

# For God's Glory

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Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, everyone. Great to be with you again this morning. If you'd like to keep your Bibles open there at Isaiah, that would be fantastic. This vision series, the title of it is All Your Life.

It's up there on the screen. All Your Life. And yet, it's not about you. Well, this is what Rick Warren says in the opening of his book, The Purpose Driven Life. He goes on to say that the purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness.

It is far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God.

You were born by his purpose and for his purpose. That, in essence, is what we've been engaging with over the course of this term, as we've looked at this topic of all of your life and God's purpose for you, for us as a church here at St. Paul's.

But a church like this, multi-ethnic, as we've already heard multiple times, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, is but a mere reflection of God's ultimate goal in history.

[ 1 : 21 ] The final picture of history and the goal of God's plan for history is in Revelation 5. We just had a little bit of it read out to us because we wanted to end there at the point where there's great tears in the heavenly realms because no one can open the scroll.

That's a problem. It's a massive problem because this scroll is the revelation of God's plans and purposes for all of history. And if you don't know what it is, if you can't open it, you can't read, you don't know what it is, then everything is purposeless.

And so there's tears because there's purposelessness in life. And then in verse 9 of chapter 5 of Revelation, the Apostle John tells us that Jesus is able to open the scroll and tells us why Jesus is worthy to open this scroll, this book of the end of history, so that everything unfolds according to the plan of God.

And he declares there that Jesus is worthy because of how his death relates to all races and tribes and peoples of the earth. We read, You are worthy to take the scroll to open its seals because you were slain.

And with your blood, you purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.

[ 2 : 49 ] That is the reason why Jesus is the one who can open the book of history and bring history to its ultimate goal and ending, is that by his death, he has ransomed for God, that is for the glory of God and for the worship of God, people from every tribe and language and nation.

Notice too that everyone who has been ransomed by Jesus is called a priest. That is, a Christian by definition is a full-time worshipper of God.

That's your job, if you like. That's your role, your full-time. You have been rescued from non-worship for worship. Jesus died to ransom worshippers for God from every race and language and cultures of the earth.

And the goal of all things is in Revelation 5, verses 13 and 14, if you've got that open. Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them singing, to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be praise and honour and glory and power forever and ever.

The four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped. That's it there.

That's the end of all things. That's the purpose of all things right there.

[ 4 : 27 ] That right there is what creation is about. This is what history is about. It's what the nations are about. It's what the races are about. It's what language is about.

It's what St. Paul is about. It's what my life is about. It's what your life is about. Right there. We exist to worship the magnificent and the gracious God.

And in the end, God's purpose is that we have been ransomed through Christ to do that, not just now, but for all of eternity, for our joy. And we will never live out that purpose now or follow through with any commitment that we might have made in this vision series unless we are captivated by him.

Mere self-will won't do it. Pulling up our socks and trying harder will not do it. We must be captivated by Christ. And our lives will never be captivated and giving glory to God, worshipping him, while ever we are captivated by far lesser glories.

While ever we are gazing on far lesser glories, we will never be captivated by the ultimate glory.

That ultimately, to cut to the chase, is what your devotional life is about.

[ 5 : 55 ] Your devotional life is about God's presence, is about seeing Christ in his word for his glory. We need to see God.

We need to gaze on his glory, to live life well. That is, we don't exist by bread and water alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

And my thinking of it is that we need that now more than anything. Anxiety and apathy are rising in our society and rising in the church after two years of COVID.

I think that the languishing stuff that I've spoken about previously is a very real thing for us. One example is our NextGen project. Now, don't even, you know, scold you on this.

That's not my intention here. We've got four days to go, and so far we've raised about \$13,000 of our \$70,000. Let me tell you, my experience here is I've not seen a response like that in 10 years at St. Paul's.

[ 7 : 21 ] And so therefore, my conclusion is that what we need now, even more than we need the rest of that money to make up the \$70,000 that we're after, we need to see God.

We need to see his glory and be captivated by him. And so I want to take, as we finish off this vision series, just take one last glimpse of our great God and why he is worthy of all of your life.

