

The Glory of God

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[0 : 00] Good morning friends, if you'd like to grab your Bibles, if you haven't got them open, I'd be very grateful if you did. More than me being grateful, it's actually crucial that you have your Bibles open.

We want to see God's glory, we want to see God's glory in the face of Christ, and we get that by gazing upon the Word of God. So let me pray. Father God, we have just been warned from John 12 about the unbelief of the Jews who saw the Lord Jesus in all his glory, they saw his miraculous signs, they did it in their presence, and yet, Father, they did not believe.

Their eyes were blind, their hearts were dead, and so Lord, we pray that you would rescue us from such unbelief, from an inability to hear, from an inability to see your glory.

And as we come now, particularly, Father, I ask, Lord, that you would help us to be amazed at who you are. We ask, Lord, that you would give us that appropriate awe and reverence as we understand who you are.

And if our view of you, Father, is smaller than who you are, Lord, I pray that you would so bless us with insight this day that our lives would be changed.

[1 : 31] We pray, Lord, that we might respond as Isaiah did, woe to me, I am ruined. So bless us with such humility, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

In the United States, you can buy a Jesus doll, pre-packaged, with a sawn-off shotgun. That's right, Jesus doll, sawn-off shotgun, buffed up, no shirt, just a pair of tight little shorts, lovely shotgun there.

Now, if that's a bit butch for you, that's not the image of Jesus you want. You can buy the huggable Jesus. He's obviously much softer, and you can push him and squeeze him at certain points, and he says nice things to you, much like some of the teddy bears that we got at home.

You push him and says, I love you, and all sorts of nice things like that. And so you can get the huggable Jesus, which you push, and it'll say nice and cute things which make you feel good. It's particularly helpful if you're feeling a little low.

You can't help but think that in much of modern Christianity, we have domesticated God.

[2 : 57] You can't help but think that bit by bit, God's majesty has been chipped away with, and now he fits into nice little Christian products which sit on our shelves, which I pull off the shelf in order to give me a little bit of a boost when I'm feeling a little low.

Jesus has been turned into a social worker who wants to hear from me how I'm feeling more than anything else. So I want to ask you this morning, what does the glory of Christ mean to you?

What does the glory of Christ mean to you? You see, the big problem is that when you make little of God's majesty and his glory, then you make little of your sin and your brokenness.

The two are connected, intertwined. You cannot separate them. And I believe that this is the reason why much of the Christian church today is dying, dead, or impotent.

So let me suggest to you that revival happens, and let me be frank, I want revival to come to St. Paul's and to my life and to yours. Revival happens in our lives when we see God majestic in holiness, and when we see ourselves as disobedient dust.

[4 : 23] Brokenness, repentance, unspeakable joy of forgiveness, the taste of the magnificence of God, a hunger for his holiness, to see these things more and to live them more and more.

That is revival. And it comes from seeing God. So let's do that now. Isaiah chapter 6. If you have not got a Bible, there should be one in the pews in front of you there somewhere.

Or shift seats now to be with someone who's got one on their lap. And let us gaze at the glory of God. Isaiah 6, verse 1.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sit on a throne, high and exalted. And the train of his robe filled the temple.

Above him were seraphs, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces. With two they covered their feet. And with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another, holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.

[5 : 36] The whole earth is full of his glory. At the sound of their voices, the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

There are at least seven glimpses of God in those first four verses. So let's look at those seven things. Firstly, God is alive. King Uzziah is dead, but God lives on.

Psalm 90, verse 2. Before the mountains were born, or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. God was the living God when this universe banged into existence.

He was the living God when Socrates drank his poison. He was the living God when Captain James Cook first put his boot on Australian soil. He was the living God in 1966 when Time magazine put out a front cover which said, God is dead.

And he will be the living God 10 trillion ages from now when all of our collective puny potshots at him against his reality will have sunk into oblivion like a pebble in the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

[6 : 51] He is alive. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. There is not a single head of state in all of the world right now who will be ruling in 100 years.

The turnover in world leadership is 100%. In a brief 120 years, this planet will be populated by more than 10 billion new people, brand new people, and all of us and the current 6.5 to 7 billion of us at the moment will have vanished off the face of the earth just like Uzziah.

But not God. He never had a beginning and therefore depends on nothing for existence.

