

Glory Alone

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 September 2017

Preacher: Rev. Jeremy Graham

- [0 : 0 0] Let's pray. Blessed Jesus, we can add nothing to your glory, but it is our joy that you are who you are and that you are so gloriously exalted at the right hand of God.
- And now we long to behold your glory more and experience your glory in us. Amen. Well, good morning, everyone. Today's the last week in our five-week series on the five solas of the Protestant Reformation.
- And sola is Latin for alone or only. And about 500 years ago, these five onlys became key slogans in the Reformers' preaching of justification by faith.
- And so the Protestant Reformers preached... Just think about the five solas in total now as we end this series. They preached, salvation is by grace alone, without us earning or deserving at first.
- It's through Christ alone, without needing any other mediator, whether a priest or a saint or the Virgin Mary or anyone. It's by Scripture alone and giving supreme authority to God's Word over any human tradition or religious experience.
- [1 : 0 7] It's by faith alone, putting our whole trust in Jesus Christ, therefore not by working to earn God's favor. And finally, this is what we'll look at today, all glory belongs to God alone, which means that we don't take the credit for anything that He does in saving us or that we do in response.
- And so the five solas are kind of like the five digits on your hand, right? Grace, Christ, Scripture, faith, faith, and glory.
- And if there are four fingers, soli deo gloria is like the thumb. It helps you to grasp the other four.
- And soli deo gloria, it weaves them all together. It's like as if you can imagine you're braiding five strings together and it's this glory alone, sola, that is the cord that binds them all together.
- So it's very important that we understand what is the glory of God. The glory of God is His character on display. It's His holiness, His righteousness, His goodness.
- [2 : 1 7] It's His majesty and His steadfast love. The Hebrew word for glory, it has connotations of a weightiness and a splendor. And so the slogan, soli deo gloria, it's important to know it's used in two senses.
- First, it means that God reveals His glory to us and glory belongs to God alone for everything that He does, everything that God does.
- All the actions in human history from creation to the last day and Christ's return. So for example, what is it that the angels say at Jesus' birth to the shepherds?
- Glory to God in the highest, right? But then second, soli deo gloria also refers to our response in giving God the glory for all that we do.
- It's a motto, sort of, of praise and honor to God in our daily lives. And as an illustration, sometimes we'll do Bach cantatas here at St. John's, and you might like to know that J.S. Bach, at the end, at the closing, after the closing note of all of his cantatas, what did he write?

[3 : 27] Soli deo gloria. May this only be for the glory of God, what I've done, this beautiful thing that I've done. And all of the solos, therefore, promote this sense of God's glory.

And they most especially promote it in that very important word, alone. We don't focus on that word, alone, very much. Why is that so important? Because soli deo gloria was the reformer's response to the church's error in giving glory to all manner of other things.

You see, the church 500 years ago, the Catholic Church, it was, the glory of God was being shared with the Pope by making his authority unquestionable. It was being shared with the church institution by building glorious buildings like St. Peter's Basilica.

It was being shared with saints and with relics. And, you know, we shouldn't think that even 500 years later that we're not tempted to share God's glory too. I think in the evangelical Protestant church, particularly two things come to mind.

We share God's glory with charismatic, you know, very likable charismatic Protestant leaders. And we love to share God's glory with the idea of large enthusiastic gatherings.

[4 : 44] You know, that's the origin of evangelicalism is these huge revival meetings and we still kind of love that God's glory must only be in these large enthusiastic gatherings. But the reformers responded to all of these by saying, no, God alone gets the glory for everything that he does and everything that we do.

And the story that we just shared with the kids, I hope you were listening because that was the first part of my sermon and I hope you were listening. The story we just heard from Luke 9, this is a very important story and a great place for us to begin to see God's glory and to experience Christ's glory in us.

So it would be very helpful if you have your Bible open with me. I'm going to get mine. And we're looking at verses 28 to 36. We're going to look at this under two headings.

First, the glory of Christ and then Christ's glory in us. So first, the glory of Christ. And we see this glory revealed to us here in two ways particularly that I want to point you to.

First, what's seen and second, what's heard. What's seen and what's heard. Look with me at verse 29. Jesus is up on a mountain with Peter, John, and James.

[6 : 00] And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered and his clothing became dazzling white. Jesus' divine glory is revealed here and he becomes literally bright like a flash of lightning.

And these three disciples, they see an unveiling of the true identity of Jesus. His divine glory which is reminiscent of what Moses saw the Lord God reveal to him on his Shekinah glory on Mount Sinai in Exodus.

That's what is seen. And then second, and even more importantly, what is heard. The glory of Jesus here is revealed by two speakers. The first is Moses and Elijah from the Old Testament and the second is God the Father.

Look with me at verse 30. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, Moses and Elijah are two bigwig Old Testament figures, right?

Moses representing the law and Elijah the prophets. And what did they talk about? You already heard me say to the kids. They talked about his departure or literally his exodus.

[7 : 10] They're speaking about his death which is coming very soon in Jerusalem. But to help us understand what the heck that's about, we need to see the second voice. And the second voice is God the Father speaking from heaven.