Why he is worthy for you to be captivated by him, to worship him, to adore him, to magnify, glorify him, and do everything to align to him. So let's go to Isaiah 6.

Isaiah 6 in one hand and St. Paul's app in the other, if you've got that. If you haven't, I think there's little code things, QR codes at the back of the seats.

We can get St. Paul's app up. Isaiah 6, which was just read out to us, towers like a majestic peak over the surrounding terrain of Isaiah.

[ 8 : 28 ] And it is of central importance to the prophecy of Isaiah. You see, in Isaiah chapters 1 to 5, the problem of God's people there is posed as corruption.

They're described as being corrupt. And they were corrupt because their increasing affluence, God's blessing on their life, their increasing affluence and wealth, led them to a dim view of God. That is, they looked at God and they loved their shiny money and bank accounts. They loved, they were captivated by that, by the ease of their life, the comfort of their life.

And so vision of God went like this as vision of their possessions went like that. And they felt secure. They were secure in their mediocrity. They were secure in their sin.

Just so long as they went through the rituals of their religious performance. What they need to see, what Isaiah need to see, was God, a greater glory.

[ 9 : 44 ] And I'm convinced that what we need to see is a greater glory. Because right now, after two years of COVID and a whole heap of other things happening in our world, frankly, just my own life in this start of this year has been awful start of the year, is to realize that those things are mere myths.

But God endures forever. So let's do that. Isaiah chapter 6. Three points. First point, glorious God. Like Revelation 5, the scene of Isaiah 6 is the throne room of God.

And there are at least seven glimpses of the greatness of God that I see here in the first four verses. And I just want to go through those seven things real quickly.

So you need Isaiah 6 open so that you don't look at me. I'm not glorious. God is glorious in his words. So let's look at there. First of all, we notice that God is alive in the year that King Uzziah died.

I saw the Lord seated on a throne. So Uzziah is dead. He's no longer sitting on his throne. He's dead. But the King of Kings still sits, is seated on his throne.

[ 11 : 03 ] Psalm 90 verse 2 says, of this God, before the mountains were born, or you brought forth the earth and the world from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

That is, he's the living God. He was alive and reigning on his throne before he banged this whole universe into space just by the simple speaking of a word.

He was the living God when the Great Wall of China was built in magnificent feet. He was the living God when in 1966, Time magazine put on its front cover, God is dead.

He was alive then. He will be living 10 trillion ages from now. Right now, that is, every head of state that's currently sitting on a throne or ruling a government right now will not be in existence within 90 years, including Putin.

He will not be sitting on any kind of throne. He will not have any palace at all. But the King of Kings will be ruling all things still. In a brief 120 years, this planet will be populated by more than apparently 10.9 billion brand new people.

[ 12 : 22 ] And the almost 7.9 billion that are currently alive today will be just like Uzziah, dead and buried. Gone. And in no time at all, the face of the events of world history will bear no recollection of our even existence.

We'll be gone. But not God. He is and he always will be alive. He never had a beginning and he never had an end.

That just blows the mind. I don't know, there's nothing in our world that never had a beginning and never had an end. Everything has a beginning and an end. Secondly, we see this God is authoritative.

Verse 2, I saw the Lord sit on a throne. There is no vision of heaven in the Bible that ever catches a glimpse of God cooking a meal, cutting the grass, shining shoes, filling out forms, loading a truck. Nothing like that. He always sits on a throne and that throne is his right to rule the universe.

[ 13 : 41 ] We do not give God authority over our lives. He has it. He has it already. We don't give it to him and he has it whether we like it or not. I think there are a few things more humbling.

Few things give us that sense of the raw majesty of God as the truth that God is utterly authoritative over everything.

That is, beyond him there is no appeal. There is nowhere else to go. Thirdly, we see that he is all powerful and beyond manipulation.

The throne of his authority is not one amongst many. He says, I saw the Lord sit on a throne high and exalted. That is, 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. Nothing. Power, sorry, authority is the right to rule power, power is the ability to rule.

