

I. The Glory of God

A. Prayer – Holy Father, You are the one true God, and we are your creation – the work of Your hands. And though You have made us for Your glory, for Your joy, and for intimate fellowship with You, we have gone astray – each of us turning away from You to go our own way. Though You are completely trustworthy, we have treated You as if You were unworthy of our complete trust. Though You are faithful, we have been unfaithful. Though You are holy, we have been unholy – and willfully so. Though You are love, and have poured out Your love on us, we have been selfish – pouring out our love upon ourselves. Though You are the light in Whom there is no darkness at all, we have chosen to walk in the darkness and to look for happiness and pleasure and power and riches in the darkness. Though You are eternal, yet You put on mortality to become like us in order to die for us so we can live forever with You. Though You are rich, yet You became poor to make us rich, now and through out eternity. Though You are the Supreme Ruler and Final Judge of the universe, and though we have rebelled against You, You have not treated us according to our sin, but like a Loving Father, You have shown us mercy and compassion. O Lord God, who is like You – majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, unmatched in love, unexplainable in mercy, and perfectly good? Dearest loving Father, in spite of what we deserve, raise our eyes above ourselves to see Your glory. Amen

B. The angels said: “*Glory to God in the highest.*” The hymn says: “*To God be the glory.*” Joshua said: “*Give glory to God.*” Jesus said: “*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*” Paul said: “*Do all to the glory of God.*” Paul also said: “*Glorify God in your body.*” And again Paul said: “*For this reason also, God highly exalted Jesus, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*” And the Psalmist wisely said: “*Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Your name give glory*” (Psalm 115:1).

C. What is the glory of God? And what does it mean to give God glory, or to glorify God?

1. In the Old Testament, the most common word for glory is the Hebrew word “kabod,” which means “heavy in weight,” and when used in relation to people, it speaks of those things that set a person apart from and above everyone and everything else. For example, Sampson’s glory was his strength. And in the same way, the glory of the President of the United States is his position.
 2. When applying this word to God, it means that God’s glory is the sum of those things that set Him above and apart from everyone and everything else in the universe. For example, as God, He holds the position of supreme being. Regarding power, He is all-powerful and powerful over all. In terms of justice, He is perfectly impartial. When it comes to love, God is the essence of love. In mercy and forgiveness, He is unequalled. And only God is able to do all He wills to do, and all He promises to do.
 3. The point here is both simple and profound. God’s glory is made up of who He is in Himself, what He has done, is doing, and will do, and His position – for it is all these things that set Him apart from and above everyone and everything else in the universe.
- D. Now that we have an understanding of what God’s glory is, I want to look at some of the Bible stories that speak of seeing the glory of God, and as we look at each of them, take note of the profound effect glimpsing or sensing or feeling God’s glory has on those encountering it.
1. Exodus 24:12-17 . . . Now the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction." [13] So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God . . . [15b] and the cloud covered the mountain. [16] The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day God called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. [17] And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top.
 - a. Israel had already encountered the glory of God in the Ten Plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, water from the rock, and the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night that led them through the wilderness. And I suspect that these signs of God’s glory were both comforting and reassuring that God was with them. But it appears that God expected these manifestations to so effect the Israelites that they would trust and obey Him from then on.

- b. Yet God did not stop with those manifestation of His glory, He gave them another at the mountain. And this time, God's glory had the appearance of a consuming fire, that is, a raging, incredibly hot fire that destroys everything in its path. And this time, their response to seeing God's glory was fear and reverence.
 2. After Moses' experience on the mountain with the Law and the Israelites and the golden calf, he asked to see God's glory. We read about this in Exodus 33:18-19 . . . Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" [19] And God said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." Exodus 34:6-8 . . . Then the LORD passed by in front of Moses and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving-kindness and truth; [7] who keeps loving-kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." [8] Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship.
 - a. Remember, Moses, had encountered God's glory before. He had sensed God holiness in the burning bush. He saw God's power in the ten plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and the destruction of Pharaoh's army. And He saw God's superior love and care in His various provisions for Israel in the wilderness.
 - b. Yet this time was different. Israel had grievously sinned by making and worshiping the Golden Calf, and Moses wanted the assurance that God would not destroy the Israelites, but rather keep them as His people and keep His covenant with them regarding the Promised Land. So Moses asked to see that part of God that makes Him superior to everyone and everything else in the universe.
 - c. And God revealed His glory in the form His goodness, as expressed by His compassion, grace, patience, loving-kindness, truth, forgiveness, discipline, and punishment of evil doers.
3. Once the wilderness tabernacle was completed, it was set up. We read about this in Exodus 40:34-35 . . . Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. [35] Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