Look at verse 35 with me. The next column. And a voice came out of the cloud saying, This is my son, my chosen one. Listen to him.

Three punchy phrases. And each one is carrying a lot of weight behind it from the Old Testament. So stay with me here. This is really important. This is my son first.

Psalm 2 verse 7. Psalm 2 declares that Israel's Messiah or King will be God's son. And so here, at the transfiguration, God is confirming that Jesus is his son and the rightful king.

My chosen one. Isaiah 42 verse 1. Isaiah 42 is about the suffering servant. It's a person who will suffer and die on behalf of Israel's sin in order to bring reconciliation with God.

[8 : 13] And so here, God confirms that Jesus is the suffering servant. And finally, listen to him. This is from Deuteronomy 18 verse 15. In Deuteronomy 18, Moses is at the end of his life and he's promising that a prophet will come after him who will speak with absolute authority and power from God.

And so here, God confirms that Jesus is that voice. this is my son, my chosen one. Listen to him. He's the king. He's going to be the suffering servant. He speaks with all power and authority.

So in sum, that's what I just did. Why does this matter? Why does this even matter? If Jesus' glory was only in what was seen, there's not much of a surprise to us.

It would actually look a lot like what we saw from Vancouver and winning at sports and beautiful church cathedrals. Because it's easy for us to understand how in dazzling beauty and raw displays of power, glory is revealed.

But what is revealed in these two voices, the Old Testament witness and the voice of God the Father, that is another side of the glory of God, the glory of Jesus Christ.

[9 : 30] We see that the glory of Jesus is fully revealed, not just through being that mighty king, the Messiah that's promised in Psalm 2, but also in taking that role of the suffering servant and fulfilling the exodus of humiliation and suffering on the cross.

In other words, to truly behold Jesus' glory, we need to see that true glory and the cross are not incompatible, that they come together in Jesus Christ.

In fact, that Jesus' death is central to his glorification because it is by his death and resurrection that glory comes to us sinners. It's by his death and resurrection only that glory can come finally to us sinners.

Praise God for that. And this leads us to the second and much shorter point, which is Christ's glory in us. Look with me at verse 33.

As the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, Master, it's good that we're here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses, one for Elijah, not knowing what he said.

[10 : 43] Question for you, what are these tents for? This is not West Coast glamping. This is, this is, these are shelters or booths.

They are temporary houses. Think of it that way. And Peter wants to make a little village for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. And you know what else? He gets to be there too.

Here's the danger for Peter and for you and I. It's that when we begin to glimpse the glory of Jesus Christ, our first desire is to capture it, is to hold on to it, is to prolong it, to control it in some respect so that it's all glory and no suffering.

Peter would have been perfectly happy if they could have just stayed up on that mountain rather than going to the mountain of Golgotha. Peter, he wants this tremendous high never to end, right? I mean, who wouldn't?

But it's the voice of God himself that rebukes Peter in verse 35. We already read it. And reminds him that this mountaintop experience is not where the fullest glory lies. We need to be reminded of that too.

[11 : 47] God declares who Jesus is and what he's come to do and then he gives a final command in verse 35. Listen to Jesus. And it's as we listen to the glory of the gospel revealed in God's word that we receive Christ and the Holy Spirit, he unites us with Christ so that Jesus' glory becomes our glory and soli deo gloria becomes our longing and the cry of our heart.

So let me try to wrap up by applying this in two ways. first in the church. Again, when you see a cathedral filled with a thousand people under Gothic arches it's easy to believe that God's glory is there.

But what about when you have 12 university students cramped in a one bedroom apartment at UBC and it's a wet rainy night. Where's the glory in that?

But you see lives are transformed there as young people open God's word and they obey that instruction to listen to Jesus and put their trust in him. And this is precisely how the church grows to the glory of God and Christ's glory works itself out in each of those lives in humble circumstances as well as grand ones.

Or what about in our families? I mean, when we celebrate our child's graduation or when we are gathered around the Christmas table and there's four generations there, it's easy to see how God's glory is on display. But what about when we find ourselves sitting at the bedside of a loved one in a tiny cramped hospital room at one in the morning?

[13 : 25] Or we face returning to a hostile workplace day after day where there's never a gentle or kind word spoken. Where's the glory in that? But Christ's glory is revealed in us and through us as we cling to him in all manner of circumstances, as we put our trust in him alone and seek his face.

He delights to display his glory in our weakness and he delights to display his power in our desperate need as well as in our triumphs. I hope I don't need to say that. He loves to show his glory in our triumphs too though they be few and far between.

He fixes our eyes not only this understanding of glory it fixes our eyes not only on our future hope but it helps us to walk with him in our present reality.

Christ in us the hope of glory. For I consider Paul says that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us. So Soli Deo Gloria is not a platitude it's not a Christian religious slogan or an advertising slogan.

It is good news it's like a compass that reorients us towards home. And as it comes to bear in our lives we begin to see the glory of Jesus revealed in his saving work for us.

[14 : 52] And we begin to follow him day by day longing to see Christ's glory revealed in our lives and declared on our lips. And we look forward to that last day when Christ's glory will be fulfilled in all things.

Soli Deo Gloria Praise be to God. Amen.