

**"To See His Glory"  
(John 1:1-18)  
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**(John 1:1-18)**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

<sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— <sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>15</sup> (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") <sup>16</sup> Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Here's where we've been so far this month in this passage. We started off with Jesus, the pre-existent God, the one who always was, who was there in the beginning when there was nothing. And he was the one who from nothing, made something. He is the creator God that entered into his own creation by becoming one of us embodying the fullness of man.

Then we talked about the honest reality of the world into which he entered. It was a dark world, spiritually and morally dark. It was a world that was in utter rebellion against God, unwilling to know him or receive him or live with him or acknowledge him. And into that pitch blackness, he came to shine and give light, meaning that he came to remove the darkness from our lives and from the world.

Last week we focused on the purpose of Jesus coming into the world. Though we deserved nothing, he came to give us everything. Because of our sin and rebellion we deserved nothing except God's wrath and punishment, but Jesus came to take upon himself the wrath and punishment of God, so that we could become the very children of God. We deserved nothing, but through Jesus we received everything.

Today, we're looking at the glory and grace of Jesus Christ focusing on verses 14-18.

### **What is glory?**

Glory is a very common word in the Christian vernacular. We use it all the time. It makes up much of the lyrics in our worship and singing. I think it's one of these words that we have a better than vague idea of, but we may not really know it's complete meaning. What is glory?

There are several uses of the word. Glory can mean praise. Glory to God in the highest, means praise, honor to God in the highest. We also see that something or someone can be glorious meaning awesome, wonderful, worthy of honor, worthy of receive accolade and praise. And there's the phrase, "the glory of God." What does that mean?

When we think of all the people that encountered God in the Old Testament, the one person that stands out the most, as having had the most dynamic and personal and intimate relationship with God is Moses. There's really no close second when it comes to this. None of the great prophets. None of the great patriarchs. None of the great kings. None of the great priests. Moses...stands head and shoulders above everyone in this category.

And perhaps of all the God encounters Moses had and he had a lot— speaking to God at the burning bush; experiencing the power of God through the greatest miracles and acts of God recorded in all the Bible; 40 days on Mt. Sinai; the daily tent of meeting—but amongst all of these stellar moments stands out one particularly amazing moment. Exodus 33. The cleft in the rock encounter. The story goes like this. Moses is pleading with God not to abandon his people and insists that the presence of God must accompany them. God is really pleased with Moses and with his request and agrees to do what he asked. And you'd think the story is over, prayer answered, mission accomplished, but Moses asks for one more thing. Here's the account:

<sup>18</sup> Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."<sup>19</sup> And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. <sup>20</sup> But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."<sup>21</sup> Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. <sup>22</sup> When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup> Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen." (**Exodus 33:18-23**)

Okay, now here's the question. What is the glory of God? Moses asked to be shown the glory of God, right? It appears that God complied, that he did what Moses asked. What did God say he was going to do? I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you. Goodness shown in mercy and goodness shown in compassion. But it will need to be veiled, you cannot see my face, because no one can see my face and live.

So these are the instructions. If you're going to do something dangerous, you better know what you're getting into and you better know what you're doing. Deep sea diving, space travel, skydiving. Here are the instructions. If you don't follow them, you die.

God says, there's this place, a crack, a fissure in the rock and when I pass by you, I will cover you with my hand so you are not consumed, so you could have an encounter with me and live to tell about it. And then after my glory has passed by, I will remove my hand and you will see by back, but again he reiterates, "but my face must not be seen."

If you think extreme sports are for thrill seekers, try experiencing God.

And then, it happens:

<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. <sup>6</sup> And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation." (**Exodus 34:5-7**)

Okay, back to the question again. From the Moses story, what is the glory of God?

The glory of God is the manifestation of God, the revelation of God, the removing of the hiddenness of God. It is the self-revelation of the character and presence and essence and speech of the holy, fearful, and loving Creator Redeemer God. It is not by accident that when God passes by Moses, he doesn't just radiate and glow and emit some sort of presence. He could have done that I suppose, but he didn't.

What I find fascinating and of primary importance in this story is that while God is revealing his glory to Moses, he's speaking. God proclaims, he preaches, he declares who he is—I am Yahweh, I am the LORD, that is my name. I am compassionate. I am gracious. I am slow to anger. I am abounding in love and faithfulness, I am forgiving, I am the judge.

It was the same experience when the Temple was completed under King Solomon. It was the same thing when Isaiah has his God encounter in Isaiah chapter 6. There was a physical manifestation of God, but always there was the speech of God. It's true even in heaven. What do the living creatures surrounding the throne of God do? Do they just sit there, basking in the effulgence of God? No, they speak. They proclaim. They declare. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. In fact it says that they proclaim this night and day!

Put it this way. If you think you are experiencing the presence of the glory of God, how do you know if it's authentic or not? Very close by will be the word of God. If there is no word of God nearby, it's probably fake.

This is what the glory of God is:

Now, let's look once again at John 1:14:

<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

What do we have in Jesus?

### **A greater glory.**

When we look at the birth narratives there is really nothing glorious or glamorous about them. A young husband and wife are about to give birth to a baby. They are not from well-known, popular, wealthy or powerful stock. They are poor. They don't have access to a hospital or physicians, they are not even surrounded by moms and aunts and grandmothers to coach them through the delivery. And they're not waiting in a warm living room for the first signs of labor. They are on the move. And there's not a single room rental available for them so they end up giving birth in a humble stable that was meant for livestock. There's no bassinet, no crib; just a feeding trough that would have to double as a bed for the infant Jesus. Nothing in his birth was even remotely glorious.

