

John 12:27-50 “The Quest for Glory”

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Before we jump back into John's gospel today, let me give you a heads up that next week we are beginning a summer break from our study of John, which by the way we are over nine months into and over halfway through.

I think that's pretty good. We're going to get back to the events of the final week of Jesus' life leading to the cross. But as we've been seeing in John the person of Jesus lifted up over and over as the one in whom we are to find life, I want us to spend a few weeks talking about what it actually looks like for us to live with Jesus, to depend on His grace, to walk with Him day by day.

So that's what we're going to do this summer. I'm excited about that series. But before we break for that next week, let's see this morning Jesus in His glory held up before us again.

Jesus has just entered Jerusalem where He's hailed as the coming King, but on a humble donkey, not a mighty war horse.

[1 : 33] And then as the Gentiles come to see Him, He begins to recognize the hour of His death has come. The hour, John has so often pointed out to us, is not here yet, is now upon Him.

God has made that clear to Jesus' spirit. And we'll pick up the reading at verse 27, where as He discusses His coming death, Jesus says, Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?

Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.

Then a voice came from heaven, I have glorified it and I will glorify it again. Then the crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered.

Others said an angel has spoken to Him. Jesus answered, This voice has come for Your sake, not mine. Let's pray.

[2 : 48] God, might we gathered here this morning hear Your voice. Would we see Your glory?

Oh, Holy Spirit, we need Your help for that. So would You speak to us clearly? By Your Word, we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

You and I are on a quest for glory. We long to make a difference in the world, don't we? To have a lasting, memorable impact on those around us.

To be significant to someone. In the Bible's terms, as we'll see, we are seeking glory. In fact, every person who has ever lived since the beginning of history has been doing this all of our lives.

As I track this quest through different seasons of life here for just a minute, you see where you recognize or remember yourself. As kids, we desperately want to fit in, don't we?

[4 : 03] Not to be left out or ignored, overlooked or picked last. To be valued by a group of friends or eventually by that special someone who will tell me that I matter.

Or failing that, I'll have to stand out so that they'll call my name and I get a diploma at graduation or a trophy at the end of the season or a medal at awards day and I'll hear my name and that will tell me that I'm important.

The quest for glory. It's why young adults often go on a journey to find themselves, right? It doesn't always happen in that season of life, but I've met with several people in their 20s recently and heard a very similar theme from several of them.

I've chased money, women, career, and as one of them told me, quote, I'm trying to decide what really matters. Or in the words of another, I just want to settle down and focus on what's really important in life.

So can we talk about God? The quest for glory is why parents of teens hurt so deeply when they feel ignored or unappreciated by someone that they've spent day after day for years pouring their

lives into.

[5 : 39] That's why many people around my age hit a midlife crisis, right? They wonder if they're really investing their lives in something worthwhile or if their investments are actually going to last or if they should do something entirely different.

The quest for glory causes many in retirement to struggle with what to do with themselves because their work has made them feel significant like they mattered for so long and now, well, what am I going to do now?

It's especially challenging as we get older and we fear being alone. Who will care for me? We fear being forgotten.

Will I matter to anyone? Or we even fear forgetting. What if I can't remember why I'm important? Or who values me? See, the lifelong quest for glory is one that God created us for, but it is fraught with failure.

[6 : 49] Trying to get my significance from other people or, as many have tried more recently, to give value to myself. I'll matter because I believe I matter.

It just doesn't seem to work. Wherever you are in that quest today, and I'd say we're all somewhere, look at how Jesus guides us.

It is really hard and yet so hopeful at the same time. Jesus' soul is troubled.

Just as at Lazarus' tomb, he's stirred up, unsettled, deeply emotional in the face of death.

It's like that moment in Gethsemane when he prays that this cup would pass from him, and then he prays, Father, not my will, but yours be done.

[7 : 48] It's that kind of moment here. Look at the beautiful submission as he wrestles with God, asking him to deliver him from this hour, this death, this agonizing separation from his Father.

And then Jesus says, What? No, this is the hour I came for. It's why I've obeyed at every turn. And he concludes, Father, glorify your name.

Wow. Wow. The biblical words for glory bring the idea of weight, heaviness. Something like a mountain or an ocean has glory because it has matter.

It literally matters, right? You don't ignore it when you're considering getting from one side of it to the other. It is glorious. There's a weight to it.

Nick Saban's opinion about football matters more to you than mine does. I'm confident of that.

[8 : 59] If it's overtime and the game's on the line and you run his play rather than my play, you're giving him the glory. If that's what glory means, to carry weight like that, Jesus shows us who has it, doesn't he?

