

THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE CRUCIFIXION
(John 13:31-32)

³¹ Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

John 13:31-32

I have entitled the message this morning, “The Glory of God in the Crucifixion,” because this is the principle message which Jesus is conveying to his disciples. Remember that Jesus and the disciples have just finished up the last supper and he has washed their feet and he has instituted the ordinance of the Lord’s Table. But most importantly and most immediately, Jesus has dismissed Judas. In essence Jesus told Judas to get out - get out of the room, get out of the church and go do what you must do.

And Judas got up, turned his back on the Light of the World and walked into the night. (John 13:30) And when Judas left the room, this little church consisting of Jesus and the other eleven men was cleansed. Jesus had already cleansed their feet. But now he cleansed their fellowship. And you must imagine that there was an entirely different spirit in the room. The dark, foreboding spirit of Satan was gone into the night. The lying tongue and deceitful heart of Judas was gone. That old thief, that old self-serving hypocrite, was excommunicated from the church. That old complainer – the one who complained when Jesus was anointed with expensive oil - was gone. I am sure that Judas must have been a dissenting voice all along the way, for his heart was quite different from the other eleven. I am sure that Judas often lobbied to put more money in the bag. I am sure that Judas was a drag on the spiritual unity of the disciples for he had no spiritual life in him. All he could offer the group was a corrupt heart and an evil spirit. And oh what a pleasant spirit must have come over that room when the contentious spirit of Judas walked out.

Now Jesus was left with a pure-hearted church. And there was a new spirit in the room. The church was one member smaller, but it was a thousand times sweeter. Now Jesus and the disciples could take a deep breath and fill their spiritual lungs with the sweet air of love and unity. There was no contention in the room. There was no argumentative voice. There was no fault-finding; no spirit of legalism; no hypocrisy. And I am sure it was a great sense of relief in the heart of Jesus when Judas and Satan finally walked out into the night and Jesus was left alone with those whom he truly loved.

And now that Jesus was alone with his true disciples, he could speak to them in a way that he could not speak when that reprobate Judas was present. You see, now Jesus could speak to those who were really his people. Now he could speak to his true church. Now he could speak to those who were on their way to heaven rather than hell. Now Jesus could put his arms around these disciples and tell them what great things he would prepare for them. These things he could never say to Judas, for Judas was not one of his sheep.

You will notice that after Judas left the room, Jesus called the eleven remaining disciples, “Little children.”

Little children, yet a little while I am with you.

John 13:33

In all of the gospel records, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Jesus had never called his disciples “little children.” But now when Judas was gone, Jesus turned to his disciples and said, “Little children.” You see, Jesus couldn’t say “Little children” when Judas was hanging around. He couldn’t say, “You are my sheep,” when Judas was there. But when the goat was finally weeded out, Jesus could address his disciples in the most intimate of terms. And so, Jesus said, “Little children.”

Jesus will now tell his true disciples things which are the most important things of the Christian life. He has saved these things until now so that he could speak to them in the most intimate and loving way.

Example: If you get a terminal illness and you know you have only a few days to live, you might call your children to your bedside and tell them things that are most important. And you would try to comfort them and let them know that all is well with your soul. And then, you might tell them all the things that you are leaving them in your will. You might tell them about the house you have built over all these years with all your hard work and that you are leaving the house to them. And you would tell them what kind of men and women you would like for them to be when you are gone. And then, before they go, you might pray for them and ask the Father to bless them and keep them safe.

And when you read the next few chapters you will find that this is what Jesus did for these disciples. You see, these are the last instructions of Jesus to the disciples before his death.

Now the first thing that Jesus would have them know is that his death would not be a defeat but it would be a great victory. His death would not be a cause for great discouragement, but rather, his death would be cause for great celebration. Now the disciples were beginning to grasp the reality of the impending death of Christ, but they were not fully appreciating it. It was difficult for them to understand how the death of Jesus would be a good thing. But Jesus would now have them understand that his death would be a great honor. His death would actually be his greatest glory.

Now when most people were crucified, it was to their great shame. Thieves and murderers and devil worshippers and serious law breakers were crucified. And it was a shameful kind of death. And there was no glory in a death by crucifixion for the criminal or the religious heretic. But for Jesus who was no criminal and no heretic and who was dying for the crimes of others, his death was great glory for him.

Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified . . .

John 13:31

When Judas had gone out, Jesus turned to his disciples and told them that the events of the next day would be glorious events. When they would drag him out of the Garden in chains, it would be glorious. When they would beat him with the scourge it would be glorious. When they put the crown of thorns on his head, it would be glorious. And when they put the spikes through his hands and feet and lifted him up on a tree, it would be glorious.

