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God's Glory Delivered

Various Scriptures

Prayer: Father, we just again thank you and praise you for this time, for this season, for the freedom that we have to literally go and tell it on the mountain. We are just amazed that we have that freedom and ability to be able to gather together. We know that our brothers and sisters around the world don't have that same freedom and so we pray for each and every brother and sister who is naming the name of Christ this morning at some cost, we just pray your continued grace, strength and wisdom for them. And we pray this morning, Lord, for ourselves as we indulge ourselves with that privilege you've given us, that you would also give us the privilege of the presence of your Holy Spirit, Lord. Without your Spirit, these are just mere words, and so we pray you would come and accompany your word and give it unction and give it power, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Luke, the second chapter, verses 8 through 14 says: And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to

them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

I think most of us are familiar with this passage of scripture that describes a group of shepherds suddenly being visited by a multitude of creatures that were not from this earth. And I can't imagine what it must have been like to suddenly see the entire heaven lit up with the multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

This is really part three of our three-part series on Christmas and it's all about glory. Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king. And we've spent the last three weeks looking at glory from three different perspectives. We've looked at glory defined and according to John Piper it is -- quote -- "The public display of the infinite beauty and worth of God." We've looked at

glory denied by examining seven different aspects of the glory that Christ gave up in order to become one of us. And to do that, we went to the final book of the Bible where there's myriad thousands of thousands and they're praising and glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ, and they say: *The lamb who was slaughtered is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!* And those are seven of the attributes of Christ that he willingly forsook in order to become the little baby that we celebrate at Christmas, and that we did last week. And so having defined glory and seeing just what it is of Christ's glory that he denied to be here, we now want to focus on Christmas itself as the ultimate delivery of God's plan for his glory. And once again, it, that is glory, is the ultimate display of God's infinite beauty and worth.

So this morning we want to go to Christmas at sort of a ten thousand-foot level. And what I really want to do this morning is attempt to answer this question: Why were the angels so filled with praise that night that they literally lit up the sky with their praise and glory for Christ? And the quick answer is that once again, they saw God delivering glory and it's something that he has done since the fall of Adam in the garden. You see, God causes all things to work together for good, and here the shepherds are watching the angels respond to God's ability to do just that.

I mean, there's a verse in scripture that I hope by now most of us have committed to memory, because we say it so often around here, and it's *Romans 8:28: All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose.*

And again, we want to ask that question, how does God do that?

Well, let me mention another verse that is also monumental, and it goes along with Romans 8:28. It's a very famous line that was spoken by Joseph when he confronts his brothers who had thrown him down a well and thought he was dead. To make a very long story short, his brothers hated the fact that Joseph was their father's favorite and they actually wanted to kill him, but instead they threw him into a well and basically they forgot about him. They didn't know that God causes all things, including wicked, evil things, to work together for good. Little did they know the twists and the turns that Joseph's life took from being taken out of the well and being sold into slavery and then through an astounding series of events being brought before the king to become vice regent over all of Egypt. Meanwhile Joseph's brothers are starving as a massive drought has gripped the entire region. They're forced literally by starvation to go to Egypt for food and to reconnect with Joseph who they think is dead. They have no idea that God has once again taken this evil deed that they had done and worked it for good. And again, I'm condensing a very, very long story to a very short response, but I want to get right to the principle that

the angels that Christmas night are praising God for. After Joseph's brothers reconnect with him after much tears and much recriminations, Joseph delivers a famous line that sums up everything that happens in his brothers' life and in his life as well. It's *Genesis 50:20*, he says: *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.* And the principle is this, the principle is God is so wise, he is so powerful and so incredibly beyond our ability to grasp, that he can take any evil thing that we are capable of doing and turn it around and use it for good. So the principle is what man intends for evil, God can superintend for good. What does this have to do with Christmas? Well, the angels there were singing that night, they're praising God for his ultimate display of his infinite beauty and worth that the birth of Jesus is, because it's the culmination of that very principle that God states over and over again in scripture. It is a principle that can guide your life and my life. I mean, just imagine being able to live your life fully convinced that God is so sovereign and so powerful that he's capable of turning anything that people or circumstance might do in your life that might be bad into something that will eventually be good. That's the principle that God's illustrating over and over again. And the Christmas story is simply the culmination of God's ability to do just that. What it said in Joseph's life and what it can say in each of our lives is that God will never, never get you around bad things and

certainly there were plenty of those in Joseph's life, that if you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, he can take any of those bad things that happen in life and make them work together for good.

