

John 12.12-43
The Glory that Comes from God

Glory. Is there anything that's been more desired in the history of humankind? Whenever I think of this whole idea of glory, I'm reminded of what St. Augustine wrote in his classic work, *The City of God*:

Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself; the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, "You are my glory, and the lifter up of my head."

You see, there are really *two distinct types* of glory. There's the *glory of men*—the glory that men seek, and that *comes from men*. And then there's *the glory that comes from God*, which is *only sought* by those who love God.

And that's one of the great truths that comes to us from this passage in John 12. The *glory that comes from men* may be pleasant for a brief time. But its end result is destruction. While the *glory that comes from God* may be hard for a time. But its end result is everlasting glory!

And there are 3 key statements on this theme of glory in John 12, located in 3 key places. The first is found in verse 23, where Jesus talks about his own glorification, "*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*"

Then there's Jesus' prayer for his Father's name to be glorified in verse 28: "*Father, glorify your name.*" Then a voice came from heaven: "*I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.*"

And lastly, there's the concluding statement in verse 43, about those who "*loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.*"

1. The Glorification of the Son (verses 12-26)

Now, in the preceding scenes Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in chapter 11. And after the raising of Lazarus, we know from verse 53 of chapter 11, that the religious leaders started making plans to kill Jesus.

And then at the beginning of chapter 12, Jesus was at Bethany 6 days before Passover. And he had dinner with Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha. Mary anointed Jesus' feet with perfume and wiped it with her hair. And Jesus spoke of the coming day of his burial.

And then as we come to verse 12 of chapter 12, we see that a large crowd of people who'd come to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover heard that Jesus was coming.

So, they got a bunch of Palm branches and went out to meet him as he approached the city. And they cried out: *"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"*

Now, it's sort of ironic in a sense that we've traditionally referred to this scene as the *"triumphal"* entry, *isn't it?* I mean, was this entry *really* a triumph? Well, yes *and* no.

Yes, because the people here are praising Jesus as the promised Messiah—the King who'd deliver them from their enemies. And that's just what he was. The word Hosanna means, *"Save, we pray."* It's a way of confessing that this one who's riding into Jerusalem was the *conquering King*.

And what these people shout comes from Psalm 118.25-26, which says, "[Hoshiana], *Save us, we pray O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!*"²⁶ *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD."*

But in reality, as we know, this entry into Jerusalem ultimately led to Jesus' death. And death would seem to be defeat, *wouldn't it?* I mean, if your King is killed, you *don't shout* in triumph. *You mourn and weep.*

But it *was* triumphal *even* in light of Jesus' impending death. Because the death of this King would be *quite unlike* any other death in history. It's

a death that brought victory. As it was *through death* that King Jesus would cast out the ruler of this world, take the throne, and draw people to himself.

And then there's also the passage from Zechariah 9.9 about the king coming into Jerusalem on a donkey, which John quotes in verse 15 as applying to Christ riding on a donkey into Jerusalem.

But notice in the context of Zechariah 9, the king who's coming will establish the glory of Jerusalem, and freedom from foreign oppression. Zechariah portrays this vividly in the verses following verse 9:

For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior's sword.¹⁴ Then the LORD will appear over them, and his arrow will go forth like lightning; the Lord GOD will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south.¹⁵ The LORD of hosts will protect them, and they shall devour, and tread down the sling stones, and they shall drink and roar as if drunk with wine, and be full like a bowl, drenched like the corners of the altar.¹⁶ On that day the LORD their God will save them, as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land

No doubt, that's what these people were expecting. They were expecting this king who'd come in the name of the Lord to *conquer the Gentile kingdoms* and establish Israel's supremacy over the nations.

But Jesus makes it clear that that's not the glory he was after—at least not yet. As he'll say later to Pilate in chapter 18, his kingdom was not of this world. It didn't have its origin in this world, and it isn't established by this world's tactics.

And we further see here that his mission was for *all people*. In verse 19, the Pharisees are upset about the people's reception of Jesus because, they say, "*the world has gone after him.*"

And then in verse 20 we see just that happening—as these God-fearing Greeks are in Jerusalem seeking Jesus. They find Philip and say, verse 21, "*Sir, we wish to see Jesus.*"

So, Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And notice what Jesus says in response. Did you find this striking?

Verses 23 and 24: *“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.”*

Now, *why* would that be his response? Why not just, *“Well bring them here.”* Of course, he may have met with them. But the point of the response is that Jesus knows now that his time has come.

Because he’s in Jerusalem for the Passover. And the Jewish authorities are seeking to take his life. And *at the same time*, God-fearing Gentiles are seeking to see and follow him. And he knows that his mission is to bring the blessing of Abraham to all the nations.