[ 14 : 57 ] And God's got both. Nothing can stand in the way of his purposes being accomplished. Nothing. And as powerful and beyond manipulation he is, he is the just judge of all of humanity and he in the end will hold every single person accountable.

And so friends, to be gripped by the all powerful sovereignty of God is either marvelous because you know he is for you in Jesus or it is absolutely terrifying because you know he's against you. indifference kind of response simply means that you have not seen him for who he is.

Which much of western Christianity has not seen him for who he is, we have domesticated God into our image.

the sovereign authority of the living God is a refuge full of joy and power for those who are his. It is terrifying for those who are not.

[ 16 : 25 ] Fourthly, we see that this God is magnificent. As I said, I saw the Lord sit on a throne high and exalted and the train of his robe filled the temple. Now whenever I read this, my mind goes back 40-something years at the wedding of Diana Princess of Wales back in 1981.

I was a kid, I was 11 or something at the time when she got married. I remember having to endure the wedding service as an 11-year-old in the middle of the night because parents wanted to see this.

It was like a wedding party, not like a reception, I mean a wedding party. I just remember going to this house, all these kids there, we had all our beds lined up because we had to go to sleep and get woken up at like 1 o'clock in the morning or something like that to watch the royal wedding.

And I remember on the little dodgy TV, they were colour back in those days, but this little TV were all watching this royal wedding. And I remember as she gets out of the carriage and starts to walk

up the stairs of St.

Paul's Cathedral and the train of her dress just kept going and going and going. And as she's walking up the steps, I think it was mainly the women in the house, just went ooh, ah, gasp, you know, all this stuff.

[ 17 : 51 ] And I'm sitting there going, oh, let me go to sleep. But I just remember the gasping that was happening in the room. It was spectacular. It's like it covered the steps of St.

Paul's Cathedral in London. So what would it mean if the train filled the aisle and covered the seats and covered the entire cathedral and the choir loft and the pulpit and it was all woven from one single piece of thread?

What would that mean? Oh, massive gasp. You see, that God's robe fills the entire heavenly temple, not St.

Paul's Cathedral, but the heavenly temple means that this God is a God of incomparable splendor and beauty, magnificence. When you look at it, it's just gasp.

The best scenes in all of creation is just a fraction of the representation of the God who made it, of his magnificence.

[ 18 : 58 ] I don't even know if it's even possible to get the Swiss Alps and to make it even more spectacular. But you gaze on the Swiss Alps and you look at God, oh, he is phenomenal.

It just reflects him. His magnificence, his splendor, his beauty spills over in excessive creative beauty in the world, the wonder of creation, right from this world to the depths of the seas, to the farthest reaches of the universe, from the tiniest atoms to the largest landscape, simply displays him in some measure.

Fifthly, and you can see why number five is important, this 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.

Now, no Bible commentator really knows what these six wing creatures really are, they've got eyes, they've got feet, they've got intelligence. One thing is for sure, when you look at the heavenly throne room, we should not automatically have in mind, when we think of angels, chubby little babies with wings, fluttering around the head of God in some way.

It's very crucial that when we see here that when one of them speaks, in verse four, the foundation of the temple shakes, the foundation of the heavenly throne room shakes.

[ 20 : 35 ] That is, these are not chubby little babies with wings on, they are no puny creatures, there's no silly little creatures in heaven, only magnificent one. And the point of this scene is that not even they can look upon this God and nor do they feel worthy to leave and leave their feet exposed in his presence.

As great and as good as they are, untainted by human sin as they are, they revere their created God with great humility. humility. Now, this is crucial.

This is helping us to see the gap between you and me and him because when one of these angels, these seraphs, appears before a human being in the Bible, they normally begin their dialogue with the human being with the words do not fear or fear not.

That's because when we're confronted with one of these, we fear. That's immediate response is the fear. We automatically realize our lack of power, our impotence at that point.

But these angels themselves hide in holy fear and reverence in the presence of God. And the only appropriate response to this God is reverence, service and worship.

[ 22 : 06 ] The sixth thing we see is that God is holy. Verse 3, And they were calling to one another, holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory.