So what I want to do this morning is view Christmas from the ten thousand-foot level to see how God can transform extraordinarily bad things into miraculously good things for his glory. That's why the angels were glorifying God in heaven before the shepherds. So we're going to be looking at Christmas to see the ultimate display of God's infinite beauty and worth in three reflections of God's glory predicted, of God's glory provided for, and God's glory performed as God delivers his glory on Christmas. We want to see everything that leads up to the angels' presentation to the shepherds as a series literally bad things turned into good things that God is accomplishing. And what I want us to see is that God's superintending power is one of the most glorious things about him, and that's what the angels are celebrating that Christmas Eve.

So first I want to look at God's glory predicted, and to do that, we need to go back to the very beginning, to Adam and Eve, and to their decision to throw their lot in with the snake instead of with the God who had given them everything. I mean, they were literally in paradise, having dominion over all of nature, fulfilling precisely what God had created them for when they decided that the

lies of a snake were more convincing than the truth of the God who had given them everything.

You know, atheists love to point out that Christians are so whacky that they actually believe in a talking snake. Well, we do indeed believe that there was a serpent who lied to the first humans who ever lived, but to be fair, we Christians also marvel at the wackiness of anyone who would believe that the universe was created out of nothing by nothing when infinite matter exploded. And so if I have to choose between a talking snake and exploding infinite matter guided by nothing, I'm going with the talking snake. This is what happened. It's *Genesis 3:1*. It says: *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her

husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

That one sin caused the absolute collapse of Adam and Eve's perfection, fundamentally transforming their nature and the nature of every subsequent offspring, including you and me. I mean, it's called original sin for a reason, and every one of us has been born with that sin which gives us the very same rebel heart towards God that Adam had. The Christmas story actually starts in the book of Genesis with God's response to Adam and Eve's rebellion. I mean, that was the very first bad thing that God was going to turn into a good thing. And God was clearly not taken by surprise by the fall of Adam and the astounding thing is that he knew before Adam even breathed the price that he would have to pay for giving Adam that absolute freedom would be a cross.

After Adam and Eve are confronted by God in the garden, God makes an astounding prediction. This is *Genesis 3:13*. It says: *Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."* The LORD God said to the serpent, *"Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your*

life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." So God tells the serpent that he and the woman are going to become bitter enemies and so will her offspring and his offspring. And then he says, speaking of one particular offspring of one particular woman, "He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Here we find God already preparing to deliver the glory of Christmas by taking a very bad thing that Adam and Eve did and turning it into a good thing that he does. All the way back in the Garden of Eden, God announces his response to Adam's sin. He says the offspring of a woman will bruise the head of the serpent, and in so doing will have his own heel bruised as well, of course referring to Jesus crushing Satan's head at the cross while suffering the bruising of his heel in the process. And there's one thing that I can't help but notice in all of this, particularly in an era where feminism is constantly on the attack and the role of women and Christianity is constantly being libeled, is that according to God's great plan, the salvation of mankind has absolutely nothing to do with the male of the species. It's amazing, but the singular honor of giving flesh to God himself rests with the female side of the equation and not with the male. Jesus came to earth through the egg of Mary and the seed of God himself. No male involved here at all. I mean, you could certainly make the case that God gave the ultimate privilege of

partnering with him in rescuing humanity not to men but to women, to a woman alone. And thousands of years after God makes this pronouncement, we read in Luke 1:26: *In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"* God had made an incredible prediction about the glory that would flow from this terrible act of defiance by Adam and Eve. So Gabriel begins the process of making the prediction take on flesh. But we're getting ahead of ourselves here. We need to go back into the history a bit that brought us to Gabriel's announcement.

