

March 18, 2018

Scripture:

Psalm 119:9-16

Hebrews 5:5-10

John 12:20-33

“Father, glorify your name.”

We find Jesus in John’s Gospel today ----- preparing for His finest hour.

He’s getting closer and closer to the cross --- His greatest act of love ---- His triumphant moment of being lifted up into glory.

He’s drawing closer and closer to the whole reason He came to earth.

Indeed in verse 27 from John’s Gospel today He says ---- “It was for this very reason I came to this hour.”

And then He it’s ----- “Father glorify your name.”

True faith is all about God’s glory.

Jesus Christ is all about God’s glory.

The cross is all about God’s glory.

The empty tomb is all about God’s glory.

This whole enterprise ---- life on earth --- our walks of faith ---- are all about the glory of God.

Indeed the Westminster Catechism begins with --- “What is the chief end of man? ----- and the answer --- anyone remember --- “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

“Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

We are here --- our purpose in life ---- our whole reason for being ---- is to glorify God ---- and enjoy Him forever.

Anyone who ever did anything to bring any kind of glory to themselves is ---
- simply put ---- not a person of faith.

“Father, glorify your name.” ----- Jesus says as He approaches His hour ---
His finest most definitive hour --- the cross.

Sometimes we get all caught up trying to understand the cross --- or explain
the cross --- wrap our heads around all that happened at the cross and why.

But the cross is beyond us in many ways --- the cross is the glory of God.

Sometimes when we think about the cross we ask the wrong kind of
questions --- or the secondary questions ---- things like ----

“Why would God punish His Son?
Why would God kill His Son? --- leave His Son up there to die?”

Or we say something like ---- “Christ was crucified to defeat Satan --- to kill
of the power and influence of evil and death.”

Or we say something like ---- “Christ died for us --- for our sins --- for our
salvation --- for the forgiveness of sins.”

And of course there is some truth --- some profound truth here.

He did die for us ---- our salvation is procured through Him ---- we are saved
by Him --- by His death --- the cross does spell the end for evil and death ---
and of course so much more as well.

But then there is this ---- “Father, glorify your name.”

“Father, glorify your name.”

The cross goes way beyond just you and me ---- it’s chiefly about God ---
the glory of God ---- His goodness.

God didn’t do something to someone else on the cross ---- God didn’t do
something to Jesus on the cross --- God was Himself up on the cross ---
hanging there.

What happened on the cross happened to God --- by God --- and for God ----
- for His glory.

Yes Satan was killed that day on that hill.

Yes our salvation was procured that day on that hill.

But the cross isn't chiefly about Satan --- or us --- or our salvation --- these
are but by products --- important ones for sure ---- evil dying off ---- our
salvation ----- important for sure.

But what about God --- isn't He the central figure --- the central actor ---
isn't He at the centre of the cross?

According to Jesus He certainly is ---- "Father, glorify your name."

"Father, glorify your name." --- that's what's really happening at the cross.

That's what Jesus' greatest hour is all about --- glorifying God.

Satan's influence dying off --- death passing --- salvation coming to all who
believe --- for sure ----- but only as God is glorified.

Second best isn't best.

Close enough isn't always good enough.

If we think the cross is about Satan and the state of our souls first and
foremost --- and then some great act of God ----- we've got the order all
wrong --- we've got the emphasis on the wrong syllable.

"Father, glorify your name." ---- Jesus says as He approaches His hour of
greatest glory --- the cross ----- Golgotha.

In verse 27 Jesus says ----

"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say?

'Father, save me from this hour?'

No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

Father, glorify your name."

Jesus finest hour ---- the cross --- is all about glorifying God honouring God --- following God's lead ---- all the rest is secondary.

Easter is the icing on the cake ----- Easter is the kind of like the --- "I told you so moment."

The cross is the binding act --- the glorifying act ---- the sacrificial --- atoning --- salvific act --- saving act.

It's all right there ----- if we want to know Jesus sooner or later we have to meet Him at the cross ---- there we find Him ---- or closer to the truth ---- there He finds us --- reveals His true nature to us.

In verse 23 in John's Gospel today Jesus says ---- "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

Yes the cross is grotesque --- remember crucifixion was the method of killing that was meant to wipe you off the face of the earth --- thousands on thousands were crucified --- it was for the lowest of the low --- crucifixion was meant to wipe your existence off the face of the earth --- before Christ we have no names of anyone that was ever crucified ----- and after Christ we have no single name of anyone ever crucified ---- it was a wipe you off the face of the earth kind of act --- so that no one would ever remember that you even existed.

But Jesus changed things ---- but changes everything.

The cross is sacrifice --- the cross is suffering --- the cross is brutality ---- the cross is a wipe you off the face of the earth kind of killing ----- but then along comes Christ --- and He glorifies God through this tremendous act of suffering.

But it's hard to understand.

It was hard for people then to understand it's hard for us now to understand.