So what we have here is the possibility of language runs out. That is, how do we describe God? It kind of runs out. The word holy carries us to the brink, to the very edge, if you like, of the possibilities of language, of description, and beyond which experience of God is beyond our words. The reason I say that is that every effort to define the holiness of God ultimately winds us back, right back around, and simply say, God is God.

The meaning of the word holy in the Bible is to cut or to separate. A holy thing is to cut off or to separate it from the common use for devotion to God.

That's what it means to be holy. So what happens when you take that definition and you apply it to God? From what can you separate God to make God holy?

[ 23 : 23 ] holy? And the answer is the very godness of God means that he is in fact separated from everything else. He's separated from everything that's not God.

He spoke every single thing into existence. He exists in a very different way than all of the creation exists. We his creatures exist independent deprived finite fragile way but our creator exists in eternal self-sustaining necessary way.

Necessary in the sense that God does not have it in him to go out of existence in the same way that we do not have it in us to not go out of existence.

We necessarily age and die because that is our present nature to do that. We cannot do anything else but that.

Oh the blessing of eternal life. The blessing of eternal life. Only God necessarily continues forever unchanged.

[ 24 : 55 ] The God of the Bible doesn't need a support system. He doesn't need our praise and glory. He is one of a kind.

He is separated from everything. And in that sense it's just saying he's holy. God has life in himself. He draws his unending energy from himself.

His beginning being and his character are not determined by anything outside of himself. He is absolute. Everything that exists derives itself directly from him.

Everything derives itself from him. He is incomparable. His holiness determines all that he is and all that he does. And it's determined by no one and by nothing.

Call it his majesty. Call it his divinity. Call it his greatness. Call it his worth. Call it his value. Call it his magnificence. In the end language runs out to describe this God.

[ 26 : 01 ] God. There may be a lot more to know about him but it's beyond language to comprehend it. And so God graciously reveals it.

And that's the seventh and final thing that we see about God. That is he is glorious. Verse three again holy holy holy is the Lord almighty the whole earth is full of his glory.

Now this is the picture here trying to get the magnificence of this God. We start here in the heavenly throne room and we end Isaiah in the earth the world.

The very last chapter we're given a glimpse of God's grandeur again. Let me read to you what Isaiah this is what God says. This is what the Lord says. Heaven is my throne.

That's where we are. Isaiah 6. And the earth is my footstool. This is the only place in the Bible where the earth is described as the footstool of God.

[ 27 : 19 ] So just to give you some visual help here. This is mine. The cat sleeps on it most of the time and scratches it up. This is mine.

My footstool. God's footstool that he rests his foot on is almost 6,500 kilometers straight through. 40,000 kilometers if you go all the way around. It weighs something like 60 million trillion tons. I can lift this one up with two fingers.

It has a surface area of 510 million square kilometers, a volume of approximately 10 trillion cubic kilometers.

It spins at 1,600 kilometers an hour. And God says this is where I rest my foot. My throne is a throne over all the universe and I rest my foot on the world.

[ 28 : 24 ] And so as Habakkuk 2.20 says, the Lord is seated in his holy temple. Let the entire earth be silent before him.

In other words, how dare humanity make God in his own image? How dare we decide that we can give him the crumbs of our life and he'll be just happy with that because he's just a gracious God? How dare we determine what discipleship looks like? How dare we think we can negotiate with him about levels of commitment? Visions of all tend to leave us speechless momentarily, but not for long.

God's glory God's glory is the revealing of his holiness. That's what glory means here. God is holy, the whole earth will see me as glory.

Glorious. God is glorious means that God's holiness, his divine being and his character have gone public and when it goes public there is only one response.

[ 29 : 47 ] Leviticus 10 verse 3. Among those who approach me I will show myself holy in the sight of all people I will be honoured.

When God reveals his glory to his creatures the response of his creatures is to give glory, is to acknowledge what they have seen.

Glory, praise, adoration, magnification. To magnify God is to respond to his magnificence. We cannot glorify God without engaging with his holiness, with his character, with his being, with who he is.

