

Glory Through Suffering

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. It's great to have all of you here in person and on the live stream. And we're glad to worship this Sunday after Easter. We have been preaching through the Gospel of John, and we will be continuing to preach through the Gospel of John in through the summer. So we will be continuing the series for those of you who are wondering what comes next. And today we'll be looking at John 12. John 12 is a unique chapter in the book of John. It is the hinge chapter. It is the end of the first 12 chapters that talk about the ministry of Jesus and His life. It covers approximately three years, and then the Gospel then transitions.

And the second half of the Gospel, 13 through 21, cover seven days. And the last seven days of Jesus' life and His death and His resurrection. And so it is a critical hinge point in the book.

And I want to begin this morning by reminding ourselves of what we have seen in these past few months as we've looked at John 1 through 11. We have seen Jesus turn water into wine so that the celebration of a wedding would continue. We've seen a moral and ethnic outcast, a Samaritan woman, brought to faith in Jesus. We've seen an invalid healed after 38 years of suffering. We've seen thousands fed. We've seen a sinful woman forgiven. We've seen a blind man's sight restored. We've seen a friend raised from the dead. And along the way, as Jesus has done these great signs pointing to who He is, He's also explained Himself, this is who I am. He said, whoever believes in Me shall have eternal life.

He said, I can give you water so that your soul will never be thirsty again. He said, I am the bread of life. If you eat of this bread, you will not die, but you will live. He said, whoever believes in Me will have fountains of living water springing up in them. He said, before Abraham was, I am.

He said, I am the light of the world. I am the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes though He dies, yet shall He live.

[2 : 3 2] This is the glory of Jesus that we have seen. And imagine those who were with Jesus in John chapter 12. They've seen all of this. And some, in response to this, believed in Him and rejoiced that He has come to see how He loves. He has come to love, to bring life, to welcome all to the kingdom of God. But others in spiritual pride were threatened by Him, rejected Him. He breaks the rules, they said. He says outlandish things, He usurps God. He takes power unto Himself. Many follow Him. But all of them saw His power. All of them saw His life-giving power. All of them saw the steadfastness as one who taught with authority.

glory. This is the glory of Jesus' ministry, is it not? Is this not the Jesus we have seen? And what more do we need to see of Jesus this morning? What more do we need to see of Jesus and His glory? And yet, as we will read in our passage in just a minute, for Jesus, the hour had not yet come for us to see the fullness of who He is and what He has done. Even in all these miracles, this was not the end. Throughout the first part of the book of John, way back in Cana at the wedding in chapter 2, verse 4, Jesus tells Mary, my hour has not yet come. After the healing of the man in Bethesda, He says, the hour is coming but is not yet here. After the controversy in the festival of booths in chapter 7, they could not arrest Him because His hour had not yet come. And then we come to our text this morning, which answers the question, where and what is the greatest display of Jesus' glory?

So let's read that passage together to answer that question and to look at it. We're in John chapter 12. We're not going to cover the whole chapter, good heavens, no. There's far too much in it. But we're going to focus on verses 20 through 28. So we're going to read this passage together, then we're going to pray, and then we'll dive in and try to answer that question.

John 12, starting in verse 20. Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus.

Philip went and told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus, and Jesus answered them, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loses his life, whoever loves his life loses it. And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

[5 : 49] If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. 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. And then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this morning and the chance to gather to worship you. We thank you for your word that speaks to us clearly about who you are. And Lord, I pray this morning that by your spirit, we would behold your glory. Lord, and that you would lay bare in our hearts the ways in which we have wandered, the ways that we have misunderstood you, the ways that we have misperceived who you are and what you've come to do. Lord, I pray that you would give me your strength this morning to speak clearly. And Lord, that we would together sit under your word, and that you would do your transforming word in our lives, that we might worship you in spirit and in truth. Lord, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. What do we see the glory of Jesus in? We see it in his loving, self-giving death. The sermon's going to be pretty simple this morning.

We're going to talk a little bit about misunderstanding and how we misunderstand glory and Jesus' glory, and then we're going to talk a little bit about clarifying how Jesus clarifies what his glory is about. So that's what we're going to do this morning as we look through it. So first, let's talk about how we misunderstand Jesus' glory. It's fascinating as you read through chapter 12, those around him misunderstood Jesus profoundly. In verse 4, you see Judas, the one who had betrayed Jesus, commenting and complaining about the way Jesus is receiving worship from Mary and the breaking of an ointment. You guys probably are familiar with that story. But he thought that Jesus was going to bring a social revolution to care for the poor. And so he was offended when Jesus received such lavish worship. Verse 16, a little bit further on, in the triumphal entry that we talked about two weeks ago on Palm Sunday, even as Jesus rode in on a donkey, fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures, it says the disciples did not understand this. They did not understand the significance. They did not understand what Jesus was doing coming in on a donkey until after the resurrection of Christ.