Verse 34 from John's Gospel ---- "We have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, "The Son of Man must be lifted up?"

"We have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, "The Son of Man must be lifted up?"

The idea of the Messiah being mocked ---- beaten --- killed --- crucified made absolutely no sense to first century Jews --- people of God.

The idea of the Messiah's finest hour being all about death on a cross ---- crucifixion with a couple of criminals made no sense.

That's why Peter is incensed that Jesus would ever even suggest such great suffering --- rejection ---- and death --- that the Messiah be treated and killed like that ---- no way Peter says in Mark 8 --- we looked at it a few weeks back ----- and so he rebukes Jesus --- does Peter ---- and Jesus simply says --- get behind me Peter --- Satan is using you so just get behind me Peter --- you don't understand this ----- you've got your heart set on human things ---- - not the concerns of God.

The Messiah was to conquer --- the Messiah was to display great feats of strength and power and authority ---- the Messiah was to reign supreme --- it was all to be glorious and mighty and it was all to be described in human terms.

And of course glorious it was --- and mighty it was ---- and powerful it was - ----- and is --- but not in the way anyone expected it.

And the truth is --- we kind of do the very same thing.

We too often put the glory where it may not chiefly deserve to be put ----- ---- Easter far more than Good Friday --- the cross.

We put the glory on the empty tomb far more than the cross.

Because we think Easter is far more about the power and the conquering --- and the great act of authority and power and dominion far more than the cross is.

But in truth ---- the cross is Christ's finest hour.

"No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour ----- "Father, glorify your name.""

Easter is the aftermath --- the icing on the cake ---- the empty net goal ---- the victory lap after the race is already over.

The conquering comes on the cross --- the glory comes on the cross --- the salvation comes on the cross ---- for the forgiveness of sins comes on the cross.

"And when I am lifted up --- I will draw all people to myself." --- Jesus said --- in verse 32 today.

For John ---- for Jesus ---- the cross is the lifting up --- the cross is the glory.

"Father, glorify your name." ----- is what has controlled and dictated and defined Jesus' entire life.

In John 8:29 Jesus says --- "The one who sent me is with me, he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."

"I always do what pleases him."

And then in verse 50 also in John 8 ----- Jesus says --- "I am not seeking glory for myself."

And here today in John 12 it's ----- "Father, glorify your name."

It's God first and then it's us --- our salvation --- the forgiveness of sins --- life eternal ---- the empty netter the victory lap.

It's God first and then the defeat of Satan --- and death shall be no more --- death has lost its sting.

That's what Christ reminds us in John's Gospel today.

And ----- that's what the cross is all about --- if we put God first all the rest will fall into place even when it seems to make little or no sense to us at all.

Remember the first commandment when Jesus summarizes all the commandments is --- “Love the Lord your God with all your heart --- mind - --- strength --- and soul...” --- put another way --- the first and most important thing is ----- glorify God with all you’ve got.

The Messiah a victim --- the Messiah crucified ---- the Messiah beaten mocked humiliated ---- well this just cannot be --- people thought ---- including His own disciples ---- Peter for sure --- Mark 8 Matthew 16.

But Jesus --- Jesus knew that if He followed God --- that if He glorified God --- even if that included beatings --- ridicule ---- humiliation ----- victimization in the sight of the world --- Jesus knew that if He did as God asked ---- if He glorified God all the rest would fall into place.

Verse 27 says it all ---- “Now Father my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”

Just because He is troubled doesn’t mean it isn’t what God wants.

Sometimes what God wants will trouble us.

Jesus doesn’t say --- “God save me from this trouble. Let me side step it Father.” --- instead what He says is ---- “Father, glorify your name.”

Sometimes what God asks of us may seem troubling to us.

Sometimes bringing glory to God can be troubling to us.

But we have to show some emotional maturity and some spiritual maturity.

We have to believe --- we have to trust --- we have to acquiesce.

Jesus did --- clearly it troubled Him a bit this methodology that God chose.

“Now Father my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”

Jesus came to glorify God's name --- and if this meant it might be a bit troubling to Him personally --- so be it.

He didn't come for an easy joy ride to heaven ---- He didn't come to slay Satan in power and might in front of everybody with a steak to the heart -----
 --- He came to bring glory to God whatever that meant ---- however that played out.

I don't know about you ---- but this is a great and powerful comfort.

Part of what this means is that troubling times don't necessarily mean the absence of God.

Part of what this means is that there is always more going on than meets the eye.

Part of what this means is trouble in our lives --- trouble in the world doesn't necessarily mean things are going wrong or poorly.

Sometimes that which is troubling to us --- to the world ---- is glorifying to God.

Just because something is troubling to us doesn't necessarily mean that it isn't also exactly as God intends it to be.

Indeed sometimes that which troubles us --- is exactly as God intends it ----- the cross.

"Now Father my soul is troubled, and what shall I say?

