

Glory Awaits: What Are You Waiting For?

Week 3: Glory's Source and Force

I. We're in a series of messages called, Glory Awaits. If we read through the New Testament looking for the word "glory" we'll find it often. Glory or glorious is one of the most frequent words used to describe the character of God, but if we're pressed, the idea of God's glory is a bit nebulous to nail down. Language is like a greased pig or wet road; we can easily lose our grip on the thing! Glory fits into such a category perhaps because in our attempt to express greater grandeur we overreach with our language. Recently a friend of mine was describing a vacation and the word that was used to describe the experience was "glorious." I do this too so I'm not knocking my friend, I'm simply giving an example that "glory" has become one of those words we've familiarized so much perhaps we've lost its essence?

A. The idea of a sermon series originates in different ways. I get that question from time to time, and we can talk more about it offline if you're interested, but this sermon series came out of my personal time reflecting on the Scriptures and really reflecting the past few months on the death and resurrection of Jesus. I wanted God to show me the power of Jesus's resurrection in a fresh way and He did that as I was reflecting on Luke 24:26: Luke 24:26 (CSB) [Slide]: 26 "Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

- This is a question the resurrected Lord Jesus is posing to the disciples on the Emmaus Road. But it's a rhetorical question! He addresses these guys as "knuckleheads" (my translation) and the force of the rhetorical question is "how has this not clicked yet? The Messiah had to suffer these things and enter into his glory!" If the cross and resurrection were the doorway by which Jesus entered His glory, then we better take note of what that means. In a culture in which "glory" is often associated with a vacation or football victories, what does it mean for God to be glorious and for Jesus to have suffered these things and entered into His glory? That's the million-dollar question that has led us into this series.
- We've given some definitions the past two weeks to give us something to hook into as we explore the concept of "glory."

a. The English word glory is derived from the Greek word:

[Slide]: δόξα

The word splendor or majesty are a correct way to think about "glory" but not so much in an aesthetic or pleasing sense like we often use the word. It's more about the authority that is derived from the majestic character of God.

b. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and the word that is translated "glory" in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word:

[Slide]: כבוד

The Hebrew sense of the word is the idea of "heaviness" or "weightiness." Think about that as a characteristic of God! We hit on Exodus 24 a bit last week and do we remember that when Moses would meet face to face with God, He would come off the mountain and the Israelites couldn't handle the glory of God reflected off the face of Moses! Only once a year could the high priest go into the Holy of Holies. Why? The weightiness of God was so powerful that the utmost precaution had to be observed or they'd fry!

B. The character of God doesn't change. God is what we say in fancy talk:

[Slide]: Immutable

- The presence of God right now is just as weighty and heavy as it has always been. Couple that with the New Testament sense of God's authority and we're treading into territory where it's essential that we have a very clear perspective on the character of God. God is immutable and therefore has not changed! When we speak of the glory of God we speak of the:

[Slide]: Overwhelming Presence of God!

Hasn't changed! God's overwhelming presence today is the same as He will forever be and has forever been! Why couldn't the Israelites of the Old Testament encounter God and survive it? Because the glory of

God is manifest from the holiness of God and the holiness of God cannot mix with sin! You might be thinking, “boy I really wish I would have just slept in this morning! This sounds like a raw deal!” Please hang in there.

2. God’s glory has not changed. So, what’s changed?

Luke 24:26 (CSB) [Slide]: 26 “Wasn’t it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

a. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, lived a sinless life and yet died as a cursed sinner for you and me. God bridged the gap between His holiness and our sin, but He did not do so at the expense of His Glory!!! Our brother Jesus Christ has stepped into His glory and because we are in Christ, we have been given full access to the Father! Do we realize how precious this is? Apart from Christ we’re not neutral in the eyes of God. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 5:

Romans 5:10-11 (CSB) [Slide]: 10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.

b. Do we see what’s happening here? Apart from Christ, we’re all self-declared enemies of God. Humanity, collectively and individually, have stiff armed God through sin. That means that apart from Christ we are positioning ourselves in such a way as to go toe to toe with the glory of God! We stand in direct opposition to the weightiness of God! But it grieves the heart of God when we take that stance. In His sovereignty God chooses not to force anyone into submission to His glory, but we’re foolish to not take the offer. We have access to the glory of God because the God-Man Jesus Christ suffered these things and entered into His glory. It’s a free offer of grace and it’s available today.

3. Some of us are living right now in direct opposition to the source and force of glory. We either stiff arm and live our lives in hostility to the weightiness and authority of God, or we align our lives in cooperation with the weightiness and authority of God.

a. Which option are we choosing today?

II. Today we’re going to look at Ephesians 1:17-20 and we’re going to see just how profound it is to be united with Christ. Why? Because in Christ our lives are brought into alignment with the source and force of glory! Are we going to position our lives in opposition to the source and force of glory, or align our lives with the entire weight of God, the overwhelming presence of God, in our favor? I would like for us to think deeply upon that question and respond today.

People online and all across the room will be making decisions today on whether or not to align your life with the weightiness and authority of God. To have that working on your behalf, or to continue stiff arming and standing in opposition. I want to pray that we’re all open to what God has to say. Let’s do that now. Let’s pray.

A. Turn with me to Ephesians 1:17-20. We’ll let Scripture do the heavy lifting, but our decision to align our lives with the source and force of glory penetrates every area of our lives. Some of us are undecided about faith in Christ, some of us are new to faith in Christ, and some have been a Christ follower many years. No matter where we are on the spectrum, I want us to think deeply about our lives either being in opposition to the weightiness and authority of God, or our lives being in alignment with the weightiness and authority of God, and if we are in alignment with the glory of God, what massive implications that must have on our lives now and the future life to come!

