

GOD IS AT WORK FOR HIS OWN GLORY – The Glory of God in Jesus

Our great hope is to be a God-centered church, captivated by God's final pursuit of Himself. Ironically, in pursuing His glory our greatest joy is found. As a result, our confidence is not in ourselves, but in his work. God is always going ahead, behind, and alongside of His people. The Church is first and foremost His great work. Our calling is to participate in what He is already doing.

John 1.14 – The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory...

Read John 1.1-18

Context & Meaning

The Word who was with God in the beginning, and who was himself God, through whom all things were created and are sustained, who is life and true light has made his home (*has 'dwelt among us' (v.14)...the word 'dwelt' refers to the OT tabernacle, the place where God made himself known and was worshipped (Ex. 25.8-9)*) among us). And as John dramatically states, 'We have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth' (v. 14). The bright splendor that marks God's presence (his weightiness) has set up residence among humanity. And according to John, if one wants to see God's glory the primary place he must look is the person of Jesus of Nazareth! – 'No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known' (v.18).

Yet once this is grasped it doesn't take long for us to realize that our concept of God's glory (or glory in general for that matter) is going to have to be reshaped. As Eugene Peterson has written:

Once we take a careful John-guided look at Jesus, we have to revise our understanding of glory considerably. The thunder and lightning of Sinai, the elaborate rituals and fabrics and designs for worship in the wilderness tent, the architectural splendors of the Solomonic temple, the spinning, gyroscopic cherubim dazzle of Ezekiel's throne, the thunderous Psalm 29 poem/prayer that conducts the entire creation into symphonic harmonies – all this is now background to the glory that we see in Jesus. Nothing of the splendor that is conveyed in these earlier expressions of the glory is to be dismissed or minimized in any way. But this glory must now be reimagined and received and entered into as Jesus reveals it: Jesus ignorable, Jesus unimpressive, Jesus dismissed, Jesus marginal, Jesus suffering, Jesus rejected, Jesus derided, Jesus hung on a cross, and - the final and irrefutable dignity – Jesus dead and buried. All this is included in the content of 'we beheld his glory' (v. 14).

Apply

Moses prayed, 'Please show me your glory' (Ex. 33.18). When we pray this prayer, God's first response is always, 'Look at my Son and listen to him' (Mk. 9.7). It is in Jesus that we behold the glory of God, glory that comes to us in the most unexpected of ways – death and resurrection. So if we want to see the unseeable God in his bright splendor, then look to the crucified and risen One, Jesus. Again Peterson helps us:

Jesus is the person in whom we see God present among us, God dwelling among us, God here and now... 'Look at what is right before you: *I am*. The signs are all over the place, the sayings are in our minds and hearts. The glory.

For Reflection and Discussion – The Glory of God in Jesus (*John 1.1-18*)

1. How does the culture around us define ‘glory’? Name specific areas where this is seen.
2. How does this definition measure up to the glory of God revealed in the person of Jesus?
3. Which definition have you based your life on? Explain.
4. In what ways does the Jesus-shaped glory of God set an agenda for our lives individually and as a community? In other words, seeing as how we are called to pursue God’s glory, what does it look like to do this the Jesus way?
5. We as a church hold firmly to the truth that God is at work for his own glory, that he is about the business of exalting his name among the nations, and that he has done this climactically in and through his Son, Jesus (see John 12.27-33). How is he continuing to do this through us the followers of Jesus? How is he doing it through Redeemer as a whole and through us a community group?
6. Do you believe that God’s name will be glorified in our culture if done the Jesus-shaped glory way? In other words, will our culture pay any attention to glory seen in Jesus or do we need to supplement in certain areas?

Prayer

O Lord, by Your Spirit, teach us and enable us to live according to Your Jesus-shaped glory.