He will never have an end. He always has been and he always will be alive. Secondly, I saw the Lord seated on a throne.

We see that God here is authoritative. It is no mistake that throughout the Bible there is no vision of heaven where you ever catch a glimpse of God ploughing a field, cutting the grass, shining his shoes, filling out reports or loading a truck.

[8 : 20] Heaven does not require maintenance. God is never at his wit's end in his heavenly realm. He sits. And he sits on a throne.

All is at peace. All is in control. The throne is his right to rule. We do not give God authority over our lives.

He has it whether we like it or not. What utter folly it is to act as though we had any rights to call God into question or his authority into question.

Few things, I believe, are more humbling. Few things give us more of a sense than the raw of the raw majesty of God than that he is utterly authoritative.

After him, there is nowhere to run. There is no appeal. Nowhere else to turn to. Thirdly, we see here that God is all-powerful.

[9 : 32] The throne of his authority is not one among many thrones. It is high and lifted up. I saw the Lord seated on a throne high and exalted.

That God's throne is higher than every other throne signifies God's superior power to exercise his authority. no opposing authority can nullify the decrees of God.

What he purposes, he accomplishes. God says a little later in Isaiah 46, I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still yet to come.

I say, my purposes will stand and I will do all that I please. in Daniel 4.35, speaking about God, he does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.

To be gripped by the all-powerful sovereignty of God is either marvellous because he's with you or absolutely terrifying because he's against you.

[10 : 44] indifference, my friends, to his all-encompassing power simply means that you have not seen God.

The sovereign authority of the living God is a refuge full of joy and power for those that are his. fourthly, we see that God is magnificent, he is gorgeous, he is glittering, he is dazzling.

I saw the Lord sit on a throne, high and exalted and the train of his robe filled the temple. Now you may have sat up all night and watched the wedding of Charles and Diana back in 1981 as many Australians did and I remember on that day as a kid trying to work out why I was up all night but

also the talk I remember when she came out of the carriage and the train of her dress just kept going and of course there was a number of women in the room just going ah, ah, ooh, ah, look at that and I'm like it's a dress you know as a kid it's a dress but I still see it now 25 feet long it seemed to have covered all the steps of St.

Paul's Cathedral in London at that time but what would it mean if she walked in and she kept going and the train of her dress filled the choir stalls the pews the pulpit everything and it was all made from one fabric what would you say then wow and that the fact that God's robe fills the entire heavenly temple not St.

Paul's Cathedral in London the entire heavenly temple means that God is incomparable in splendor he is magnificent he is dazzling the fullness of God's splendor shows itself in so many ways in this world one little example is the species of fish who live in the dark dark dark depths of the ocean that we cannot even see with our physical we cannot go there you need machines to go there and take photos of these things these species of fish have their own built in lights some of them have got lamps which hang from their chins some of them have noses which glow some of them have eyes which are kind of like headlights they can see around in the darkness they are spectacularly weird and beautiful and there's not just one or two there is thousands of these species down there why are they there when I can't get my fishing line to them why are they there and why are there thousands of them there because

[14 : 01] God is lavish in his splendor and his creative fullness spills over into excessive beauty and if that is the way the world is how much more magnificent must this God be who thought it up and brought it into being just by a word and therefore fifthly God is revered above him were seraphs each with six wings with two wings they covered their faces with two they covered their feet and with two they were flying no one knows what these strange sixth wing creatures with feet and eyes and intelligence are they never appear again in the Bible at least not under the name seraphim one thing is for sure given the grandeur of the scene and the power of these angelic hosts we had best not picture chubby winged babies fluttering around the ears of our

Lord according to verse four when one of these creatures speaks the foundations of the temple shake and if I ask Samira to turn this speaker up right now as far as he could go I could not do that here at St.

