

# Dying With Jesus: Love and Glory

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[ 0 : 00 ] If you're new to St. John's and you don't know me, my name is Aaron. It's wonderful to be here this morning. Our passage is John 12. It's a huge passage, a lot of stuff going on.

But I really want us to zoom in just on the first six verses. Just the first six verses. And they're all about God's glory, which is a huge topic, theme in John.

And our reading starts, you see there in verse 27, by saying Jesus is troubled. His heart is extremely agitated. I mean, the cross, you know this, right?

The cross is one week away. And he's praying to God. And the gist of his prayer is this. He says, what's coming down the pipeline is horrible, but I won't avoid it.

Father, glorify your name through what's coming. And God responds audibly to the prayer in verse 28. And then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.

[ 1 : 04 ] It's a remarkable line and a remarkable prayer. And do you see what it's saying there? It's saying that everything that God has ever done and everything that God will ever do, the purpose is to make his glory known.

That God's primary goal is to be praised and glorified. Now, straight away that raises two questions, doesn't it?

The first question is, what does the word glory mean? That's a good place to start. Second question, we don't generally like people who seek after admiration and praise.

So why is it okay for God to seek after it? Right, first question. What is glory? Let me give you one definition. I think it's a really good definition.

Here it is. Glory. It is, well, it is at least the combined magnitude of all God's attributes and qualities put together. I'll say it again. Glory is at least the combined magnitude of all God's attributes and qualities put together.

[ 2 : 11 ] Now, let's dig a little bit deeper here because the word glory itself is a very interesting word. It literally means weight, as in heaviness. And how does that help us understand what it's trying to get at here?

Well, let me illustrate with a little picture here. Imagine rolling a boulder off a cliff into a pond. When the boulder hits the water, the water has to move out of the way, doesn't it?

It has to get out of the way, and probably the water will quake and maybe flood out over the pond.

Now, the boulder has, what's the advantage of the boulder? It's got more weight. It's got more glory, so to speak, than the water.

So what does it mean to say that glory is weight? It means this. It means that it's talking about robustness, about thickness, about heaviness.

So when Jesus prays, Father, glorify your name, he's praying, Father, make your name weightier, more important, more significant than anything else, so that everything else has to get out of the way.

[ 3 : 15 ] Now, what does that mean for us? Why is this important for us to kind of get this idea? It's because when we understand God's glory, when we get it as much as we can, it should hit us like that boulder, and we should recognize that boulder.

God's glory has more weight and substance and goodness and more permanence than anything else in my life. It has more substance and more importance than my comfort, than my goals, my achievements, my marital status, my status in society, my bank balance, my job.

But, it's not just this interesting concept, right, that's kind of out there. It's something we should pray for, that we get it.

Because when we get it, when we understand it, when we comprehend it, as we do that, it helps us work out things that we should love in our life and things that we shouldn't love as much.

It helps us think through what things we should be aiming for in our life, what things we should prioritize, what things are more important than our own security and comfort.

[ 4 : 28 ] I mean, that's the reasoning behind Jesus' prayer, isn't it? This is the attitude Jesus took when going to the cross. He's about to face the worst thing anyone's ever gone through. And we're not just talking about the physical pain of the cross.

Christ's soul was terrified because he was going to be separated from the Father. You know this, that his relationship with the Father is beginningless and more intimate than any human relationship that's ever existed.

And the cross meant that that relationship was going to be cut off for a time. And so Jesus, facing this hellish prospect, he prays. And in his prayer, he recognizes this is really hard.

This is going to be horrible. His comfort was on his radar. But as awful as the cross was, the glory of God was more important to him. And that's why he could go through with it.

Okay, that's a quick definition of glory and some implications for us. The second question I brought up at the start here is, If God's main purpose, his primary activity, is glorifying his name, like I said, I mean, we don't normally like people that are about glorifying themselves, do we?

[ 5 : 41 ] Or at the very least, we'll feel sorry for people who are attention-grabbing. So why is it okay for God? It's a good question, isn't it? Glad you asked it.

Here we go. Let me begin with a statement that hopefully I can back up. Here's a statement. God's aim to glorify himself is good.

And it's good because it's an expression of love. Start again. God's aim to glorify himself is good because it's an expression of love. See, the reason we don't like self-promotion in others is because it's always masking something unhealthy in that person.

I watched a documentary on Netflix the other day called Being Ginger. And I don't know why. It was just there.