Jesus is troubled, but in the midst of that overwhelming emotion, he is deeply committed to God's glory, no matter what it costs him, right?

Let's run your play, Father. Let's do it your way. Nothing and no one matters more to me than you.

God's glory, see, weighs so heavy for Jesus. God's will is so primary for Jesus. God's person looms so large for Jesus that it produces costly obedience.

In Jesus' case, all the way to death on a cross. Father, glorify your name.

[10 : 11] Then all of a sudden, the people around Jesus are startled by a thunderclap, they think. A voice that says, I have glorified it and I will glorify it again.

Oh, there are many, many ways that God has glorified his own name, aren't there, in creation. And displaying his power and his majesty for us to marvel at.

But I think especially here, God is speaking of the signs. The signs he's been showing the people through Jesus as he has become flesh to reveal God's character.

And then displaying his glory over creation, over sickness, over death itself. That's what he's talking about.

And he will, as Jesus asks, glorify his name again, specifically through the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. As Jesus seeks God's glory, rather than valuing his own comfort or peace, God's glory is ultimate.

[11 : 22] He is the weightiest, the most important. We glorify God because he glorifies himself, doesn't he?

Glorify your name. What matters to you? What carries more weight? God's name being shared with your neighbors or your comfort being maintained.

God's design for your sexuality being followed or your desires being satisfied. God's command to love your uncool neighbor being obeyed or your longing to fit in with the cool kids being achieved.

See, those are glory issues. Not just day-to-day decisions. Those are glory issues. God has true glory.

Will God be significant, big, weighty to us? Well, maybe you say, I'm not exactly sure yet, pastor.

[12:37] How do I even engage with this true glory? John has a consistent answer to that question. It's echoed in this passage. We engage with God's glory by seeing God and believing who he is.

It's why Jesus is here, right? To show us the glory of God since we haven't seen God. Remember chapter one? Jesus says this thunderous voice has just spoken.

Why? For your sake. So you will see true glory and that you'll believe. And so Jesus then talks about both unbelief and belief connected to glory.

That's the rest of the chapter. I'm gonna read now first the unbelief part at verse 37. Though Jesus had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him.

They meaning many of the Jews who had seen these signs. So that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled.

[13:54] Lord, who has believed what he heard from us and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe. For again, Isaiah said, he has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart lest they see with their eyes and understand with their heart and turn and I would heal them.

Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him, Jesus. Isaiah spoke of a Messiah. That's the first quotation here.

A Messiah who would not be attractive to people. No beauty or majesty. We esteemed him not. God's arm, God's strength is gonna be revealed differently from what most longed for their Messiah to be. So just as in Isaiah's day when people didn't believe God's message, part of what was going on there was a divine hardening so that the Jewish rejection of Jesus, this so-called Messiah, would take him to the cross.

God's plan, right? And share then the riches of his grace with Gentiles. God's glory would be spread as a result. But then as always, there's a human responsibility for unbelief held right there alongside divine sovereignty.

[15:28] People motivated by what they consider to be most weighty. Verse 42. Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in Jesus but for fear of the Pharisees, they did not confess it so that they would not be put out of the synagogue for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

They saw God's glory, right? Intellectually, what Jesus claimed appealed to them. But they loved glory from man more than glory from God.

Their position, their comfort, their reputation, their way of life was bigger in their eyes. It mattered more than God did.

So they couldn't live for his glory as Jesus did. It's unbelief here, not from some atheistic philosophy, but from a lifestyle of self-focus.

Don't let God get in my way of my life. Friends, if you know that feeling, one of the most significant things is that you listen now to Jesus' appeal to everyone, especially those who are unbelieving, who are seeking glory but missing this true glory.

[17:02] What does Jesus say? He says, believe in me. I am showing you the very glory of God. Verse 35, the light is among you for a little while longer.

Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light that you may become sons of light.

Again, verse 44, when he's faced with the unbelief again, Jesus cried out loud for emphasis. A summary here before he goes away from the people, his final appeal to them, what is it?

Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge.

[18:16] The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment, what to say and what to speak and I know that his commandment is eternal life.

What I say therefore, I say as the Father has told me. Whoever believes, whoever believes in me, believe in the light while you have it.

You, even you who have heard before and not believed, even now can become children of God who experience his greatness, who rest in his love and so live your life as you were created to for his glory, that can be you today.

Jesus couldn't be more urgent in this plea, could he? It's an invitation to you. It is in fact a command to believe. Listen, friends, believe in the light while you have it to point you to the true glory.

While you sit today under the preaching of God's word to reveal his glory, today is the day of salvation. Tomorrow is not guaranteed to any of us, not a one of us.