You see, God wants to be praised for his praise worthiness, magnified for his greatness and his goodness. He wants to be appreciated for who he is.

God's glory showing requires glory giving and this is at the very heart, the very heart of true fulfilment for all of God's creation and especially humanity.

[ 31 : 06 ] glory giving joy to people as we glorify the glorious God. Now, here's the kicker for us.

The New Testament writers declare that the public display of God's nature, his character, his power, his purpose, his grace, who he is, has gone public for all people to see in the person and the role of God's son, Jesus Christ.

Now, in John chapter 12, there's a little verse there that, you know, you do your daily Bible reading and you read straight past this, you wouldn't notice it much. But John chapter 12, verse 41, is very explicit on this.

Isaiah said this, because it quotes from Isaiah, and then it says, Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.

See what John's saying there? John is saying that Jesus Christ is who Isaiah saw in the throne room of Isaiah chapter 6.

[ 32 : 29 ] That's who he saw, Jesus Christ. And Jesus is the one who radiates, reflects, mirrors, displays the character, the purpose, the power and the grace and the magnificence of our creator God.

The magnificence of what went public in Jesus was the plan, the work of grace whereby he saves sinners. And gathers them to himself as his new people, his new humanity, through his death and resurrection, for his glory, for the worship of his honour.

He's a magnificent God. But in Jesus we also see he's a gracious God. God's glory reveals that he's not just magnificent, but he's gracious.

You see, if my goal in life was to bring glory to myself, which ironically because of sin it is, but imagine I existed in my role here at St.

Paul's, your job is to glorify me. We would call that narcissism, we would call that egotism, there's a whole range of things we would probably call that. And that's because I am neither glorious nor praiseworthy.

[ 33 : 48 ] I'm like you, I'm a human being. For God, however, it's not egotism and narcissism. It doesn't point ultimately to God's divine ego, but to his divine love.

That is, his magnificence is directed towards love for us. God doing everything for his glory is in fact the foundation of his love for us.

God's commitment to his glory means his commitment to love and life for us, forgiveness and eternal fame for those who live for his glory.

But Isaiah didn't see this initially. This vision of God produces in Isaiah not worship but sheer terror initially.

Have a look there. Woe to me, I cried. I am ruined for I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the king, the Lord almighty.

[ 34 : 54 ] Woe to me. Woe to me are the very first words that Isaiah speaks in his entire 66 chapter prophecy.

Woe to me. He pronounces judgment upon himself is his first response in seeing God because he acknowledges that he himself is unclean.

unclean. The word there unclean is a general term in the Old Testament for all that is unfit to be in God's presence. I'm not worthy to see this and I'm not worthy to be here in his presence.

And for the very first time Isaiah sees that he is typical of his generation whose faith was unthinking, was glib, response to God was just rote.

Their mouths were not filled with worship but with flippant repetitions and self-justifying excuses.

And now Isaiah sees his heart for the first time because he sees God for the first time.

[ 35 : 59 ] And something wonderful happens. A seraph peels off from his flight path around the throne, diving straight for Isaiah. He's holding a burning coal that he has taken from the altar with the tongs.

But he's taking it from the altar with tongs not because it's hot. It's not that. He took this coal with tongs because what he has taken is a holy thing.

It's a holy thing. It belongs to the place of sacrifice. and atonement and forgiveness. And with it the seraph flies to Isaiah and gets this burning coal and it touches his lips.

My immediate response there is to go oh man burn. But not with Isaiah. It doesn't hurt him.

It in fact heals him. The seraph says to Isaiah your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for.

What we must see in the context of the whole Bible is that burning coal right there symbolizes the finished work of Christ on the cross for you and for me.

[ 37 : 21 ] Jesus is the one who went to the place of sacrifice for us. His dying love is the only power that can awaken people as dead to God as we are and his death heals us.

What should hurt us has healed us and he comes to us today through his word by his Holy Spirit and he says to us again and again and again your guilt is taken away, your sin is atoned for, welcome into the overwhelming delight of my presence until one day you will be there in my actual presence physically forever.

