

## The Gift of Glory

John 17:20-23

The glory of God is a phrase that is used in a number of ways. In Psalms 19, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork..." The glory of God is "declared" to the creation by the order and beauty of all that God has made. His glory then is known and experienced as the result of a process of observation that prompts a reasoned response as to the cause behind the beauty. The world we live in is ordered and beautiful because this is how God made it. All that we observe in God's creation speaks to His nature and character. We can argue from creation to Creator and come to "know" (reach conclusions concerning) our Creator as an outcome of this exercise. Everything we can learn about God results in glory to God for the truth of God is great. It is inspiring. It is affirmed in the best of our own nature for we truly were created in the image of God.

Psalms 19 celebrates God's glory first in His Creation and secondly in the Word. David's relationship with God through the Word was so very rich. His rehearsal of what the Word can do is a testimony of what the Word had done in His own life. The adjectives; perfect, sure, right, pure, clean and true are each attached to God's Word as we find it in the Scriptures. The Word glorifies God as it reveals who He is even more completely than He can be known by means of the creation. His word is to be understood, obeyed and revered by God's people.

Finally, God is also glorified through the personal transformation of the believer whose contemplation of the Word leads him to self-examination and to a desire to be free of the sins that have formerly put him in bondage. He wants only to please His God and brings this resolve to bear on both his words and even his thoughts. In this endeavor he finds God to be both his present strength and his source of second chances. This gives glory to God.

Speaking of Jesus in John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of

grace and truth." In Jesus, His glory was seen and His glory was the glory of the Father. Jesus' glory is here attached to His being full of grace and truth. So that when John chooses two words to describe the ministry of Jesus he chooses grace and truth. Jesus' grace was seen in His compassion toward all people who were in need. Again and again, the crowds, the disciples, the religious leaders, and so forth are in a position for having reason to justify priorities that did not allow room for compassion. The disciples did not have the money or resources to feed the hungry crowd. They wondered whose fault it was that a man was born blind. The crowds shouted down blind Bartimaeus. The religious leaders used a helpless woman and a man with a withered arm to attempt to trap Jesus with no regard for these people. But Jesus is seen having regard for all people. This was just one side of His grace. His grace was also experienced by His love of friends and disciples, by His welcoming into His circle the social rejects and children, the "unimportant." This grace was glory because it reveals God to us. He is grace.

Jesus was also truth. Grace is probably a more popular idea for us than truth. We might associate truth with righteousness and judgment. And, Jesus actually spoke much about these things. The cross, the ultimate symbol of grace, is also associated with judgment. When Jesus was on the cross, a darkness covered the land, an earthquake shook the city, and the veil in the temple was torn in two. The cross was grace and forgiveness for those who believed but judgment for those who did not. The truth is - there is forgiveness and there is judgment. But Jesus also spoke truth that sets us free. Specifically, "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." The great example of truth and freedom is in the Sermon on the Mount. The concept of returning good for evil and living with the object of extending good to others on behalf of the goodness of God is liberating. We need not be controlled by our enemies or by oppressive regimes or systems. Jesus who is truth has set us free. So, when you taste your freedom, when you are lifted by it to heights of exuberance, know that this is the glory of God.

The glory of God also describes the experience of the disciples, Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. There, Jesus appearance was altered before them so that He was glowing and translucent. Moses and Elijah appeared

and spoke with Jesus and the disciples overheard them. The Father spoke from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, Hear Him!" This was the glory of God revealed and experienced. God and His Son, Jesus Christ were revealed to be the otherworldly, celestial beings that they are. The shine of Jesus was celestial shine. Jesus is God. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." When we see the shine of Jesus we see the truth that He is God. If you are there and you see it then you will never doubt it. You will know. And all people will know one day. "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Having said all this, let's note that Jesus prayed, "And the glory which You gave Me, I have given them, that they may be one just as we are." So what does this mean?

Jesus' glory was to reveal Himself as grace and truth. It was His glory to reveal Himself as celestial and divine. To the extent that we can share in this mission, we also share in the glory, in the process of God's self-disclosure to humanity. When God becomes known for Who He is, this is glory. But we also experience the glory in the same ways that David did if we do what He did. He gloried in the creation, in the Word and in God's continuing work in His life. The gift of glory in that sense must be received to be experienced. And it is when we become engaged with God in this common purpose that we are one (unified) with Him and one another.