Even in his life, he lived simply and humbly and in poverty, yet John says here, we have seen his glory. What is he saying? He's saying, just as Moses saw a glimpse, the backside, of the radiating presence and Word of God, we have seen the ultimate expression of the radiating presence in the Word of God that became flesh. Do you see? God who existed eternally, in the person of Jesus became a human being. For the first time ever people were able to see God, see his glory, to hear his speech, to touch him and have him touch them, to eat with him and walk with him and not die. There is no cleft. There is no more just looking at God's backside. We now get to see God face to face in Jesus Christ. That is why John can say, "We have seen his glory" and in seeing the radiating presence of Jesus and seeing and hearing the ultimate expression of the word of God, the Logos, we have experienced an even greater glory.

The glory Moses saw was veiled. The glory John saw wasn't. The glory Moses saw was from behind. The glory John saw was from the front. The words of the glory of God that Moses saw was the speech of God and the commandments of God. The words of the glory of God that John saw, was GOD, the incarnate Logos.

In seeing Jesus, "We have seen his glory!"

Listen to how the author of Hebrews says it:

<sup>1</sup> In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. **(Hebrews 1:1-3)**

What is it that you and I must experience this Christmas and for all of our lives? It is the radiating, holy, and powerful glory of Jesus Christ. How? How do I experience that?

We can experience this glory because in Jesus, in Christmas, **a greater grace** was offered to us. Let me read verses 16-17:

<sup>16</sup> Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

What does that mean that we received a grace in place of grace already given? Well it implies this. The second grace is greater than the first grace. There'd be no reason to replace it or to give more of it if the first grace was sufficient.

So, what was the first grace? I believe the first grace was the giving of the Law of God at Sinai. Between Moses asking to see God's glory and God actually revealing to Moses his glory there was something God had asked Moses to do that we didn't read. Let me read it here:

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. <sup>2</sup> Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain. <sup>3</sup> No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks and herds may graze in front of the mountain."<sup>4</sup> So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. **(Exodus 34:1-4)**

The Bible tells us that there is no other people like God's people that have a law like God's law. The giving and receiving of God's law is a tremendous grace. Through the law we could know who God is and how we are to relate to him. So God's law was the first grace and John tells us that from or through Jesus Christ, we have received a greater grace. Why is a greater grace found in Jesus?

- Well, in Jesus the law is no longer an etching on stone tablets or even ink on paper, through Jesus the law is now written on the human heart.
- In the law, we are shown how utterly unable we are to meet the requirements of God. In Jesus we are shown that the requirements of the law have been taken care of by him.
- In the law, we are told that the blood of animals must be shed for our sins. In Jesus Christ, his own blood was shed once and for all for our sins.
- In the law we are told we must go to the priest to offer our sacrifices. In Jesus, he is the ultimate high priest making the way for us to reach God.
- In the law we discover that we need, more than anything, grace. In Jesus, we discover that this grace is now available to all who would believe.

So yes, definitely, in the law of Moses there was grace, it was a free gift of God, but now in Jesus, in the incarnation, in the death and resurrection of Jesus, there is a far greater grace, the ultimate and final and only necessary grace—that says, the requirements of the law you were never able to fulfill, I have fulfilled. The punishment that you were supposed to receive for all the times you violated the law, I have paid in full. It is indeed a far greater grace.

Friends, this is what Christmas is about, seeing the glory of God in the grace that comes from and through Jesus Christ. This is the gospel message. Christmas and for that matter Christianity, is about grace, that sinners, like you and me can be forgiven.

### **Conclusion:**

As we end this year and begin a new one, my hope and prayer is that each of us, regardless of where you are in your relationship with God, will come to know Jesus Christ more personally, and in coming to know Jesus you'll experience and even deeper measure of his grace—a grace upon grace, a grace greater than the first grace.

It is so important for us to experience God's grace in Christ.

Your understanding and experience of grace, or lack thereof, will impact everything. That's not an exaggerated statement. It really is true. Your understanding and experience of grace, or lack thereof, will impact everything. You see, grace is like a dye, a spiritual dye. It permeates into everything. It gets into every part of your being. Grace will impact the way you view God. Is he a ruthless taskmaster, or is he your loving and holy heavenly Father? How you answer that question reveals what you know about grace, and how truly and deeply you've experienced it.

Grace impacts how you view others. Is there a heavy-handedness to your relationships or is there more of a sense of understanding and patience and forgiveness? Think of the way you relate to your children, your spouse, your closest friends, church members, even your coworkers. What is the permeating dye that colors all these relationships? Is it harsh and judgmental? Is it full of grace and mercy?

Finally, grace impacts how you view yourself. How do you view yourself? Are you always trying to perform? Is that where you get your value? Is that how you tell yourself that you're okay? Or do you think it doesn't matter at all what you do? A Christian infused with grace doesn't think either way about themselves. Rather they echo what Paul said.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.  
**(1 Corinthians 15:10)**

Everyone leaks this dye. Just like dye it gets on everything. If you ask God for this grace and you truly begin to experience it deeply, and truly in Christ, through Christ, for Christ, it'll get on everything. It'll color your relationship with God, your relationships with others and the way you see yourself.

Let's pray.