[19:35] The story is told of Satan calling some demons together to pick one of them to send to earth with a message that will ruin human souls.

What do you got? One says, I'll go and tell them there's no heaven. Satan said, nah, they won't believe you. There's a bit of heaven in every human heart.

In the end, everyone knows good will triumph. Another demon said, oh, I'll go and tell them there's no hell. Satan said, nah, they won't believe you.

Every human heart knows not only will good triumph, but also evil will be defeated. And then one other demon said, oh, I'll go and I'll tell them there's no hurry.

And Satan said, you go. Distract them with the notions of human capability, of worldly fulfillment, of living for self, of busyness all the time, of the tyranny of the urgent, the weight of the world all the time until they neglect the weightier matters of God, the true glory, the lasting issues of life eternal, and they start to treat those weighty things lightly to give them attention once a week, to make them sidebars in their life.

[21:08] Friends, the God of the mountains and the oceans, the God of your life, of my life, the God of all glory came to us in the person of Jesus to speak words of eternal life, to tell you what really matters so that we would know him and trust him and find life in him.

I don't want one of you to miss out on that for one more day. He is where life is found. He's calling for you to come believe in him and have life.

You say, well, Pastor, I like that, but I'm just not sure I've got so many questions. There's so many things you haven't answered yet. I'm willing to consider it, but there's a lot of evil in this world.

You're right. I believe there's a God, when I look at the oceans and the mountains, he must be powerful and creative, but I can't imagine I could have a relationship with him.

I see that. Pastor, I'm interested, but I don't want my life to change so much when I start saying that he matters the most. That's scary.

[22:24] Yeah. So what one place, if I'm trying to decide, where can I look? If I'm really wrestling with this, if I'm brave enough to test God out, what's the one place I can look to really get the best glimpse of his glory, to know what he's really like?

Give me one vista that I can look out over and ponder for a while. Should it be the Grand Canyon? I mean, that is a glorious place. Maybe it's the Gulf of Mexico.

I got summer vacation coming up. I go to the beach and I'll think about it. It's beautiful. I want to encourage you. I want to urge you to go to the cross of Jesus, to gaze on Jesus there for just a little while.

Remember, the way that we glorify God is by seeing him and believing who he is. God is glorified when his character is revealed.

And he says, there is no better place to get a glimpse of me than the cross of Jesus, to let the weight of who I am really sink in to your soul.

[23:38] This is what Jesus tells us here. You can hear the power of God and the thunder, the voice, but that voice says that he's actually going to show his glory again.

Jesus explains that this is where it comes from. Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. Here's where it's all happening. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. The Gentiles, even.

Everyone, everywhere, drawn to a dying king? The people listening understand what Jesus means, what he's talking about.

They say, can you really be the divine Messiah if you're about to die? And what does Jesus say? Believe me. Now, I'm headed to the cross to die and so many won't believe, but you can still be sons of God simply by trusting me.

[24 : 50] Trust yourself to me. I'll take you to the cross and then you'll rise with me too. That's where to look. Look at the cross.

Okay, well how does the cross show me God's glory? I'm looking, I'm looking, what do I see? What does it reveal about who he is? Let me give you three pairs of character qualities for God that I think will allow us to marvel together for a couple minutes here as we wrap up.

First, we look at the cross, we see God's holiness and his nearness. The cross shows us God is holy, completely other, different, set apart, totally pure, far from sinful people.

He can't stomach sin and he is near to broken sinners, isn't he?

Weeping with us, bleeding for us, agonizing in our place the way only a sinner deserves to hurt.

[26 : 05] Do you see him like that on the cross? believing that that's who God is means in your life when you suffer or you hurt, you embrace the truth that you're not alone, are you?

Because God is near the brokenhearted. If the sin of the world didn't keep him away, neither will your failure, right?

Believe that. What glory there is. Can you believe that even the worst you could do can't keep God from you? Believe him.

Next, God is self-exalting and self-sacrificing. The cross is the moment of great divine victory over his arch enemy.

It's the moment that Jesus says he is lifted up. It's the moment that God through darkness in the middle of the day draws the spotlight of all of creation on himself to show what?

[27 : 19] Some amazing act of grandeur, some miracle, some powerful sign to show that he's sacrificing himself, enduring pain, standing apparently defeated in the place of his creatures.

Paradoxically, God is so far beyond us that he's not too good for us. Do you see that at the cross? Do you believe that in the sacrifice of himself, God displays his highest and greatest glory?

glory? Do you see how important his glory is to him and how tremendously valuable you are at the same time? Too good to believe that those things could be true together?

