

Worship Foundations, Part 3, GOD's GLORY

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We're making our way through a worship series called "Worship Foundations," where we're searching the scriptures for the core of Biblical worship to make sure that we build our worship on a Biblical foundation.

Two weeks ago, we started with God's WORTH, which is a perfect place to start because worship is about "worth-ship" – responding to God's great WORTH.

Last week, we dug a little deeper, and saw that a major aspect of God's worth is His HOLINESS. God is HOLY – unique, one-of-a-kind, in a class by Himself!

There is none like Him... and His matchless rarity contributes to His endless worth.

Today, we're going to dig deeper still, and reach what I believe the Bible teaches to be the core, **the absolute center of all things** – namely, the GLORY of God.

I'm the kind of person who likes to peel back the layers and get to the core, to understand what's really at the center of things.

This started in my mid-30's, when God really prompted me to think about my life.

Mid-30's meant that, statistically speaking, my life was probably about half over.

And I realized that, if I didn't change what I was doing with my life, I was going to wake up one day a 70 year old man full of regrets.

(Not that I was doing a bunch of bad stuff; I just knew I wasn't doing the best stuff.)

I didn't feel like my life was amounting to anything significant or even satisfying.

So I got into counseling, I started reading lots of books, and I also started searching the scriptures, basically asking the question, "what's the point of life?"

(not depressed, but searching)

"What should I choose to focus my life on - My faith? My family? My fellow man?"

I wanted to find out what was most important thing, and devote myself to that!

Was it to be happy? To be successful? (and who defines success?)

Was it to be satisfied? To make a difference? To leave a legacy?

There were many possible answers!

So I kept reading and asking and searching and digging for ultimate purpose.

And the conclusion of my search was this - the GLORY of GOD.

And in the years since I first reached that conclusion, I've not changed my mind.

In fact, I'm more confident than ever that this is true.

And not just true for me, but true for **every created thing** – every human being, every blade of grass, every galaxy, every molecule... **the ultimate goal of the universe is the glory of GOD. It's the reason for everything that exists.**

Now... that's a BOLD statement for me to make.

And you should expect me to back it up, Biblically. I'm gonna take my best shot.

What IS the "glory of God?"

It's a phrase that gets used a LOT – in the Bible, in churches, in all kinds of Christian stuff... so much so that, if we're not careful, it can end up sounding like some meaningless "tag line" or "catch phrase" that we stick onto everything to make it sound better.

Our church's stated "mission" is to be:

A people with a passion for God, a place with a passion for people,
for the glory of God.

We say that our core purpose as a church is:

To glorify God... through spiritual transformation...

And we talk a lot about the transformation part. But the purpose is to **glorify God!**

What does that even mean – "the glory of God?"

The dictionary defines "glory" as:

very great honor, praise, or distinction bestowed by common consent;
renown. As in: to win glory on a field of battle

OR: resplendent beauty or magnificence, as in: the sun set in a blaze of glory

The glory of God is a similar idea.

God's glory is the display of His greatness, the radiance of His splendor.

It's God going public with His intrinsic worth.

Whenever any of God's magnificent attributes are seen or made known – that's His glory. Whenever His honor is spread – that's His glory.

It might help us to look again at Isaiah 6:3.

This is a verse we saw last week, where the angels cry out:

Isaiah 6:3

"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is the Lord of hosts,
the whole earth is filled with His..."

You'd expect them to say, "HOLINESS." But they say "GLORY."

Why? I think it works something like this:

Whenever God's HOLINESS – His unique, one-of-a-kind greatness & worth –

"goes public," whenever His HOLINESS is put on display or made known in any way – that's His GLORY.

Hence, "the whole earth is filled with His GLORY" – with the public display of His infinite beauty and worth.

You can see this idea in the way we typically use the word "glory" in our culture.

It's often associated with athletics.

I thought about Michael Phelps, the swimmer who won all those gold medals in the most recent Olympic games. His performance in those games brought him GLORY.

(some of his activities since the games have diminished his glory... another story)

He's a great swimmer. That's true, whether he participated in those games or not.

He could have just done all his swimming in his private pool at his home, watched by no one, and been just as fast, just as great.

But swimming in seclusion wouldn't have brought him any **glory**, would it?

Because no one would have seen and known about his great swimming ability.

He would still be great, but not glorious.

His glory came from displaying his ability at those Olympic games.

And, because of what he did, other people did things to “glorify” Michael Phelps. They draped gold medals around his neck. That glorified him – brought him glory. Replays of his photo finishes on TV brought him glory.

Putting his picture on the front of Sports Illustrated and on cereal boxes brought him glory, spread his fame, his renown, his honor.

Now those things also had other goals (sell magazines, sell corn flakes, make money) but one of the goals of all those things was to show the glory of Michael Phelps.

Well, the ultimate goal of the universe (not one of the goals!), but **the ultimate goal of the universe is to show the GLORY of GOD!**

OK – we’ve said it enough, we need to see it in the Bible.

This is a theme that runs throughout Scripture.

> You can see it in Creation – He created everything that is for His glory. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And...

Psalm 19:1a The heavens declare the **glory** of God.

Isaiah 6:3b The whole earth is full of His **glory!**

All of creation, everything in the universe proclaims His greatness!

It’s all His handiwork, created for His glory.