Ephesians 1:17-20 (CSB) [Slide]: 17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength. 20 He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens-

B. Paul’s ministry is a remarkable thing to study and particularly how he was able to contextualize the gospel for different cultures. We may think that the New Testament was written to different groups of people, but they

were all basically the same. That's just not the case. The church in Ephesus and the church in Corinth were very different places as it relates to their cultural settings.

1. Corinth was a place of material wealth, and their worldly success gave rise to a culture that celebrated immorality, and anything goes. Corinth has often been described as the Las Vegas of the ancient world. Corinth which was and is a Greek city has a good bit in common with Western thought and culture (our culture). Some would argue Greece is the cradle of Western civilization.
2. Ephesus on the other hand was a city long before the Greek's came on the scene and the cultural underpinnings of Ephesus was its religion. Ephesus (modern day Turkey) is just on the other side of the Aegean Sea but very different and very Eastern in thought. Even as Greek (and soon after Roman) culture overtook Ephesus, Artemis, the goddess of the city, and her temple were never challenged. They were always assimilated out of respect for the perceived power. We think of Artemis within the Greek pantheon of gods which is correct, but the worship of Artemis was taking place in Ephesus long before Alexander the Great and the Greeks arrived in the 4th Century B.C.

C. Why the history lesson?

1. Paul's ministry in Ephesus differed from that in Corinth because the Corinthians struggled with the way of glory. God's glory is manifest in our brokenness and weakness and when you're in a culture of affluence that's not popular. It's far easier to promote a gospel that bears fruit in worldly success and accolades. I don't think the Ephesians would have struggled so much with the way of glory as much as they would the:
[Slide]: Source and Force of Glory
2. The Apostle Paul writes to buttress their faith in the glory and power of God that has been made evident in the death and resurrection of their Lord Jesus. We have a core value statement that says:
[Slide]: We Go All Out!
3. We don't want to have any contingency plans when it comes to our relationship with God. At the end of the day, God help us to lean completely on You as the source and force of glory. There is nothing, period, more weighty and authoritative than God almighty, and when we align our lives with the glory of God, we are in cooperation with the One whose authority is above all!

..D. Look how Paul describes this alignment as He writes out this prayer for the Ephesian believers who would have faced tremendous persecution for denouncing the goddess Artemis. In the ancient world, guilds (work unions) were associated with pagan worship. As they were losing their jobs and facing other types of persecution don't you know they were feeling powerless.

Paul prays to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and declares Him to be the:

[Slide]: Glorious Father

1. There are some really good combos out there! Biscuits and gravy, French fries and ketchup, Saturdays and Alabama Football, but there ain't no combo that holds a match to our Father of glory!!
Father is a term of endearment and glory represents weightiness and authority.
The One who is authoritative above all is also our Father!
2. Everett my youngest doesn't like to go to sleep until I'm home and tuck him in the bed. He'll fight sleep to ensure that happens because I'm his father and he likes those moments of having my attention. But also, he likes having the peace of mind that I'm in the house and there to keep an eye on things.
God is our Father and He's there to give us time and to love us as we are, and He's capable of taking care of us. That source of glory is also the source of peace. Our lives are in alignment with the weightiness and authority of God!
3. In a world in which a commitment to Jesus would likely cost your job, your family relationships, maybe even physical danger, Paul gives this absurd advice. Absurd unless Paul had already discovered it to be true. Paul says I pray to the Glorious Father to give you your job back? No. How about to give you the perfect spouse or just a spouse? No. A clean bill of health? No.

Paul says I pray that God would give you:

[Slide]: the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. Ephesians 1:17 (CSB)

4. We think we know but we don't know. The only way our lives align with the source and force of glory is to experience intimacy with God! That cannot be found in the things of this world.

That can only come from the Holy Spirit:

[Slide]: enlightening the eyes of our hearts.

5. How much of our prayer life is centered around the desire for God to grant us wisdom and revelation to know Him? That's a risky prayer. God is always loving and gracious.

But sometimes He loves us enough to allow us to go through the valley.

It's easy to praise God on the mountaintops, but intimacy is most often forged in the valley.

a. This is just a hypothesis but based off the Word of God written through Paul, I think he might disagree with the substantial emphasis most of us place on external prayer requests. I think he would say the truth of God and the blessing of God has already been answered. It's there for the taking! The issue is with us knowing and realizing what's already available! The source and the force of our glorious Father because of our position in Christ!

E. I love studying big words and looking at original languages but sometimes the most profound word or words in a text are so plain as day they could jump up and bite us. I spent 20 minutes looking for my sunglasses the other day and they were hanging off the top button of my shirt! Y'all know what I'm talking about!

In Ephesians 1:17-20 my favorite word in the text is used 3 times and here's the word:

[Slide]: Is

So that you may know what is! The issue today isn't with God and His glory. That's what is!

Not might be. Not could be. Not maybe. What is! The prayer is for us to know what is.

• What is it that we need to know about our glorious Father?

Following are 3 realities that have nothing to do with the circumstances of this world and everything to do with the character of God, the source and force of glory!

1. So that you may first know what is:

[Slide]: The hope of his calling,

2. Second what is...

[Slide]: The wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

3. And third what is...

[Slide]: The immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength.

F. Does Paul anchor all this in wishful thinking? Absolutely not! Remember God's glory and power are often interchangeable qualities of God and here's how Paul anchors what has been declared true:

Ephesians 1:20 (CSB) [Slide]: 20 He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens-

The source and the force of glory is found in the Father of glory who invites us into a personal relationship through Christ! It's in Christ alone we align our lives in cooperation with God.

He's glorious which means He's weighty and authoritative.

He holds the ultimate power, and this Sovereign God invites us to come to Him as Father.

Our loving and attentive Father who is the source and force of glory!