God's pronouncement in the garden of the glory of Christmas predicted is directly followed by the glory of God's providence provided. And by "providence," we mean God's selective guidance of the affairs of mankind so that human free will is maintained while the absolute sovereign will of God goes forward. That's just a longwinded way of saying that God takes every single bad thing that mankind intends and he superintends those bad things to work together for good to those who love him, and who are called according to his purpose. So God's providential plan was to take a man, just a man, an idol worshiper from Ur of the Chaldees, a guy by the name of Abraham, and through him form a great nation that

eventually would give rise to the Messiah, God become man. God chooses Abraham and he tells him that his offspring is going to one day outnumber the stars in the sky, even though Abraham at this time and his wife Sarah are barren. 25 years after God tells Abraham he will bear a son, the promise is fulfilled in his son Isaac. And you've probably heard it before, Abraham begets Isaac who begets Jacob who begets Joseph, who gave us that great principle what man intends for evil, God superintends for good. And we know that eventually we will arrive at the generation that's going to produce the ultimate good, which is God himself in the flesh. And so we go from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob, generation to generation to generation, and in each case we come across human beings making tragic mistakes, sometimes out of their own weakness, sometimes out of their own sinful intentions, and again and again, we see God taking something intended for bad, superintending that same thing for good. That includes even the genealogies that sometimes seem endless in scripture. I mean, one thing you may notice from the Old Testament is that there are genealogies everywhere. God treats these family histories as enormously important because they trace out God's superintending hand in the affairs of his people. And probably the best example of that is the genealogy of Jesus. The New Testament genealogy of Jesus traces his line all the way back to Adam. And once again, it demonstrates God's sovereign ability to take bad things and

superintend them for good. If you look at the New Testament, you'll find that there are really two different accounts of Jesus' genealogy that appear because they trace two different people. There's one in Luke's gospel and it's of Joseph. The other is in Matthew gospel and it's of Mary. They have two different starting points and they focus on two different parts of the genealogical line. Luke goes from Joseph which is Jesus's stepfather, Luke goes from Joseph backwards all the way to Adam. And Matthew goes from Abraham all the way forward to Jesus and it ends with Mary. You know, *Matthew 1:16*, it ends with *Mary, the mother of Jesus, who is called the Messiah*. Well, you don't do that. Normally genealogies don't go through females, they go through males. This is a highly unusual ending to a genealogy that it ends with Mary, a female. And once again, you can make the case that God uses even genealogies to point out that he can take something bad and make something good out of it. And the bad thing in this case happens to occur in the line of Mary. Mary's genealogical line in Matthew's gospel has an entry by the name of Jehoiakim or Jechoniah. It's the same nasty guy. It occurs in *Matthew 1:11*, it says: *Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel*. Well, this fellow Jechoniah was a king of Israel who was uniquely cursed of God. The curse occurs in *Jeremiah 22*, it says: *Thus says the LORD: "Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not success in his days, for none of his*

offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah." Now sceptics claim, well, this obviously rules Jesus out as Messiah because his line through Mary is cursed and it says right there, he will never sit on the line of the throne of David. Well, that's got to qualify as a bad thing. However, scripture also points out in Luke's genealogy of Jesus's stepfather Joseph, that Joseph was of the house and the lineage of David and that he was legally a part of David's line. Now his line did not have the curse of Jehoiakim because he was from a different branch entirely. Same trunk, different branch. And so Joseph had the legal right to the throne but he didn't have the biological or natural right because his seed had nothing to do with Jesus being formed in Mary's womb. But Mary's line had the natural right to birth the Messiah because it was her humanity that conferred Jesus's human nature, and again she didn't have the legal right because her line was cursed. So God puts Mary and Joseph uniquely together in marriage and you wind up with Jesus, the Messiah, inheriting the legal right to the throne of David from his stepfather Joseph and the biological or natural right to the throne of David from his actual father, God in heaven, through Mary. So once again we see God doing the impossible. He superintends the bad that man intends for the good that he intends. And again, that's why the angels are singing at night as the shepherds are watching in awe, they're witnessing God's glory predicted in the

Garden of Eden, provided for in the history of his chosen people and now they're singing about God's glory performed. See, to perform something is to take something from an idea into an action. We say *faith by itself, if it doesn't have works, is dead* because simple intent, well, that's not enough. And approximately 2,018 years ago God performed what he had predicted he would do thousands of years previously. And it was no easy task and God's providence was put to the test as God once again turns a bad thing into a good thing. The bad thing in this case was a decree that Caesar had decided to issue. It's in *Luke 2*. It says: *In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was Governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town.* Well, Mary and Joseph lived in the town of Nazareth. So they learn, under penalty of the law, Joseph finds out he has to go to his hometown in order to register for the census. So they have to undertake this arduous journey in order to fulfill a legal requirement which is, again, a bad thing because their hometown is 90 miles away. Just imagine having to go -- you try it -- having to go from here to Kingston by mule in the wintertime, and you have to recognize that back in that area -- if it was wintertime which we're not positive, but we think it was wintertime -- if it was wintertime, oftentimes you have daytime temperatures in the mid-30s, freezing nights, and lots and lots of rain. See, the good