Father save me from this hour?

No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name." ---- these are profound words ----- these are powerful words that display a trust in God beyond measure.

In Isaiah 49 verse 16 God says ---- "See I have engraved you in the palms of my hands."

God holds us in the palms of His hands ---- the problem is sometimes we sit in there with a chain to His wrist trying to direct where it is He is going to take us or set us down.

But it doesn't work that way.

We don't bring glory to His name by trying to control what it is He would have us do --- we don't bring glory to His name by asking to be saved from anything that perplexes us.

“Now Father my soul is troubled, and what shall I say?

Father save me from this hour?

No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”

When Jesus says --- “The one who sent me is with me, he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”

When Jesus says ----- “I am not seeking glory for myself.”

He's not just giving Himself a little pep talk ----- He's also talking to us ---- and encouraging us along the way.

When Jesus says that He will do as God asks Him even when it's troubling - --- He's encouraging to us to do the same.

When Jesus says --- “Father, glorify your name.” --- He's inviting us into that same great proclamation --- and statement of faith.

If our lives --- how we appear --- what we do --- what people think of us --- how we are perceived by others is more important than bringing glory to God ----- we are failing --- and we are falling short in our walks of faith.

Lent is the season of self --- examination and growth like no other.

“Anyone who loves their life will lose it Jesus says ----- while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me.”

Whoever serves must follow me --- He says.

And Jesus goes into some pretty tricky situations ----- following Him sometimes takes us into some pretty tricky situations too.

There's glory ---- but sometimes the glory comes much later on.

I take great comfort in what Jesus is saying today ---- and I hope you do too ---- because it's meant to comfort and encourage us --- lift us up and empower us.

“Don't worry my child Jesus is saying. Don't worry if you are troubled --- sometimes following me will be troubling ----- but trust --- bring glory to God and all will be well ---- God's got this ---- God's got you in the palm of His hand.”

Jesus was forever filled and ruled and run by a great and profound trust in God and belief in the power and benevolence of God's will.

Jesus knew there would be ups and great downs to His time on earth --- but He also knew it would all end with the great UP --- being lifted up for glory ----- in glory to God.

Troubling yes --- difficult yes ---- a paradox --- a seeming contradiction ---- yes ---- but there was never any doubt of the final outcome.

“Now Father my soul is troubled, and what shall I say?
 Father save me from this hour?
 No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”

Jesus didn't ask to be saved from the troubles of this world.

“My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me ---- No.” ----
 Jesus said --- “No.”

By doing as God so asks of us --- by believing we are saved not from troubles and evil and hurt and suffering and sacrifice in this world ---- but from all of these in the next world --- the next realm --- that's how He --- Jesus ---- and we bring glory to God.

But sometimes we're impatient ---- and we want it now.

Save me from what troubles me now Lord --- give me comfort now Lord ----
 I don't want to feel this way Lord ----- it's too much ---- give it ----- heaven -
 ----- absence of pain --- grief --- struggle ---- suffering ---- give it to me now.

“Father, glorify your name.” --- is what Jesus says --- not save me from
 feeling troubled --- but “Glorify your name.”

The glorification of Christ brings change to everything.

Everything now --- and everything later.

The cross identifies those who are children of the light --- now and also later.

The cross separates those who believe and who are saved --- now and also
 later.

The light of the cross shines bright illuminating the darkness and always will
 ----- and nothing can ever change this.

And the light of the cross shines now here today --- and tomorrow ---- and
 the next day and the day after that and the day after that --- until the end of
 time as we know it.

It shines until He comes again when it will shine in a new and far more
 powerful ---- beautiful ---- and radiant way than ever before.

“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness will not overcome it.”

Jesus is the light ---- the cross is the light --- and the light shines in the
 darkness now --- the darkness of this world --- and the darkness will not ---
 does not overcome.

That is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for today.

That is the glory of God.

And it's a beautiful thing --- and it's a life giving thing --- and it is good -----
 and it is true ---- and nothing can ever change this.

When the crowd --- when the culture speculates about the nature of the Messiah --- see verse 34 from John's gospel today --- when the people speculate about the nature and role of the Messiah ----- Jesus denies them an answer and simply invites them to believe.

“Believe in the light --- become children of the light” Jesus says in verse 36 today ----- that is the glory of the Gospel.

“Believe in God believe also in me.” --- that is the glory of the Gospel.

God is glorified when we believe.

When we believe and trust and follow --- even when it's troubling to do so.

Our lives are a great and beautiful gift --- and they are a great and beautiful gift that we are to employ for the glory of God.

“Father, glorify your name.” --- Jesus says.

And so as His disciples we too say ----- “Father, glorify your name.”

What is our chief end ----- to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Or as Jesus said ----- “Father, glorify your name.”

And so ---- to God be the glory now and forever ----- as walk in the light of God sharing His goodness --- His beauty ----- and His truth.

Amen.