And it's about a red-headed guy in the UK who was trying to find love. And his experience was, strangely, that he found out that women don't particularly find red-headed men attractive.

[ 6 : 52 ] And so he made this documentary about looking for love. And he lived in, he was in sort of one of the Oxbridge kind of places, right? And it sounds like it's just a ridiculous documentary, right?

But the more this guy talked about his life, it was quite a moving story, actually. It turns out he was horrendously bullied as a child, horrendously bullied.

And towards the end of the documentary, in this sort of epiphanal moment, he's at a cafe and he's talking to the camera. And he's just been doing all this kind of, like, work trying to make this documentary and find love and get girls to like him and stuff.

And at the end of the documentary, he sort of says, you know, the reason I'm making this ridiculous thing and doing this ridiculous self-promoting is because I'm so broken and so insecure.

So I thought this is a great example of unhealthy self-promotion. So what makes God's self-promotion different? Well, it's different, of course, because God is uniquely perfect and completely self-sufficient and infinitely loving.

[ 7 : 51 ] And here's the good stuff here. The best thing God can do for us is make himself known to us. Because the thing that we need more than anything else in the world is him.

So we actually want God to promote himself. We want God to make his greatness known. If he gave up self-exaltation, we would be the losers in this.

So I'll say that again in a different way. God is for us. He's for you. He's for us. Which means he must be for himself. So seeking his own glory, it's not the act of an insecure being.

It's not the act of somebody who needs somebody to tell them that they're cool and nice and attractive and great. It's the act of a loving and generous heavenly father. We were made for him. In order for him to love us, he must be for himself. His primary purpose must be glorifying himself. Right.

[ 8 : 54 ] Where are we in the sermon? You'll be delighted to know we're at the halfway point. We have talked about God's great desire to see himself glorified, and that's a good thing.

And as we comprehend God's glory, our lives should be changed. It changes our priorities. It should change our agendas. And this is exemplified in Christ's prayer, who chose his father's glory over his own comfort, over his own safety.

Now for the second half, I want you to notice something specific about Christ's prayer. When he's praying, God glorify your name, he's talking about something in something specific.

It's not a general just glorifying your name in general. He's saying glorify your name in the cross. Now how can a cross, how can crucifixion, this brutal, gruesome thing, glorify the father? Well the passage in verses 31 and 32 gives us four ways that the father is glorified. So here we go, four ways in quick shot. One, world judgment. Two, devil eviction.

[10:00] Three, Christ's elevation. And four, cross magnetism. Okay, I'll say them again. World judgment, devil eviction, Christ's elevation, cross magnetism.

We're going to spend two minutes on each one of those. Okay, number one, world judgment. Verse 31. Now is the judgment of the world. That's what it says there.

So God is glorified through the judgment of the world. And what does that look like? Well it looks like two things on the cross. The big story is this. So God sends his son as a representative to the world, the supreme revelation of God.

And what does the world do with God's supreme revelation? We beat him and we nail him to a tree. So on the one hand, we have the brilliance of God's grace in sending his son.

On the other hand, we have the brutality of the world in rejecting him. How does this look like judgment? Well, God judges the world by exposing its character.

[11:04] He exposes what the world actually wants to do to God. But it's not all he does. As well as judging the world, God, the grammar of this is not quite right, but he judges Jesus as if he was the one guilty sinner on earth.

So the punishment for all the wrong and anger and violence and abuse of the world, it falls on Jesus on the cross. He pays a penalty for all our greed and violence and selfishness.

It's all laid on him. So the world's evil is exposed. And at the same time, the sentence is passed and Jesus pays the price. How is God glorified in all of this? How is the weight of his character on display here?

Because we simultaneously see justice and mercy. Justice, the world is judged. The world is exposed.

Mercy, the price is paid by Jesus, not us. Okay, the first one. Number two. Devil eviction. God is glorified by casting out Satan.

[12:11] That's the second half of verse 31. He's described as the ruler of this world. Now indulge me with a little preamble to this one here. I know in our culture, in our time, belief in the devil, it can seem like, you know, the beliefs of sort of a primitive people or a naive people, the kind of thing that simple people buy into.

Many people would think that, you know, the belief in the devil has got no place. There's no place in modern society. That's what some people would think.

But if you are trying to explain the state of the world, if you try to explain the current state of the world, without the existence of the devil, without talking about evil, folks, it's you who's naive.

