

May 28, 2017  
Seventh Sunday of Easter

“Where Glory Is”

John 17:1-11

We have some trouble nailing down what exactly the terms “glory” and “glorified” mean, especially when it comes to the unfathomable glory of God. In the Greek this word ranges from being shining and bright to being magnificent and great to being honored and recognized to simply a godly transcendence of the normal.

When it comes to us, glory is easier to define: Drew Brees holding up that Superbowl trophy with all the crowds cheering around him. Or maybe it’s just that feeling of bliss enthralled in doing something you love—Victoria riding her horse is in her glory. Whatever our idea of our glory, it’s something the world would look at and say, “awesome!” But our idea of glory when it comes to us doesn’t mesh well with the glory of God.

Jesus prays in the hearing of the disciples on the evening of Maundy Thursday *“Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”*

First off, what is the glory of God here? It’s not Jesus shining bright in magnificence and greatness and honor transcending human existence. His hour has come. He in a matter of what, a couple hours, is going to be arrested and beaten and mocked, and beaten and mocked some more, flogged, beaten and mocked some more, crucified and mocked, and then die in agony. That’s His glory. That’s what He means in praying, “glorify your Son”.

We would not call that glory, but it is. It is the glory of a love so great it is beyond our comprehension. It is the glory of an awesome God who so selflessly loves his miserable created humanity that turns against Him every chance it gets that He is willing to humble Himself at their hands, suffer and die. Jesus is glorified in being willing to be God forsaken by God that poor miserable sinners would be saved from such condemnation. His glory is in His humble, serving love of humanity.

Of course, *“having accomplished the work that [the Father] gave [him] to do,”* Jesus is glorified in His resurrection and then ascending bodily to the right hand of the Father, reigning in divine power and glory again and forever as He did before the world existed. We’re really good with that—Jesus in heaven in glory beyond our imagining. We’re really good with that because if He’s all glorified up there at the right hand of the Father, that means we can be in our glory down here on earth.

Unfortunately, this is the truth of our sinful condition. We want the glory. The design and command of God is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself. Sin loves self first and most. Sin seeks to exalt self first and most. Sin wants the glory.

Our greed and covetousness stems from a desire to raise ourselves up in wealth and possessions and resentment of anyone else having more than us—more stuff and the glory that goes with it. Sinful self-righteousness is nothing more than thinking ourselves more glorious and honorable than others (and thereby deserving of special treatment by God and man). Our hatred and unforgiveness most often stems from someone daring to disrespect our person by offending

us, somehow tearing down our rightful glory. I did this just recently by getting so big and glorious in my own mind and getting angry when somebody had the audacity to infringe on my precious time! It was indeed something of which to repent.

We dance through life seeking various and sundry types of glory for ourselves. We're angry and resentful when we don't get it, or when other people don't recognize it. And often when we do attain glory in the eyes of the world, we think we achieved it, we deserve it, we are totally responsible for it.

Don't do this. Stop doing this. This is really dangerous. This is a First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me" kind of thing. This is seeking to have glory in and of ourselves in our own eyes and seeking to have glory in the eyes of the world. This is really turning your back on God and saying, I'm not interested in your glory, mine is the glory that matters.

What is it Jesus prays about His people and glory? "*All mine are yours, and yours are mine and I am glorified in them.*"

Who is glorified? Jesus is glorified. Jesus is glorified in His people. And how exactly is Jesus glorified on earth? We've been there already. He is glorified in loving the unlovable and underserving through humble service and self-sacrifice. He is glorified in being the suffering servant savior that looks as far from earthly glory as can be as He suffers and dies for poor, miserable sinners.

So, what does that call us followers of Christ to? The same. We are called to glorify God, to glorify Christ in everything we do by loving; loving and serving in love. We are called to be humble and think others more significant than ourselves. When we thrust ourselves over another in sin, we are to humbly repent and seek their forgiveness and God's forgiveness.

What we must realize, is that there is ultimately no such thing as earthly glory. Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father. And while, for a time, the powers and authorities of this world may huff and puff in some weak semblance of glory, on the Last Day Christ's glory will bring it all to nothing. The heavens and the earth and all they called glorious will be nothing. The new heaven and new earth will be remade in the glory of Christ and only those who belong to Christ will live there, in His glory.

So this day, glorify God in your body. Faithfully and humbly serve God and neighbor in love. Doing so well may even bring earthly rewards, victories and lesser glories. The truth is that by serving God and neighbor well in your God-given vocations as an employee or boss, a laborer or executive, a parent, child, student, athlete, teacher, pastor, neighbor, businessman, retiree or whatever will probably result in some good stuff—wealth, celebrity, praise, honor, reward—coming your way. But in all of it be giving glory to God. Be doing it for the glory of God by doing it in love for God and for neighbor.

"Glory" may be a hard thing to define, but in the end the glory is God's, all God's, and nothing but God's. Glory, true glory, is to be had nowhere else. So don't seek it anywhere else. Quite frankly, don't seek it at all, because you already know where it is. The glory of God is on the cross where Christ saved you. The glory of God is through the tomb in the resurrection by which Christ wins your eternal life for you. The glory of God is in the Baptism by which Christ claims you as His own. The glory of God is in the forgiveness Christ gives you.

So simply be Christ's; the redeemed children of God, giving glory where glory is due; to the Jesus who saves you.

Amen.