And that’s *exactly* how he’ll be glorified! By falling to the ground like a grain of wheat. Giving up his own body. But then bearing much fruit for the blessing of the nations.

Revelation 22.2 gives us a beautiful picture of the fruit that’ll be borne by Christ’s death and resurrection: *“On either side of the river, was the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”*

Well there’s *more to say* about verses 24-26. But I want to hold off on that until later. So we come next to verses 27-36.

2. The Glorification of the Father’s Name (verses 27-36)

Now, notice in verses 27-28, the Father’s name is to be glorified in the *purpose* for which the Son came. *“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.”*²⁸ *Father, glorify your name.”*

Jesus’ purpose was to *go to the cross*. That’s why his soul is troubled. He *knows* the pain that lies before him. And there’s *inner conflict* because of it. *“Now is my soul troubled.”* This isn’t some stoic response to the suffering he’ll face. He’s *deeply troubled* by it.

But ultimately, his *greatest desire* was for the Father's name to be glorified. And that was his prayer. He's *so troubled*, that he's moved to pray right there out in the open.

But his prayer is *consumed* with the Father's glory. This is much like what we see in his prayer in Gethsemane—*"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done."*

And the glory of the Son and the glory of the Father are *so intimately linked* that they're inseparable. Notice what Jesus will later pray at the beginning of chapter 17: *"Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you."*

And so, the Father answers Jesus' prayer in from heaven in verse 28--*"I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."* The Father had been glorified through Jesus' life up to that point. As even as early as Jesus' Baptism, the Father spoke from heaven, *"You are my beloved Son. With you I am well pleased."* And he'll *yet be glorified* in his Son's death and resurrection.

And here we see again in verses 31-33 that in his death Christ will draw all peoples to himself: *"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out."³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."* Then John adds: *"He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die."*

You see, by being lifted up from the earth in his crucifixion, Jesus will cast out the ruler of this world—Satan—and draw not only Jews, but all peoples—people from all nations—to himself.

And the people who stood by listening knew *exactly* what he meant. So they ask in response, verse 34 *"We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"*

And in a sense, they were right, *weren't they?* We can think of passages like Isaiah 9.6-7, which says the kingdom of the Messiah will be without end. So, they ask, *if this Son of Man is the Messiah, and the Messiah's reign is forever, then how can you say the Son of Man will be crucified?*

And once again, Jesus doesn't respond to the question with a straightforward answer. Instead, in verses 35 and 36 he just exhorts them to walk in the light while the light was still with them.

As he *already declared* back in chapters 8 and 9, he is the *Light of the world*. But he's about to die. And if the people refused to believe in him while he was still in the world, then they might fall into darkness once the light is taken away.

But *what about us?* I mean, Christ isn't here bodily, yet we do believe. *How?* Well, we have the illumination of the Spirit. See, the point of what Jesus says here isn't that there won't be any opportunity to believe in him after he dies.

The point is that the light was standing *right in front of them*. And if they rejected that light, they'd run the risk of becoming *so hardened* against it that they could fall into darkness.

In other words, *"Today you're being confronted with the reality of who I am. So don't reject that light!"* As the Psalmist says in Psalm 95—*"Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."*

3. Glory from Men and Glory from God (verses 37-43)

But, of course, many did reject the light. As John goes on to say in verse 37—*Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him.*

And to show that this rejection wasn't unforeseen, John then quotes two passages from the prophet Isaiah, *first* from chapter 53 and *then* from chapter 6. Both of which talk about the peoples' rejection of the prophetic message.

And he even goes so far, before the citation from chapter 6, to say that they *couldn't believe*. *But why not?* Well because of verse 40: *the Lord blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts.*

But *how is that fair?* Well it's fair because they rejected the light. And the blinding and hardening basically gave them over to what was

already in their hearts. You see, the *one doesn't cancel out the other*. They both *couldn't* believe, and they *chose* to not believe.

Because in reality none of us believe apart from God's grace. We're all as blind men groping around in the dark. None of us accept the light unless *God himself* by his Spirit *reaches into us* and gives us the light.

Jesus made *just that point* back in chapter 6 verse 44, *didn't he?* "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up at the last day.*"

And notice, John says in verse 41 that Isaiah said those things, "*because he saw his glory and spoke of him.*" *Whose glory? Christ's glory! The Christ* who's about to be glorified in his death. *The Christ* whose sufferings are *so vividly portrayed* by Isaiah, especially in chapter 53.