I mean, it's true. There is systemic injustice. There is psychological imbalance. There's stupid people doing stupid things. And that accounts for a lot of stuff.

But as well as that, there is a spiritual evil in the world. There is a supernatural intelligence. And the danger is, if we reject that idea, we will misdiagnose and we will underestimate what's happening in the world.

[13:21] And we won't know how to solve it, which is what's happening today, of course. Folks, the devil is real. He's around. He's wreaking havoc. Now, back to the text. Back to the passage here.

So what does it mean that Jesus says the devil has been cast out? Note there that Jesus calls him the ruler of this world. Well, how is he cast out? Let me explain with a couple of verses from Colossians 2.

Wonderful, wonderful stuff. Let me read it to you. Two verses. Having forgiven us all our trespasses by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands, this he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. You see what it's saying? Satan's only weapon against us is unforgiven sin.

And on the cross, Satan was disarmed. Jesus took that weapon from him. Now, the devil is still around causing trouble, and God will deal with him with finality at some point.

[14:28] But Satan no longer has a claim on you. He can no longer accuse you. Now, how does this glorify God? Well, God is so merciful and just brilliant.

Isn't God brilliant? Think about it. Okay. The worst thing you could do to somebody, we did to Jesus. And God used that very same thing to deal with our great enemy and save us. Isn't that remarkable? Right. Where are we? Okay. God is glorified in four ways on the cross. One, world judgment. Two, devil eviction. And three, Christ's elevation.

Verse 32. Jesus says, and when I'm lifted up. So there's a double meaning, of course, here. Jesus will be physically lifted up on the cross. But it's also a coronation of sorts.

His crucifixion is a type of coronation, the cross being his throne. And this isn't what the Romans had in mind when they put him up there. Because for them, crucifixion, it wasn't just, the point wasn't just to kill somebody.

[ 15 : 36 ] It was to humiliate them. You know, the cross was a political thing. The idea was that the status of the crucified person would be decimated.

And the comparative grandeur and power of the empire elevated. This is not what happens. The opposite happens. The glory of God is elevated. And the brutality and evil of the world is exposed. How does this glorify God? Because the nature of God's kingdom is on display here. The kingdom of God is not going to be one built on fear and coercion and human power and money and strength and selfish ambition.

It's going to be founded on grace and service and humility. Generosity. Number four. God is glorified by cross magnetism.

Verse 32. I want you to notice the sort of definitive I. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

[ 16 : 40 ] Goodness, there's a lot to say about this one here. I'm just going to say one thing. We've heard a lot about the amazing characteristics of God this morning, right? His grace and his mercy and his forgiveness, his service, his glory.

God's incredible. Who wouldn't want to serve this God? Who wouldn't want to give their lives to this God? Well, the short answer is we wouldn't. We wouldn't.

Because all human beings in their sinful state, in their fallen state, given a hundred chances, a thousand, an infant number of chances, will always choose to be their own savior, will always choose to be their own Lord, would never choose Jesus.

But God, what God does is he opens the eyes of some so they'll see the truth. Now, where am I getting this out of the passage? It's the word draw. Jesus says, I will draw people.

That draw word, it's a great word. You might be surprised to know it means to violently drag. So it doesn't mean like, hey, come over here.

[ 17 : 44 ] It's grabbing something and pulling it. And the New Testament's used for like when fishermen would grab the nets full of fish into their boats. If you're here and you're a Christian, Jesus has brought you into his kingdom, kicking and screaming.

How does this glorify God? What kind of God would go through what he went through to save people who reject him, who put him on a cross?

What kind of God would do that? One that you can trust your life with. One that you can trust everything you have with. Let me close up here.

We covered a lot of ground this morning. And rather than summarizing, I'm just going to ask you three questions. Three heart questions. One, does your heart say, because of what Jesus has done, I believe my judgment's over?

Or are you carrying the weight of guilt still? Two, does your heart say, because of what Jesus has done, Satan has no claim on me?

[ 18 : 53 ] Or are you still attentive to his lies? Does your heart say, I believe Christ purchased me, drew me in, and I am invincibly secure in him?

Or do you doubt your salvation? Folks, if you had trouble answering in the positive for those questions, come to the cross.

Come to the cross daily. Witness the glory of God on the cross. Do that and know the forgiveness of God. The victory of God. And the example for how you should live your life.

Amen.