives, in the world we live in, and even in our churches, it's become really out of vogue. To spend time dwelling on the majesty of God.

But we have to pause and do that. We have to pause and dwell on the majesty of God. Because if we don't, then we will end up with a God who's far too small.

We'll end up with a God who is simply a moralistic deity. He commands us to do things, but he is not able to judge and save. We could end up with a God that's therapeutic.

He comes to comfort us, but he's not a God who can transform us and glorify us. Or we can end up with a distant God who's powerful, but he's unconcerned.

And he doesn't actually come down to us in the midst of our cries for help and help us. So we have to pause here, and we have to dwell on the majesty of God, or else we'll get everything else wrong.

[9 : 01] And practically speaking, there's lots of ways to do this. But one that I would submit to you over the next six weeks quickly is just take whatever psalm was preached on the Sunday past.

And choose one verse from it each day. And memorize that verse. Sometimes less is more. And just spend time with that one verse.

Give thanks to God. Praise him for who he is in it. Confess how you don't acknowledge him as this sort of God. And invite him to change your life.

And slowly but surely, we will start to see the majesty of our God. And it will change us. And I was just having a conversation with somebody from the young adults group at St. John's called Ecclesia.

We meet on Wednesdays. And I was cooking with this young woman. We're cooking dinner for Ecclesia. And she had just come back from about a two-month trip at an intensive Bible school for two months.

[10 : 08] And she was really thrilled about what she learned. So I asked her the question that is impossible to answer. So if you could boil it down to one or two sentences, what was the most life-transforming thing for the last two months?

And surprisingly, she could actually answer. She was very, very animated. Which is a frightening thing when you have knives involved in a kitchen. But she said this.

She said, Jordan, my discovery is very simple. And this is what it is. My whole life as a Christian, I thought the Bible was about me and discovering who I am. She said there's some truth to that. But all I learned over these past two months is that the Bible is primarily about God and discovering who He is. It was so simple. I needed to be reminded of it.

And as I chatted with this 19-year-old young woman as we're chopping vegetables, I saw a joy. I saw a wonder.

[11:10] I saw a zest for life. And I saw a passion for the Lord and for other people that I hadn't seen before in her. Because that's what happens when we start to see the majesty of God.

It fills us with fresh joy and purpose and meaning. And we start to see that life makes sense in His eyes. Yes, there's lots of mystery and there's lots of difficulty.

But we are the creatures of the majestic and living God. And that's a wonderful thing to behold. And so we spend time pausing at the beginning and end of our psalm to say, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

But in the middle of the praise of God's majesty, the psalmist moves to reflect upon the dignity of being human.

And the two are connected. The psalmist moves from adoration of God's majesty to astonishment at human dignity. Look at verses 3 and 4.

[12:24] He looks at God's majesty in verse 3. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man that you're mindful of him?

And the son of man that you care for? You see what's happening here. The psalmist has begun by looking up at the stars and looking at the heavens and saying, they proclaim your glory and your majesty, O God.

And sitting in awestruck wonder at God's adoration, how wonderful and majestic he is. And then when he goes on to realize that that majestic God is mindful of and cares for human creatures, that he has set his love on us, he steps back in astonishment and goes, whoa, the dignity of those creatures.

He's taken back. You see, the majesty of God doesn't diminish the dignity of human creatures. It's the majesty of God that gives human creatures dignity.

And we got to wrestle with this. We got to capture it. And so the psalmist goes on in verses 5 and 6, and he gives us more. He reflects back on Genesis 1 and the original creation of humans.

[13:46] And he says in verse 5 that they were made to be glorious. Yet you made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

Made to be glorious. And then he says God gave those human beings who are glorious a wonderful and very important vocation. Verse 6, You have given him dominion over the works of your hands, and you've put all things under his feet.

Notice the royal imagery. Crowned all things under his feet. This is ancient royal imagery. Human beings have been created with dignity to be conduits of God's loving and just and good rule and reign on earth.

We've been given this wonderful vocation. And it's just astonishing. And I would like to pause here for a couple moments because I think there are two radical implications for our lives of this view of what it means to be human.

It's astonishing. And the first is that we must uphold the dignity of human beings wherever it is threatened and belittled.

[15:03] Wherever it's threatened and belittled. And we see this a bunch of places in our lives, don't we? I mean, it doesn't take long to look at the headlines.

You could think of the Orlando shootings of this past week. Horrible. You could think of the Syrian refugee crisis, which has been with us for so long now.

You can think of the innumerable places on the face of the earth where child sex trade still goes on. You could think about the ways in which our culture is now being tempted and lured into belittling the youngest stages of human life and laws of abortion.

We could be lured into and tempted into seeing how our culture is belittling the older stages of life and euthanasia.