Paul's Chatswood even with the aid of this thing there are no puny or silly creatures in heaven only magnificent ones and the point is this not even they can look upon the Lord nor do they feel worthy enough to be in his presence to even leave their feet unexposed to leave their feet exposed they cover up in his presence great and as good as they are untainted by human sin as they are as powerful as they are as splendid as they are they revere their maker in great humility and if one of these creatures was to appear at the foot of your bed tonight in all its brilliance and all its power you would want to die in its presence with the fear would be horrendous how much more will we shudder and quake in his presence who cannot even endure the splendour of one of his creatures oh friends how far have we moved away from the glorious and splendour of this God when Australian Christian television puts out little jingles like when we get to heaven what do you think he'll say he'll say g'day

I don't know what he'll say but it won't be g'day six God is holy and they were calling to one another holy holy holy is the Lord almighty and the whole earth is full of his glory what to say about that the possibilities of language to carry the meaning of God eventually run out and it spills over the edge of the world into the vast unknown the word holy carries us to the brink and from there the experience of God is beyond our words there is nothing more to say the reason I say this is that every effort to define the holiness of God ultimately winds me up coming straight back to the first point and saying God is holy means that he's God

God is God the root meaning of the word holy is probably to cut or to separate a holy thing is cut off and separated from common we would use the word secular use earthly things and persons are holy as they are distinct from the world and they are devoted to God and so the Bible speaks of things like holy ground and holy assemblies and holy Sabbath and holy nation and holy garments and holy city and holy promises and holy men and holy women and holy scriptures and holy hands and holy kisses and I'm not sure what a holy kiss is the only definition I can describe between a kiss and a holy kiss is probably two minutes that's all I can work it out I'm not really sure but almost anything can be holy providing it's separated from the common and it's devoted to God but what do you do when you apply that definition to God himself from what can you separate God in order to

make him holy the very godness of God means that he is separate from all that is not God [19:53] God is one of a kind in a class of himself in that sense he is utterly holy and then in the end all you've said is that he's God or if the holiness of man derives from being separated from the world and devoted to God to whom is God devoted so as to derive his holiness no one but himself it is blasphemy to say that there is a higher reality than God to which we must conform in order to be holy God is the absolute reality beyond which there is only just more of God when asked for his name in Exodus 3 he said I am who I am that's it to me that doesn't seem terribly helpful I am who I am his being and his character are utterly undetermined by anything outside of himself he is not holy because he keeps the rules he wrote the rules

God is not only holy because he keeps the law the law is holy because it reveals God he is absolute everything else is derived from him in the end God is holy in that he is God and he is not man he is incomparable his holiness determines all that he is and he does and he is determined by no one or anything you can call it his majesty you can call it his divinity you can call it his greatness you can call it his godness you can call it his value you can call it whatever you like but in the end the language runs out in the word holy we have sailed to the end of the world of language and we've got nowhere else to go and so what do we do when we sit there at the end of the world when all of our language and all of our trying to understand who this god is have a cut 220 but the lord is in his holy temple let all the earth be silent before him there is nothing more to add but before the silence and the shaking of the temple and the filling of smoke we learn a seventh and a final thing about this god holy holy holy is the lord almighty the whole earth is full of his glory this god is glorious the glory of god is the manifestation of his holiness god's holiness is the incomparable perfection of his divine nature his glory is the display of that holiness okay god is glorious means that god's holiness has gone public it's on facebook it's in the newspapers it's everywhere that's what it is it's gone public his holiness has gone public in levticus 10 3 god says among those who approach me i will show myself holy in the sight of all people i will be honoured or another translation i will be glorified when god shows himself to be holy what we see is his glory when the seraphim say the whole earth is full of his glory it is because from the heights of heaven you can see all the world you can see the whole universe and you can see this universe reflects the splendor and the holiness and the glory of this god from down here the view of this god is limited and it's largely limited because we have exchanged the glory of god for things that give me frills right now according to romans chapter 1 and so the curtain of heaven is open and is i gets a peek and what does he do verse 5 woe to me i cried i am ruined woe to me i am ruined not don't hear me wrong when i say this god i've done things i shouldn't have done and things that i did do i shouldn't have done and didn't do things i should have done and sinned against you and against people and other things so woe to me i am ruined for i'm a man of unclean lips and i live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the king the lord almighty and what happened a little bit earlier in the scriptures what does it say you may not gaze upon the lord and live is i expected to die in the presence of this god in chapter five isaiah pronounced woes this amazing thing happens in chapter five he pronounced woe after woe after woe curses on the people of israel because they as it says in verse 12 there have no regard for the deeds of the lord no respect for the work of his hands but isaiah gets a glimpse of the glory of this god and what does he say hang on a bit just hold that thought these people over here need to see this forget about their woes forget about their curses woe is me having been confronted with the glory of god isaiah goes downward in humility he knows that he's not god when he's confronted with god and friends is that not the experience of peter that we saw in this service last week with the kids talk he's been out fishing catches nothing jesus takes him out gets a load of fish up on the boat and he doesn't go wow fantastic all this fish i can finally buy that house i can finally get off and finish my masters of fishing i can finally get the superannuation thing sorted out and i can go and retire down to egypt or somewhere else forget the fish fish he looks at jesus and this is how when simon peter saw this he fell at jesus knees and said go away from me lord i am a sinful man peter saw glory and we're confronted with jesus peter's own sinfulness is the thing that's exposed again the apostle john had a similar experience revelation chapter one i turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me and when i turned i saw seven golden lampstands and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and a gold sash around his chest his head and his hair were white like wool as white as snow and his eyes were like blazing fire his feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters in his right hand