Which brings us to the last point of treasuring Jesus because this is what stands as John said, stands right over this church is why this treasuring Jesus is our mission statement, it's why we exist. You see when the magnitude of God's grace touches Isaiah, he's awakened in that moment to live for God. In that moment, God reveals himself to Isaiah, Isaiah is immediately terrified, sees his guilt, he's terrified, his sin is atoned for and he rises to serve God with joy.

When God says, well, okay, so who am I going to send now? Pick me, pick me. Oh, oh, oh, oh. At least one major purpose in God revealing his glory is for us to experience his compassion, his mercy, his grace, and his forgiveness for our joy.

[ 39 : 10 ] And what overflows from that is a life lived for the glory of Christ. Service of others. Every other glory that we might have in our world gets diminished, diminished, diminished, diminished.

You see, to effectively bring glory to God, it's got to be so much more than just mere external behaviors. Genuine worship is seeing God's glory and being moved with all of our life, our affections, affections that overflow with singing and praise and thanksgiving and living to please God.

This God wants us to love him according to Deuteronomy 6, 5. He wants us to love ourselves in him according to Psalm 37, verse 4. He wants us to worship him with gladness according to Psalm 100. In fact, he condemns dutiful obedience where there is no gladness and no joy in him in Deuteronomy 28, verse 47.

And that is our experience in life. I mean, imagine I was to buy my wife Nats and flowers and she is overjoyed in that moment.

[ 40 : 33 ] She thanks me for the flowers. Doesn't happen that much. Just to retrieve something there, she is away for the weekend, so it's a little bit more than flowers.

But imagine in that moment she gets the flowers, oh, she comes home this afternoon. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

And my response to her is, don't mention it, it's my duty. It's my duty as a husband. It's what I must do. I must do this.

I must sacrifice my money and my time for you. I'm assuming in that moment she's going to be offended in some kind of way. It's an insult to her honour and to our relationship.

She is honoured when I sacrifice and I give because it's my delight to do so. If it is a great sacrifice for us to do anything for the glory of God, it shows that we value something else more than him.

[ 41 : 41 ] It shows us what we value more than him. If we can't read our Bibles because I don't have time because of the TV, it's telling me that my comfort is more valuable than him or my entertainment is more valuable than him.

When he is our greatest treasure, then choosing him over lesser things is not even a sacrifice.

When we delight in his power, in his perfection, in his beauty, in his mercy, then our worship and service of him will glorify him.

God is dishonoured when all of our worship is just purely a service to him, just done as a duty. God is God desires to see him.

That we savour his mercy and his forgiveness and his acceptance, that we serve him with all of our lives with joy and gladness.

God is so let me just end very briefly. My sense is, as I said at the beginning of this, so many of us are struggling right now.

[ 43 : 07 ] Plans are shifting so fast. people who were signed up to serve today are now in isolation and lockdown because COVID in their families and bang, bang, bang.

Last night, this morning, a number of us are going bang, bang, bang, having to make changes shift. Anything that we got in paper lined up, it just shifts.

And what happens there is constant fatigue all the time. I've not seen my parents for nearly two and a half years, face to face for two and a half years, because of COVID.

And there's a fear now that if I book a ticket, if the airline doesn't get cancelled, I might get cancelled because of COVID. And that if I go there, a rat test may be negative, but I might be positive and give it to...

I mean, it's like multitude of decisions. And so many people are struggling right now. Anxiety, apathy is just rising, languishing.

[ 44 : 17 ] I've spoken about that before. So if you're struggling right now, or if you're in a rut spiritually, maybe you're steeped in sin.

Your one prayer right now should be, help me see you. Help me see you. I'm captivated by lesser glories.

I want things to return that they were because to me that was glorious. When I could plan my travel and I could plan my life, but now I can't. Captivate me with your glory as you open God's word.

And this might be the challenge for every single one of us right now and God's word. Your one prayer might be, as I read your word, help me to see your face and to know your presence.

I want to be captivated by you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 45 : 31 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.