thing that God superintended through Caesar's proclamation was an answer to the ancient prophesy that was absolutely crucial for Mary and Joseph to go. I don't know if they knew about this prophesy that Micah had made many years before but the prophet said this in *Micah 5:12*, he said: *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.* See, the bad thing is Mary and Joseph had to take this arduous journey in order to meet this legal requirement. The good part, good thing is, whether they know it or not, they're fulfilling a prophesy made long ago by the prophet Micah, because Mary and Joseph's ancestral hometown just happens to be Bethlehem. *Luke 2 says: And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.*

Now, I suppose that God could have sent an angel to tell Mary and Joseph, hey, you're going to have to go to Bethlehem and you have to go there because the prophet Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born there, but instead, what we see is God sovereignly guiding the hands of history, so that any kind of intent, whether it's bad or sinful or just stupid or ignorant, or whatever it is, it's always going to be superintended by God for his ends.

Proverbs 21 tells us: The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

See, the lesson of Christmas for all of us individually is that God can take anything, anything in your life that you may think is a bad thing or an out-of-control thing, something that is not good and he can superintend that for good. He's done it hundreds of millions of times in the lives of his people, and he's demonstrating in the Christmas story the very same thing and he wants you to recognize that this is a truth that can transform your life. Just imagine believing that your life was so important to God that he would take every single thing that takes place in it and use it in some way for good. And that's exactly what God is promising us. Now, the good that God is speaking of is not the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel that so many are telling us about today, it is something of far greater value than that. What God is promising us is that every single thing that takes place in your life is going to pull you towards one particular goal, and that is to shape and to mold you into the very image of God's Son, the one who came on Christmas, the one who came not as an icon of health, wealth, and prosperity but as someone who came to die. God's providence brought him to that moment and God's protection will keep him from harm as well. I mean, the lesson of Christmas is that God's sovereign ability to superintend good out of any bad

includes his promise to protect us like he protected his own Son. You know, it's been well said, if you are a child of God, you have absolute and complete protection from God. You are immortal till the moment you die. I mean *Psalm 139* tells us that every one of our days are numbered according to God. It says: *All of the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.* What that tells us is that God knows the precise moment of our birth and the precise moment of our death, and nothing, nothing can superintend God's will for either of those dates.

A few years ago Davage Armstrong walked into a McDonald's with his son. And as he walked into the McDonald's, he was confronted by a psychotic man who pointed a gun directly in his face, and he wound up firing five times at pointblank range and each time the gun misfired. The man ran out of the McDonald's into the parking lot where he started firing wildly and this time the gun worked perfectly, the bullets harming no one. The detective looked at the gun. They could find absolutely nothing wrong with it. Then they looked at the surveillance tape and it proved that five separate times at pointblank range the gun was fired and misfired. Mr. Armstrong wisely attributed the misfires to God giving him a second chance, and a third and a fourth and a fifth. I attribute it to the fact that no one leaves this earth prior to the time that God has established for him or her, because God is that sovereign

and that much in control.

And as we look at the Christmas season and the Christmas story, we see Jesus entering into human flesh in a time that was filled with human peril. I mean, it wasn't a psychotic McDonald's patron who was after him though, it was Satan himself, the ruler of this world. Jesus was in more peril than any human being has ever been in the history of mankind. But again, you got to understand, there's no amount of peril that will ever be a match for God. And the enemy, either the snake himself or his offspring, knew what a threat this child was going to be. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, Satan has successfully plunged this world into darkness and he knew that Jesus was here to destroy his kingdom and his works through the cross. For many, many years, many centuries, Satan has ruled as the ruler of this world. That's a title that Jesus himself gave Satan in John 14. So as Jesus is about to make his entrance into the world, the enemy begins whispering in the ear of King Herod. We read about it in Matthew 2. It says: *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."* When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of

them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

Mary and Joseph are providentially in Bethlehem, and they're there by virtue of a pagan ruler named Quirinius who thought he's simply demanding a census. But they're in grave danger by virtue of another king, a so-called ruler of the Jews named Herod. Matthew 2:7 goes on to say: *Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."*