Yes, he is that good. You gazing at the cross with me? There's Jesus.

He's crying out with the only breath that he can muster. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? What's happening?

[28 : 37] The justice of God is crashing down on the sin bearer. God, in his justice, is punishing sin as it deserves even a glimmer of God's glorious justice should make us quake in our boots at the seriousness of sin.

Is the weight of sin's just desserts reflected in our lives? Or do we live like we think of sin but lightly nor suppose the evil great?

We tremble at God's justice and we also rest in a God who will judge evil, who will make things right. We need his justice, don't we?

He is a God of justice and yet the God of justice is a God of grace. Even as he totals the unimaginable debt of sin, he pays it all.

The enormous price to have us in relationship with him, doesn't he? The curtain is torn. You are welcomed into God's presence. You are set free from all of your sin, past, present, and future into relationship with him.

[29 : 56] You'll never pay for it. God is that gracious. Do you believe that when Satan tempts you to despair and tells you of the guilt within?

Do you know it glorifies God when you respond, Jesus paid it all. In the cross be my glory ever.

My faith has found a resting place. His wounds for me shall plead. It is enough that Jesus died and that he died for me.

He's holy and he's near. He is self-exalting and he's self-sacrificing. He is a God of justice and a God of grace.

This is the glorious God Jesus is calling you to trust and no other. Seeing him and believing who he is is what you were made for.

[31 : 02] It's your chief end, your highest purpose, glorifying God. The relationship that you long for is with him, the one with true glory.

Give weight to his view of you. Know that his words matter more than any others. Marvel at him until your heart says, to God alone be the glory.

And when you do that, you will actually find glory. glory. Your quest for glory will culminate.

And you may ask how? How does God's having glory actually help me to find glory? That doesn't make any sense. Listen, I need to connect this dot.

Don't miss this. When you soak in the love of God for you on display most extravagantly at the cross, you will know that you matter forever.

[32 : 12] And it won't be from some other person who gave you a trophy or someone else who promised to be faithful to you and broke your heart. It won't be a career you threw yourself into so that no matter what anyone else said, you could tell yourself that you were valuable and have a bank account and a house and a car to back it up.

It won't be your own beauty, your own capacities, your own performance, or anything at all, which is so wonderful because all of those glories can be easily lost, can't they?

You will have glory. You will matter. You will be valuable because the God of the universe, the Lord of all glory, gives himself in exchange for you at the cross.

Can you believe it? You are precious. You are valuable. You matter. you have glory. No one and nothing can ever take that glory away from you, even if the person you love dies, or you get to where you can't remember their name.

Even if you lose your job, you have an accident, you can't work. You can't care for your kids anymore.

[33 : 37] You will still have glory. Glory from the one who has and shares true glory.

It's the only way to have it. And he gives it to you. And Jesus wants you to believe this for the first time this morning, or for the thousandth time.

He wants it to come home to your heart. So he gave this sacrament to his followers as a memorial of his death. In fact, as more than a memorial, as a spirit empowered assurance that he has shared his glory with you.

That's what you're going to taste. It's why he sat with his disciples on the night he was betrayed and took bread and he broke it and he gave it to them.

As I'm ministering in his name, give this bread to you. Jesus said, take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

[34 : 46] And in the same way after supper, he took the cup and said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. drink from it, all of you.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. God sets this table to eat with us and he also warns us to examine ourselves as we see this table before us and consider coming to it.

If you come here glorying only in the cross of Jesus, repenting of other sources of glory your heart often chases after, living in glorious peace with his brothers and sisters, then come and celebrate with us.

If you examine yourself this morning and you find that actually other things carry more weight than God for you, that other people that you refuse to love or forgive as he has, that there's other hope besides the blood of Jesus that you are holding on to, then don't come take this sacrament.

But Jesus invites you to believe in him. He invites you to come. You can come up to these tables this morning and have a front row seat to see his love, his sacrifice, what he would do for you to give glory and to show you how precious you are to him.

[36 : 28] Come and see his love, believe in him and have life eternal and glory eternal that will never be taken from you.

Let me pray and then we'll come celebrate together. Lord Jesus whether we know you and come to taste your body and blood again or whether we're not sure what you're about but we're watching a picture of something that's unlike anything we've seen before.

Would you work by your spirit faith in our hearts that we might believe something we didn't even come here to believe this morning, that we might remember our value comes from you, the Lord of glory.

We might rest in a God who would give himself for us. Meet us in this time, use common elements for a holy purpose we ask in Jesus' name.
Amen. For more information visit us online at southwood.org. bater