

Sermon Guide: Towards Easter: the Good News of Jesus: “Cruciform Glory” | Samuel Voo | March 17, 2024

Summary

In today's sermon, we explored the profound biblical concept of glory, particularly as it relates to the cross of Jesus Christ. We began by considering the public ministry of Jesus as depicted in the Gospel of John, noting that despite performing seven symbolic signs, the response from the people, especially the Jewish leaders, was largely one of disbelief and rejection. This culminated in a plot to kill Jesus, marking a pivotal moment in the narrative.

We then delved into the meaning of glory from a biblical perspective. Glory, in its simplest form, is associated with brightness or brilliance, much like the awe-inspiring view from the summit of Mount Kinabalu at sunrise. However, the biblical understanding of glory goes much deeper, encompassing the concepts of weightiness, heaviness, and density. This heaviness is symbolic of value, honor, and respect. In the Old Testament, God's glory is so intense that it is dangerous for humans to approach, as seen in the account of Moses on Mount Sinai.

The Gospel of John presents a unique perspective on glory, intertwining it with the themes of suffering and the cross. John connects the glory of Jesus with the prophecies of Isaiah, particularly chapters 6 and 53, which speak of the Lord's exaltation and the suffering servant. In John 12, Jesus declares that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified, referring to His impending crucifixion. This paradoxical association of glory with suffering and death is central to John's portrayal of Jesus' mission.

As we approach Easter, we are reminded that the cross, an instrument of suffering and shame, is the ultimate expression of Jesus' glory. It is through His sacrifice that we find the full revelation of God's love and the means of our salvation. The cross stands as a testament to the weighty glory of God's redemptive plan.

In applying this understanding of glory to our lives, we considered three aspects: relational suffering, the distinction between physical and spiritual well-being, and the ministry of presence in suffering with others. We recognized that relationships often involve pain and that through enduring and forgiving, we grow in holiness. We also acknowledged that physical suffering does not negate our capacity for spiritual joy and peace, as exemplified by Jesus Himself. Lastly, we emphasized the importance of being present with those who suffer, sharing in their burdens without the need for many words.

Key Takeaways:

- Biblical glory is not merely about radiance but also about the weightiness of God's presence, which is both valuable and transformative. As we seek to reflect God's glory in our lives, we must embrace the fullness of His character, including His holiness and righteousness. [13:21]
- The cross of Jesus is the ultimate expression of glory in the Gospel of John. It is through His suffering and death that the love and salvation of God are most powerfully displayed. This challenges us to reconsider our own understanding of glory and to find beauty in sacrifice and service. [23:53]
- Relational suffering is an inevitable part of life, but it is also a means through which we can grow in holiness. As we navigate the complexities of human relationships, we are called to exercise grace, patience, and forgiveness, reflecting the character of Christ in our interactions with others. [27:23]
- Our spiritual well-being is not solely dependent on our physical circumstances. Even in the midst of physical suffering, we can experience profound spiritual joy and peace by focusing on the presence and promises of God, as Jesus did during His final hours. [30:08]

Bible Reading:

1. John 12:23-28 (ESV)

"And Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. 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.'"

2. Isaiah 6:1-3 (ESV)

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"

3. Isaiah 53:3-5 (ESV)

"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."

Discussion Questions:

1. Reflecting on Isaiah 6:1-3, how is the glory of the Lord described in the vision of Isaiah? What does the response of the seraphim reveal about the nature of God's glory?
2. Considering Isaiah 53:3-5, how does the suffering servant's experience contrast with the glory typically associated with power and majesty?
3. What does the voice from heaven in John 12:28 indicate about the relationship between Jesus' mission and the glory of God?

Going deeper:

1. Reflect on a recent experience of relational suffering. How can you apply the principle of glorification through suffering to grow in holiness in this relationship?
2. Identify a situation where you or someone you know is experiencing physical suffering. How can you encourage spiritual well-being in the midst of this challenge?
3. Think of a person in your life who is currently going through a difficult time. What specific action can you take this week to offer a ministry of presence to them?
4. What is one daily activity you can replace with time spent in prayer or Bible study to prioritize reflecting God's glory in your routine?