he held seven stars and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword his face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance when i saw him i fell at his feet as though dead this is the same john who used to lean against jesus and when he sees jesus in all his resurrected glory it's not g'day he falls down as though dead and then he

placed his right hand on me and said do not be afraid i am the first and the last i'm the living one i was dead and behold i'm alive forever and ever i'm not dead i'm still reigning but it ought not be a surprise to find that peter and john's experience is the same as that as isaiah because they got a glimpse of the same god did you see what was read out to us mike read out to us a moment ago from john chapter 12 isaiah said this because he saw jesus's glory and spoke about him isaiah got a glimpse of jesus this one that we just spoke about is jesus not the little package jesus with the sawn off shotgun not huggable jesus the real jesus isaiah saw jesus glory in chapter 6 jesus is god's holiness gone public what isaiah saw is what peter saw and what john saw and this same jesus is the one who calls you and me to follow him if the magnificent creatures in the throne room throne room approach with caution with reverence and awe and respect how much more you and me in following the one this one jesus but you know what the great news is is when jesus says to his disciples praise in the hearing of his disciples father the time has come to glorify your son let let your holiness really go public now and he went to the cross and in that jesus humbling himself to the death of the cross is the reason why we can stand in his presence god in his ultimate display of glory is the reason why we can actually stand and gaze upon his glory and not be crushed due to his perfect humility and perfect sacrifice we no longer need to fear this god is judge when osiah called out i am ruined god deals with that situation by atoning for his sin so that he can stand in his presence in the boat jesus says to peter don't be afraid he says exactly the same thing to john don't be afraid it is only possible to stand in his presence because god makes it possible for us to stand in his presence god wants to dwell with people like you and me and the safest place in the world and i've said this a number of times i want to keep coming back to it the safest place in the world is at the foot of the cross with your face in the dust in humble submission that is what gets the gaze of the sovereign eternal god that is what draws his attention it is my hope and my prayer that this church that we will get such a glimpse of the glory of christ that we will declare war on pride let us be vigilant my friends let us never forget that it is humility that draws the gaze of this glorious god it is humility is the only way that we can stand in the presence of this glorious god it is not our small groups it is not our budget it is not the size of our church it's not how great the music is it's not the strength of the preaching it's not the number of congregations it's not how precise our liturgy it's not how well people people speak of us it's not even how well we speak of our history it is not the eloquence of

our prayers this is what is i god says at the end of isaiah this is the one i esteem in other words this is the one who draws my attention this is the one who i look highly upon he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word i am thoroughly convinced that there could be no effective christian growth in our lives that there can be no effective ministry or mission flowing out of this church without the cultivation of humility in the heart and the weakening of pride in our lives and so friends someday this all powerful sovereign god will blow and he will turn away every single completing glory and he will make his holiness known in awesome splendor to every creature but there is no need to wait you see we don't have to be satisfied with the cheap frills now we don't have to exchange god's glory for something else osiah job ezekiel jeremiah peter john and many of you have humbled yourselves to go hard after the holy god and have developed a taste for his majesty and so to you and all the rest who are just beginning to know it and just beginning to feel it i hold out this promise from god this god who is ever alive authoritative all-powerful spectacular gorgeous revered holy and glorious from is is is what the high and lofty one says he who lives forever whose name is holy i live in a high and holy place but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite amen to so the the it we know the the