And remember that vision Isaiah had in the Temple of the *majestic Lord in his glory* at the *beginning of chapter 6*? The train of his robe filled the temple, and the seraphim cried out, "*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.*"

It's that vision that led to Isaiah's commission to preach and then to the statement that's quoted here in verse 40 about hardening the peoples' hearts. And both the *glorious One* Isaiah saw in chapter 6, and the *Suffering Servant of the Lord* of chapter 53, are said to be "*high and lifted up.*"

Isaiah 6.1— "*I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.* Isaiah 52.13-15: *Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.* ¹⁴ *As many were astonished at you-- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind--* ¹⁵ *so shall he sprinkle many nations.*

And, the fact that the Servant of the Lord will be lifted up, suffer, and sprinkle many nations, is exactly what Jesus was talking about in verse 32 of our passage—"*when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.*"

You see, the *glorious one* Isaiah saw in chapter 6, is the *same one about whom* he prophesied in chapter 53. The one whose glory filled the Temple is the *very one* who'd suffer as a servant for the sins of his people and be glorified by being lifted up in his crucifixion.

But *he was rejected*. And the rejection of that suffering Messiah came in a variety of ways.... First, there were those who actively sought to kill him. Specifically, these were the religious authorities who'd hatch a plot to put him to death.

And then there were those who simply refused to believe. These may or may not have wanted him dead. But their hearts were nonetheless hardened against him.

And lastly, there were those in the “Nevertheless” category of verse 42. *Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.*

And so these people—note, *even people in authority*—lived out of fear about what other people might think about them or do to them. They *weren't willing* to confess their belief in Jesus because they feared being put out of the synagogue.

You see, *desiring* the glory that comes from men leads to *fearing* men rather than God. But the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. While the fear of men leads to foolishness and cowardice.

The fear of men leads to doing things that may win you temporary favor with people. You may quickly climb the corporate ladder. You may be part of the “popular” crowd at school or in your neighborhood.

But all those things are *fleeting*—like a *vapor*. Don't ever forget this: The glory that comes from men passes away in a moment. But the glory that comes from God is everlasting!

What's your situation? Are there things that are causing you to shrink away from publicly declaring your faith in Christ? Are you seeking

acceptance with people? And does that desire for acceptance lead you to compromise your faith or shy away from speaking the gospel to people?

See, these people John's telling us about here loved the glory that comes from men *more* than the glory that comes from God. Now sure, the glory that comes from God may have *sounded* really nice to them. But they wanted a way to get around *the cross* to receive it!

And I think that if we're all really honest with ourselves we know there's a place in our lives and in our hearts that can at times look *exactly like that*. *Wanting* to be liked. *Wanting* to be accepted. *Wanting* to fit in.

What do you sound like when you're *talking with your co-workers*? Or your *unbelieving neighbors* or *relatives*? Do you shrink back in your witness to Christ, or compromise your convictions, because you fear being put outside those seemingly desirable social groups?

I mean, even when you know and believe the gospel, the glory that comes from men is still *Oh so alluring isn't it?* How tempting it is to want to be seen by others. To want to fit in. To want to live as though *this world* is our ultimate homeland.

How easy and tempting it is to forget what James writes in his epistle: "*Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God?*"

You see, brothers and sisters, the way to the glory that comes from God is the way of suffering and cross. Being crucified with Christ. Enduring reproach for the sake of his name. Confessing Jesus Christ as Lord in both your words and your actions, *come whatever consequences may*.

And confessing Christ means to being willing to be cast out as he was. Just like Jesus already said back in Verses 25-26: "*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.*"

Remember, the servant is *not above* his master. If they rejected Jesus, they'll reject us. And part of being his disciple is giving up the *fleeting glory* that comes from men for the *lasting glory* that comes from God.

Yes, Christ *did* ride triumphantly into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. But his entry was only triumphant *precisely because* he rode there in order to be taken *outside* the city to be sacrificed for our sins!

Hebrews 13.12: *Jesus suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore, the author of Hebrews concludes, let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."*

You see, if you follow Jesus you may be outcast. You may suffer reproach. *You might even be called to die for your faith.*

But what's more than all that: Reproach and death *will not* and *cannot* defeat you, just as it couldn't defeat Christ. Because the end result of it all will be *your glorification*—just as it was for Jesus!

And that's the case because if you're united to Christ, you've *already died!* Like Paul *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

And if, through your union with Jesus, you've fallen to the ground like a grain of wheat and died, you'll bear much fruit. If you lose your life to follow Jesus, you'll save it for eternal life.

Because the King *has ascended* triumphant into Zion *hasn't he?* He rode into the earthly Zion in order to die. But because of the victory of his death and resurrection, he's been given all authority in heaven and on earth, and he ascended the *heavenly* Zion, where he now rules.

So, you see, the King of Israel—the *King of Glory*—has ascended his throne. He now ministers in the heavenly Tabernacle as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

And he will come back to earth a second time with glory to finally liberate his creation from bondage, and glorify his saints once and for all.

Therefore, *brothers and sisters*, let us seek his glory and his righteousness *above all else*. Let us seek the *glory that comes from God* rather than the *glory that comes from men*.