- a. In this story, we see God's presence in the form of a cloud covering the tabernacle, and His glory filling it – and it was the glory of God which prevented Moses from entering. By the way, a similar event happened when Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 7:1-3).
 - b. Now we know the cloud remained with the tabernacle throughout Israel's wilderness journeys. And we know Moses, Aaron, and the Levites were able to enter the tabernacle to do the work God had given them to do. So what made this even different? It was God's glory – that is, God's awesome supremacy, for its presence prevented even Moses from entering the tabernacle.
4. This next story displays God's glory in a way that promotes a healthy fear of God, a proper reverence for God, and humble obedience to God. Numbers 16:19-35 . . . On a certain day, Korah assembled all the congregation against Moses, Aaron, and Miriam at the doorway of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation. Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "Put some distance between yourselves and this congregation, so that I may consume them instantly." But Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and said, "O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?" Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.'" Then Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him, and he spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, or you will be swept away in all their sin." So Israel backed away from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the doorway of their tents, along with their wives and their sons and their little ones. Moses said, "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these deeds; for this is not my doing. If these men die the death of all men or if they suffer the fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the LORD." As he finished speaking, the ground that was under them split open; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions. So they

and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. Fire also came forth from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense.

- a. On this occasion, God revealed His glory in the form of holiness, power, and judgment – and God did this for the purpose of restoring order to His ordained leadership over Israel and to the acceptable forms of worship.
 - b. What if we seriously considered the implications of this display of God’s glory for how we do church? I suspect it would drive us to give thoughtful, serious, and respectful consideration to Christ’s headship over the church, God’s standards for leadership in the church, and the forms of worship that are acceptable to Him.
5. In Isaiah 6:1-5, we read about Isaiah’s experience with the glory of the Lord . . . In the year of King Uzziah's death, Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. [2] Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two the seraphim covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. [3] And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.” [4] And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. [5] Then Isaiah said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”
- a. There are two things about Isaiah’s experience that we ought to take note of.
 - (1) First, God’s glory fills the earth. In other words, there is no part of the earth that does not in some way reveal the glory of God.
 - (2) Second, God’s glory had a profoundly humbling effect on Isaiah – and we see Isaiah’s humble response to God’s glory in his words: “woe is me,” “I am ruined,” “I am a man of unclean lips,” “I live among a people of unclean lips.”
 - b. It is probable you can get a better sense of Isaiah’s humility when you take into account that among prophets, Isaiah was an important one, and among nations, Israel was God’s chosen people. If there was any reason to feel like they were in good standing with God and superior to others, then both Isaiah and Israel had a reason. Yet, the glory of God drove Isaiah to a humble

and honest self-denigration before God. And without question, God's glory should have the same effect on us.

6. In Isaiah's experience, it was the Seraphim who proclaimed that God's glory fills the earth. In the psalms, it is David who writes that creation provides a daily manifestation of God's glory. For example, we read in Psalm 19:1 . . . The heavens tell of the glory of God; and their expanse declares the work of His hands. Paul added similar words in Romans 1:20 . . . For since the creation of the world God's invisible attributes, His eternal power, and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made . . .
 - a. To me, this constant and universal display of God's glory in creation is as significant as any displays of God's glory. Why? Because the unrighteous can see it and touch it and measure it and test it just as much as the righteous. In other words, nature reveals God's glory – day in and day out – to the righteous and unrighteous alike.
 - b. And though creation's manifestation of God's glory may not inspire awe and reverence in everyone, it does in those who are willing to see the supremacy of God in what He has made.
7. There are numerous references to God's glory in the NT, though most of them are not in story form. But of the stories, there are two that are very familiar, and I am choosing these two stories because they record the same response in those who experienced God's glory.
 - a. The first story comes from Luke 2:8-10 . . . In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. [9] And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. [10] But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.
 - b. The second story comes from Matthew 17:1-6 . . . Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. [2] And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. [3] And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. [4] Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." [5] While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said,

"This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" [6] When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified.

- E. In each of the stories we just examined, seeing, sensing, or feeling God's glory was a profound experience that produced a humble, fearfully reverent, self-demoting, and God-exalting response. Of course, if our response to God's glory is to have lasting value, its effect must go beyond the moment and profoundly effect how we think about God, what we think of God, how we relate to God, how much we trust God, and how we deal with daily life and the people around us.

II. Conclusion

- A. I want to conclude today's teaching by applying it to you. And I hope to do this by giving you four examples of God's glory and the response each example ought to bring from you.
 1. God is the Supreme Being. As I have already said, God's glory is the sum of who He is and His position. Therefore, as the Supreme Being, you owe God supreme allegiance, humble reverence, whole-hearted obedience, and acceptable worship.
 2. God is perfectly good. And the only worthy response to His perfect goodness is to trust Him completely.
 3. God is the most valuable treasure you can possess. There is nothing in this world, be it people, possessions, positions, or pleasures that comes close to being of the same value as God. Therefore, you ought to vigilantly guard against anything of this world taking God's "most valuable treasure" place in your heart, mind, and life.
 4. God desires and has made a way for intimate, meaningful, mutually satisfying relationship with you, and with us as a community. Though this never puts you on the same level as God, or justifies treating Him as if you have a casual familiarity with Him – it does bring you into mutually satisfying fellowship with God. And those who have entered into such fellowship find it so amazingly wonderful that they guard against anything of this world demeaning or diminishing or damaging this most precious relationship.

B. Communion