And what this says to us is that the dignity and glory and honor of human beings is something that must be defended and it must be upheld and it must be recognized.

[16:08] And it can only be upheld and recognized when we see that it is a gift from the living God. It's a gift from the living God.

I mean, look at the verses here. When it's talking about the glory of humanity, God is the subject the whole entire time. Look at verse 4. God is mindful of human beings and cares about them.

God made human beings and crowned them with glory. God has given them dominion over the works of his hands and God has put all things under their feet. You see, what happens here is that when we reject God, anytime we reject God, what ends up happening is we end up belittling the dignity of human beings that he's given to them.

I remember coming across this point a few years ago. I was reading a book by a 19th century French Jesuit thinker, of all things, called *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*.

And he was actually arguing that for all of our humanistic emphasis on the human person these days, if it's cut off from any relationship to God, it actually becomes incredibly inhuman.

[17:23] And he said, because human beings were made in the image of God and our dignity, our worth, our glory is received as a gift from him. So with this death of God movement, he said that we have going on in our culture, which he thought was a bit ridiculous to say that.

God can't die. But the death of God movement, you push God away and all of a sudden, you don't, the dignity of human people starts to fade away as well. And we run the temptation of belittling human dignity in a whole bunch of ways.

So we must defend it. The second important thing is that we have to remember that this dignity and worth, as I just said, is not self-derived or self-achieved.

We didn't create it. We didn't earn it. We didn't achieve it. We didn't construct it. It's all God's action, all his relationship, and all his movement.

And I think, friends, this really frees us up a bit. I mean, I don't know about you, but how many times have we tried to kind of prove ourselves, our dignity and worth in the eyes of others by achieving something, by maybe knowing more about something, maybe by criticizing another person.

[18:47] I mean, innumerable ways in which we, in a culture that bases so much of our value and identity on merit, try to achieve and define ourselves by what we do, and this just completely frees us of it.

It frees us of that and lets us receive dignity as a gift from God and then live in the freedom of that dignity and vocation. And so we see that there are innumerable implications of this beautiful picture of the dignity of humankind here.

God has created human beings glorious as little kings and vice regents who are to mediate his rule and his reign on earth.

But if you're anything like me, if you're really honest with yourself when you read this psalm, this feels a little too pristine.

It almost seems a little too good and a little distant. When we look at the world around us, we realize that there's not a whole lot of praise of God's majesty.

[20:00] And when we look at the world around us, we see there's a lot of attacks on human dignity. And we realize that something horrible has gone wrong. Adoration of God has been replaced by apathy across the board.

Wonder at God's marvelous creation has been replaced by cynicism. Responsible dominion over the earth he has given us has been replaced with selfish exploitation.

Care for the people that he made and imprinted his image on has given way to envy and contempt. And glory and honor of humanity has been replaced with shame and disgrace and distrust.

And in the midst of all the chaos and all the brokenness of our own lives in the world, we may very well wonder how in the world will psalmate ever be true of us, let alone this world?

And the New Testament wrestled with this question, friends. The New Testament wrestled with this question. And the only answer the New Testament could come up with was a person, Jesus Christ.

[21:12] In Hebrews chapter 2, the author is meditating upon the Lord Jesus Christ and he says, Jesus has done Psalm 8 for us.

He's brought us back to the glory that we were intended to have. It goes something like this, he says, the high and majestic God that Psalm 8 worships and praises has come down and taken human flesh upon himself.

You see verse 8 of our Psalm, verse 5 of our Psalm, you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings. Jesus has come down and taken our flesh.

And then Hebrews quotes the latter half of verse 5, and crowned him with glory and honor. Hebrews says, that's because Jesus lived the life we could not live and died the death we rightfully deserve.

so now God has crowned him with glory and honor. And then Hebrews quotes verse 6 and says, you have given him, Jesus, dominion over the works of your hands.

[22 : 17] You've put all things under his feet. And Hebrews says, that's because Jesus is now at the right hand of God and everything, not just animals, but all creation has been put under his feet.

And all sin and all death has been put under his feet and all people have been put under his feet because Jesus Christ now reigns as the living Lord of the universe.

And as you go on to read Hebrews chapter 2, he says the most amazing thing. He says, why is Jesus Lord? Why did he come down and do this whole thing for us?

He said, so that he may bring many sons and daughters to glory. You see what's happening? Jesus comes down. takes our nature upon himself, restores our dignity.

He comes up into the presence of the glory of God and then he invites us to once again experience the glory that we were created to have from the very beginning. Honored in the presence of God, fully alive and flourishing in Jesus' name.

[23 : 27] O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. When we sing that, we sing it primarily to the Lord Jesus Christ now.

As Paul said, who has been given the name that is above all names so that at the name of Jesus every knee may bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.