Well, the wise men didn't know it but we know it and God knew that that was indeed a lie, that it was a ruse concocted by Herod to find Jesus and kill him. It was a ruse that God would frustrate. It says: *After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and*

they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Now there's deep symbolism in the gifts that the Magi brought to Jesus. I mean, the gold symbolized the kingship of Jesus. The frankincense was an incredibly expensive reminder of the priestly role that Jesus would have. Isaiah in *Isaiah 60* points out the gifts that these were gifts fit for a king, he says: *And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.* But Isaiah in that passage only names two out of three of those gifts. He doesn't mention what was by far the most telling of the gifts that the Magi brought, and that was myrrh. See, myrrh was a very costly spice but it was exclusively associated with death. I mean, it was the spice that was used to wrap bodies in after death. It was the 21st century equivalent of embalming fluid. See, the birth of Jesus is focused on the death of Jesus. I simply can't imagine how Mary responded to this third gift, but once again, I know why the angels were praising God's glory. God was using the Magi to symbolize his ultimate ability to turn the ultimate evil into something of ultimate good.

Now the ultimate evil in the universe is that we human beings would take the one person who's ever lived among us flawlessly, the only one who's ever lived perfectly committed to the idea that the most

important thing in life was to love the Lord his God with all of his heart, mind, soul and strength and to love his neighbor as himself, there's only one person who ever did that and he did it perfectly. And for that, we slaughtered him, we mocked him, and then we started slapping him and then we spit in his face and then we started punching him over and over again and then we stripped him and we put a crown of thorns on his head in order to mock the idea that he would be a king, and then we flogged him, and then we put him on display. But that only made things worse, that only fed our bloodlust, as we cried, "*Crucify him, crucify him! May his blood be on us and on our children.*" That's what we did. Now I'm not saying this to either exonerate us or to drown us in guilt but to simply point out that the cross was the most evil thing that has ever been done in the history of mankind. There was never a person more innocent or a punishment more sinfully inflicted than the cross. The cross is also the greatest example of the sovereign power of God. Why were the angels so filled with praise for God's glory that they lit up the sky? They knew what we also can know as we learn and grow by studying God's word, that is that God alone is capable of taking the most hideous evil that mankind could ever intend and to superintend it for the greatest good humanity will ever know. A child born in a manger would grow into a perfect man, leading a perfect life, all so that he could lay that life down for us at the cross. And there Jesus Christ exchanged his perfect

righteousness for our sin so that we could stand before the throne of his justice, clothed in his righteousness, instead of our own wretchedness. God made it crystal clear in scripture that Jesus came to earth not to be a great leader or a philosopher or a teacher, but to be the one and only sacrifice for our sins.

Galatians 4:4 says: But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. That's the essence of the glory of God. That's God's beauty and worth and it's never been more fully revealed than in the redemption plan God birthed at Christmas. And the picture God paints in scripture is of Glory's prediction in the Garden of Eden. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." And that's followed by God's providence in the lives of his chosen people. *As for you, you mean evil against me, but God meant it for good, because all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose, which leads to God's glory performed as the angels tell the shepherds: "And this will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."* And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"* See, the heavens lit up with

praise because the angels saw Christmas from far more than ten thousand feet. They saw unfolding before them in this little tiny town in Bethlehem the final phase of God's glory performed. It says: *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

And if Glory defined is the public display of the infinite worth and beauty of God, then Christmas itself was its ultimate public display. If Glory denied is the emptying of God's power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing, then that baby born in that barn in Bethlehem says everything about the servant heart of God. And if Glory delivered is the essence of Christmas, then we need to join the angels and declare along with Isaiah: *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.* Let's pray.

Father, we just marvel at your power, we marvel at your beauty, we marvel at who you are and what you've accomplished. And Lord, you

have indeed taken the most hideous evil that we could ever commit and turned it into the most glorious goodness that mankind could ever see, and we praise you and we thank you for letting us understand even a fraction of what it is you accomplished at Christmas. We get, to a tiny extent, why the angels were praising you, why the sky lit up with praise at your glory. And we pray, Lord, as this Christmas season unfolds, you would give us the ability to not just understand that but communicate that, that we might share in that glory, that we might see you glorified and that we might see your kingdom advanced. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.