[8 : 54] Verse 19, the religious leadership of the day, the Pharisees, saw Jesus as a threat to their political and social power and their religious power. They saw him as one who was stealing away their following and their position in society, and they were threatened by it. And therefore, they responded violently towards him. And if we look on even in verse 34, as Jesus is teaching about himself, the people are asking him, who is the Son of Man to be lifted up? Who are you talking about? The crowds, nobody understood what Jesus was about to say in terms of why he had come.

Misunderstanding Jesus is easy, I believe. It's easy to misunderstand what Jesus has come to do. Thinking about our world today, I can think of a couple of examples, and I'm sure there are many more of ways in which we misunderstand Jesus and why he's come today. If we went to Houston, we could go to Joel Osteen's church, and he could teach us about your best life now. How Jesus has come to bring us glory by providing prosperity in our physical, earthly life.

That he has come to bring success in our careers. That he has become, he has come to bless us by increasing our bank accounts. We ought not to suffer setback or trial or loss. Those would be signs of faithless living or of distance from God. This is the message of the prosperity gospel, and it's out there. It's out there in lots of churches in America and around the world.

And it's a misunderstanding. I believe there's also a misunderstanding that was laid bare on January 6th, when people in the name of Christ, some, sought to, by force, impose an outcome on an election in an attempt to promote the kingdom of God, and one that they saw as God's anointed leader for our country. Now, friends, this is a complicated thing, and I want to be clear.

We did a great Sunday school on politics and how we ought to be properly engaged, and I'm not saying that we ought not to do this. But if we think that Jesus has come to bring America into moral alignment, or if we think that Jesus has come so that we, by political and social activism, might usher in the kingdom of God, if we place Jesus, if we believe that Jesus has ordained particular political leaders to save our society and to save our church and protect it, we have misunderstood what Jesus has come to do.

[12 : 02] Coming closer to home, maybe for some of us, the story of the evangelical church has shown many leaders who have failed to understand how Jesus has come because they have shown by their actions and by the way that they have led their ministries and their personal lives, ultimately, that they believe that Jesus has come for their own personal gain and glory, not his. So I think of people from Mark Driscoll to Ravi Zacharias, people for whom many of us may have been blessed at one time by their ministries, and yet who have shown in the end that their position in ministry and religious leadership has been used for selfish gain and promotion.

How they have questioned and silenced others who have brought concerns to them, how they used their power to hide from accountability and to excuse their sin.

How easily, even those who start out on a good path, believe that Jesus has come ultimately, and the sacrifices they have done for ministry, therefore, entitle them in ways to establish their own commitment commitment to comfort, to pleasure, or to power.

Friends, these are some of the ways that Jesus has been misunderstood in our culture today. We may be able to see them from afar, if we feel like those are far off from us, and denounce them as being misunderstandings.

Friends, we need to look into our own hearts as well. How easily do we think that Jesus has come for us, for our pleasure, for our comfort, to lessen our suffering and increase our joy?

[14 : 16] Here's some diagnostic questions that I want you to ask as you think about this question. What do you pray for? How do you pray for God's work in your life? Here's another one.

What do you invest in? For where your money is, there will your heart be also. What stirs your passion? What energizes your efforts and your energy?

As you lie in bed before you fall off to sleep at night, what consumes your heart in worry and fear? And what do these questions reveal about what you think Jesus has actually come to do for you?

Because we love a glory that is here and now, that is visible and easy, that will be seen by others and praised.

But as we come to this text, Jesus says, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And he goes on, truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

[15 : 34] But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Friends, this is even more clearly explicated in verses 32 and 33, where it says, where it refers to Jesus being lifted up, that when Jesus is lifted up, he will draw him into himself.

We have seen that this refers to his crucifixion in the Gospel of On. This refers to his death. Jesus says, the hour has now come for me to be glorified, and it is not in the resurrection, though there is glory and the resurrection too, but it is in the crucifixion itself.

The gruesome, bloody, tortured cross. The humiliating, shameful death of Jesus, where those standing around him reviled him and mocked him.

By the measure of any human standard, at that moment, Jesus had failed in his death.

His followers had abandoned. He was betrayed by his inner circle. He left no texts to pass on, no schools, no institutions. He did a terrible job of beginning a religion.

[16 : 49] where is glory in that death? But friends, of course, we've been living with this for 2,000 years now, that we know that there is glory in it, isn't there?