That includes people. God describes His people as:

Isaiah 43:7

Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My **glory**,

> God called the nation of Israel, set them apart, for His glory:

I made the whole house of Israel & Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, that they might be for me a people, a **name**, a **praise**, and a **glory**. (Jeremiah 13:11)

> God delivered them from Egypt & defeated Pharaoh for His glory:

And the Egyptians shall **know** that I am the Lord, when I have gotten **glory** over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen. (Exodus 14:18)

> When Israel disobeyed, God restrained His wrath for His glory:

Isaiah 48:9, 11

“For My name’s sake I defer my anger, (not because you deserve it, but) for the sake of My praise I restrain it for you ...for how should My name be profaned?

My **glory** I will **not** give to another.”

God is very zealous for His reputation, His fame, His glory.

> JESUS came for the Glory of God!

And, when I say “the glory of **God**,” I’m talking about God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Spirit – the full Godhead. The Bible says that:

John 1:14

The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His **glory**, the **glory** of the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Hebrews 1:3

(Jesus) is the radiance of God's **glory** and the exact **expression** of His nature

That's what Jesus came to do – to reveal God's **glory** to us!
He sought the glory of the Father in all He did.

> And, Jesus told us to do good works so that God gets glory:

Matthew 5:16

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and give **glory** to your Father who is in heaven.”

> Jesus said that He answers prayer for His Father's glory:

John 14:13

“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be **glorified** in the Son.”

> Jesus endured the cross for God's glory. He prayed:

“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.’ Then a voice came from heaven, “I have **glorified** it, and I will **glorify** it again.” (John 12:27-28).

Do you see how pervasive this is?? In fact,

> God tells us to do everything for His glory:

1 Corinthians 6:20

For you have been bought with a price: therefore **glorify** God with your body.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do **all** to the **glory** of God.

I was reminded this week of a time I was hiking near the Blue Ridge Parkway.

I had hiked alone to waterfall, and was sitting there just soaking up the beauty and seeing how it all declared God's glory.

Then some other hikers wandered up, talking, kinda interrupted me.

Then a ranger walked up, saw a crowd, and took the opportunity to preach to us a little about the effect of pollution on that fragile ecosystem.

And I was struck that, although protecting that ecosystem was a worthy cause, compared to the glory I had been considering, what this ranger was asking us to consider was of FAR less importance.

Because, you could protect that ecosystem so completely that you could return 1000 years later and find it perfectly preserved, but if you miss the glory of God that the ecosystem is proclaiming, you missed the whole point!

You've protected it for nothing! Because the purpose for its existence is to glorify God. That's why it's there! If you miss that, you've missed everything!

So, yes, we should protect creation – but we protect it for the glory of GOD!
Do you see how this literally extends into whatever you do??
You can recycle an aluminum can for the glory of God! I'm serious.
> The Bible defines SIN as dishonoring God's **glory**:

Romans 3:23

All have sinned and fall short of the **glory** of God...

Sin is to “come up short,” to “de-value” God's glory.
Sin is preferring anything above the glory of God.

> Jesus is coming again for the glory of God:

Mark 13:26

“They will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and **glory**.”

2 Thessalonians 1:10

...when He comes to be **glorified** in His saints on that day, and to be **marveled** at among all who have believed.

> God's plan is that:

Habakkuk 2:14

“The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

In fact, the Bible says that:

Romans 11:36

From Him and through Him and to Him are **all things**.
To Him be the **glory** forever.

Everything comes from Him, happens through Him, and consummates in Him.
ALL THINGS are for His glory.

> And in Heaven, the Bible says that the New Jerusalem...

Revelation 21:23

The city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the **glory** of God illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

And there's much more, but I hope that's enough to convince you that this theme pervades all of scripture.

This is NOT the theme, however, of the world you & I live in.

The world's mindset, the secular mindset starts with “me.”
The starting point is me and my desires and rights and expectations.

This is the natural mindset of every person ever born.
And we stay this way unless and until we are born again.
And even then, significant remnants of that old mindset remain,
and it's an ongoing battle for us as worshippers to overcome this
and replace it with a GOD-centered mindset.

Self-esteem has a place, but NOT at the center of your life!
GOD-esteem belongs at the center of your life!

The GLORY of GOD is absolute.
Everything else is contingent. Everything!

Why does the Sun rise every morning? (For the glory of God.)
And it sets every night for the same reason.
And all the orbits and rotations and gravity involved in that are for the glory of God!
Why is the sky blue? For the glory of God!
(and sure, you can say it's because of the wavelengths of different colors of light passing through the atmosphere.)
But why are there different colors of light, and why is there an atmosphere at all?
For the glory of God!
Why do birds sing? Why do the seasons change? **Why were you born??**
For the GLORY of GOD.

This is the “meaning of life.”

Authors and painters and playwrights and poets have created countless works, searching for this - the answer to the meaning of life.
Scientists seek it in microscopes and telescopes. Children ask questions about it.

And GOD has revealed it to us - in His Word, in creation, in history...
and most of all, in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The foundation of worship – the foundation of all things – IS the **GLORY of GOD.**

PRAYER

Father, thank You for revealing Your glory to us.
This morning, we ascribe glory to You.
We embrace Your glory, we stand in awe of Your glory.

And we thank You for displaying Your glory most radiantly and completely in Your Son.

JESUS, heal us from the foolish disease of self-centeredness.
Change our hearts to be God-centered, focused on You and Your glory.
It is NOT about us. All things are about You.
To You be glory forever.

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