Now is the Son of man glorified.

You see, Jesus humbled himself and became a man. And he lived a very humble life on this earth. He was a poor man with a poor station in life. But Jesus came not to live, but to die.

I suppose there have been those who found glory in their death. There is a certain amount of honor in the death of a soldier who dies defending his country. There is honor when a father somehow gives his life for his child. There is honor when a man dies in the performance of a good deed. But never a man died with such honor as Jesus Christ.

Jesus offered up his life for others. And what a life it was. It was a sinless life. It was a life of service. It was a life of sacrifice. It was a life that measured up to the very standards of the holiness of God. It was a pure and perfect life. It was a life worth preserving, and yet, he gave it up. None of us can boast such a thing. The most righteous man that could be found on the face of the earth is yet a sinful man and so he is worthy of death. And if any of us give up our lives for another, we have only given up a sinful life. But Jesus gave up a sinless life.

Jesus gave up his life to bear the sins of others. You and I could never do such a thing because we have sinned and sinned often. And we could never die for the sins of others because death is our just reward for sin. But Jesus could die for others because he was sinless.

And so, the death of Jesus Christ was a very glorious event. It was the one historical event since the creation of the world that had the greatest impact on the world. His death resulted in the redemption of billions of sinners. His death filled heaven with a multitude of the redeemed. His death gathered in a multitude who would praise God for all eternity. His death robbed hell of its bounty. His death shook the foundations of the spiritual world. His death resulted in the binding and ultimate destruction of Satan and his forces. And so, I hope you see clearly that his death was no unfortunate event, it was no accident, it was no battle lost, but it was a very glorious victory for the Lord Jesus Christ and for the Father.

It must have been very hard for the disciples. In effect, Jesus was saying, "I am about to be betrayed. I am about to be scourged. I am about to be led up the hill and to be crucified like a criminal. My blood will be poured out on the ground. Furthermore, Satan's desire and his plan to kill me will be carried out. And it will appear to all the world that Satan has won and that I have lost. Isn't it glorious!

You do know that it was Satan's plan to kill Jesus even before Jesus was born.

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried,

travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

Revelation 12:1-4

And you remember that when Jesus was born Satan moved in the heart of Herod and Herod tried to kill Jesus by ordering all Jewish male babies under two years old to be killed. But God was always way ahead of Satan. And God told Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt until Herod was dead.

Of course, Satan tried in vain to get Jesus to sin in the wilderness. He maliciously offered Jesus bread when Jesus was hungry and drink when he was thirsty. But Jesus would not yield to his temptations.

From that point forward, Satan imbedded himself in the heart of the Jews with the intent to put Jesus to death. Little did Satan know that in his wicked way, he was actually pushing forward the redemptive plan of God.

Oh, how unsearchable are the ways of God and how wise are his counsels! God planned all along to allow Satan to have his way, to allow Satan's plan to come to pass, to allow Satan to have his day. And yet, that very plan of Satan would, by the determinate counsel of God, bring salvation and great happiness and joy to the redeemed of this world.

You see, Satan was like a chess player who had a great plan and a great scheme, but he could not see far enough to see the final result. Satan intended the death of Jesus, and he had a plan and he used the wicked Jews and he used Judas and he brought his plan to pass. But he forgot to look beyond the cross. Satan could not see the ultimate result of his plan. And God used Satan and used the Jews and used Judas and he allowed them to do their evil deeds because God saw beyond the cross. God's wonderful plan of redemption was brought about by using Satan's evil plan. God brought about the salvation of Gentiles by using wicked Jews, God brought his own Son to the cross by using the wicked heart of Judas. And so, Jesus tells his disciples, "Isn't it glorious!"

I tell you, we should glory in the cross. The cross was not only the culmination of Satan's plan, but also it was the great centerpiece of God's plan. Satan meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. The plan of God trumped the plan of Satan. And therefore the cross is glorious evidence of the greatness of God over Satan. The death of Christ will forevermore be the trophy in God's trophy case. He will display it for all eternity because it is God's most glorious moment in all of history. Forever, we will be reminded of God's brilliance and his vast superiority to Satan, by the cross of Christ.

The sacrifice of Christ was God's most brilliant and glorious move in the chess game of history. It caught Satan completely by surprise. Satan was trying all along to win God's most

valuable piece, and then, to Satan's great surprise, God sacrificed his only Son to gloriously win the game.

The cross of Christ is the proudest moment in all of human history. It is God's proudest moment and it is our proudest moment.