That there is glory in the upside-down nature of God's kingdom. Glory not in power achieved, but in power surrendered. Glory not in self-promotion or preservation, but by self-denial and sacrificial, loving action towards others.

Glory not in victorious triumph, but in selfless death. This is the way of the cross. This is the way that Jesus says, I am going to glorify myself. Because on the cross, you will see the fullness of grace and truth.

You will see where justice and mercy meets. You will see where God's hatred of sin and His love for sinners will be merged in a way that you wouldn't even imagine if it hadn't happened.

Jesus says, the doctrine of a full atonement is made. The ultimate ransom is paid. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

[18 : 07] For it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. In Christ, upon the cross, we see the just dying for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, the innocent bearing the crimes of the guilty, that they might be forgiven and accepted.

And friends, it is in this shameful, terrifyingly horrible death that the greatness of Jesus is seen.

The depth of His love is seen that He would not save His life, but offer it up for us. We see the breadth of His grace, that He would do this, that all would come to Him in faith, that any could come to Him in faith from every tribe and tongue and nation, that we would see in this, the source of His power, that in His weakness, God's power is made manifest.

And we would see the irresistible beauty. Have you thought, friends, of how often we wear a cross around our neck and how odd that is and how much it speaks to how much our culture has embraced this gospel story even in the background?

How many movies have this great story of a sacrificial one who gives their lives for others that is honored and glorified? glorified. From Dickens and Sidney Carton and dying for Charles Darnay to Tony Stark for heaven's sakes or Anna in Frozen, depending on your movie choices.

[19 : 43] Glory and sacrifice is a theme in our culture because of what happened at the cross. And we do it in real life too when we see examples of people who lay down their lives for others.

We think of those who died in Flight 93 to bring down a plane so it wouldn't crash into a building and kill many people.

We think of Mother Teresa living selflessly for her whole life in the slums of Calcutta and so on and so forth. Friends, the way of the cross will still seem foolish to some.

They will believe that glory is found in another path. They will strive for power, for control and domination over their opponents. They will seek to promote themselves at the expense of others.

But Jesus says, my glory is in the cross. This is where you will see who I am and what I have come to do.

[21 : 00] So what about you? What do you think of Jesus? Is this surprising glory of Jesus foolish or is it marvelous? The upside down kingdom is not merely what Jesus has done but it is then as we see in verses 25 and 26.

It is the pattern for those who follow him. It produces a church that knows the fellowship of suffering with Jesus. As the apostle Peter writes later, we read from 1 Peter 1, 1 Peter 4, he writes verse 12, beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you but rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in that name.

Friends, there are many who are living today in this pattern. It is the missionary who chooses to stay in China when the pandemic hits in order to shepherd their flock and to love those brothers and sisters that they have been ministering to to stay and to suffer with them.

It is in the Christian executive who is fired from his high-powered job high-profile job because he has shared his faith in Jesus with a colleague.

[22 : 32] It is with Christians who welcome foster children into their homes and love these broken children at great cost to themselves.

It is seen in those even in our congregation facing degenerative and terminal illness who suffer great trial and great loss and yet continue to know that Christ has set a pattern for them to follow and a path for them to walk.

one of humility not pride one of service not triumph one of self-denial not self-promotion and friends look we know Pastor Greg preached eloquently about it last week so go back and listen if you didn't listen to last week's sermon that Jesus did not just die but he rose again on the third day.

There is a great hope that the glory of the cross is married with the glory of the resurrection and that we know that he is now ascended into heaven promising to return again and he will one day come to finish the work of redemption he will finish the work of redeeming souls and he will come and he will renew the world and make it the way it is supposed to be and he will come bearing the scars of that cross to say this is my glory this is how I have achieved this and he will gather his people in and he will make all things new friends this glory that we long for that our hearts were made for that we strive and so often misunderstand how we are going to get it this glory is ours for those who have faith in Christ but it will be ours only when Jesus returns and when Jesus comes to bring the fullness of it when we are caught up with him and so now we suffer with him so that in that day we will be raised with him and we will have his glory and be caught up in it and what a great thing that will be friends this is the glory of Christ that he suffered and died for us at the cross let's pray

Lord we thank you this morning for this message Lord thank you that your ways are not our ways and your thoughts are not our thoughts Lord thank you that you have come to do the unthinkable of forgiving sinful people like us pardoning our sin Lord you have come to wash away the evil of our hearts and ultimately of this world to redeem it and Lord you have done so by entering into it and taking it upon yourself oh Lord will you help us to see this pattern of the cross that we might glorify you for the greatness of all that you have done for us and so that we might put our hope in the glory that is ours with you when by faith we will be raised with you in that day we pray these things in Jesus name amen