Listen to what Paul thought of the cross.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Galatians 6:14

And so, Jesus told his disciples,

Now is the Son of man glorified.

John 13:31

Jesus doesn't say, "Now am I betrayed by my friend. Now I am arrested by my enemies. Now I am brutally beaten. Now I am humiliated. Now I am nailed to a cross." But he says, "Now I am glorified."

But notice who else is glorified by the death of Christ.

And God is glorified in him.

John 13:31

Not only was the cross a glorious moment for Jesus, but it was also a glorious moment for the Father! This was the moment when his beloved Son would submit his life in complete and utter obedience. This was the moment when Jesus would say, "Not my will, but Thine be done." This was the moment when the world would see what true faith and obedience is. This was the moment when the work of the Son in the eternal plan of redemption would be carried to its completion. This was the moment when the victory would be won. One shining moment in the history of the world, and this was it! And God the Father was glorified in the death of his Son. I want to consider this morning a few of the many ways that the death of Jesus Christ was glorious. First of all, it was glorious because it shined a spotlight on many of the glorious attributes of God.

The Love of God

Who would have known the extent of the love of God had it not been for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? We would never have dreamed of such a love. How much did he love his elect? This much – he agreed to be crucified.

The Wrath of God

But don't think that love is the only attribute of God. This is the mistake that many make – that God is love and love only. But the cross shows without question that God is a God of wrath. The Scriptures say that,

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness.

Romans 1:18

Embedded deep within the nature of God is a righteous quality called wrath. Now God's wrath is not an emotional, out-of-control kind of wrath like ours often is. But his wrath is righteous and well founded. And God's wrath boils within him against sin and against sinners. God is not indifferent toward sin. He hates it. And the crucifixion of his Son demonstrates God's unqualified hatred of sin. Did God hate his Son? No, but he punished him just as though he hated him. When we see Jesus hanging on the cross, we see the wrath of God. Look at Jesus hanging there with his flesh torn. Look at his body writhing in pain. Look at him as he gasps for a breath of air. Look at him as his blood drips to the ground and you will see something of the wrath of God.

The Justice of God

But in the cross we also learn of the unrelenting justice of God. He is not a God that bends the rules. He is not a God who will accept a challenge to his holiness. He is not a God who will lower his standards to make men acceptable. But he is a God who says, "Thou shalt not lie," and he means it. He says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and he demands it. He says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and he will not bend the rules for any man. If you are a guilty man, you do not want to stand before a righteous judge. You might prefer a judge who will accept a bribe, or a judge who can be fooled. But you wouldn't prefer to have God sitting on the bench.

The death of Jesus Christ demonstrates that God is just. God punished his own Son in order to let sinners go free. Why did God do it? So that he might just and the justifier of the ungodly.

The Humility of God

We don't often think of the humility of God. When we think of God we think of majesty and power and absolute sovereignty. But there is a beautiful attribute of God called humility and we see it most clearly in the cross of Christ. The one who sat on a throne in heaven humbled himself and became a man. And not only that, he humbled himself unto the cross. Think how low he stooped to save the souls of men. He stooped all the way. And this teaches us something about God. Remember, Jesus said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." And so, when we see Jesus hanging on the cross we learn about the great humility of God himself.

Virtually all of the attributes of God are shed abroad at the cross. What about his goodness? What about his mercy? And when you look at the cross you see the great strength of our God, for who could voluntarily endure such suffering without divine fortitude. What patience and endurance Christ showed when he walked the road to Calvary.

And when we think upon the cross of Christ we see the sheer kindness of God. He could have called down legions of angels to punish his enemies, but instead he said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Who can contemplate the cross of Christ without considering the abundant grace of God. Not only did abundant grace flow from the cross to a world of sinners, but it flowed to a thief who was hanging next to him. Even in the moment of his greatest pain and suffering, Jesus looked to his left and imparted saving grace to a hopeless sinner. And so, at the cross we see the grace of God on display.

So you see why Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified."

But there is glory in the cross also because it shows the unrelenting purpose of God in the matter of redemption. God had a plan to redeem a people. It was an eternal plan. It originated in the eternal counsels of God. But it was gloriously brought to completion by the suffering of Jesus at the cross. And so we see that what God determines to do, he does it at all cost. There is no wavering of purpose with God. And so, God purposed to save a people and when Jesus died he said, "It is finished." There is great glory in finishing a worthy project and no one ever undertook such a worthy project as Jesus.

I hope each of us can see the glory in the cross of Christ, for the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God unto salvation unto us which are saved. (I Corinthians 1:18)