

## God's Glory

Ephesians 3:13-21

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 26, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

What is the glory of God?

The glory of God is what He has done.

Therefore the creation is the glory of God. But if the glory of God is what He has done then redemption is also the glory of God. In fact redemption is the peak of the glory of God because the redemption restores the creation that had fallen from its creator.

Therefore Jesus and what He accomplished is the glory of God.

It may be helpful to think about God without Jesus. If you truly believe in Jesus, this will be difficult for you to do because you cannot think about God without thinking about Jesus because Jesus is God, but let us try.

If you take Jesus away from God you wind up with a God that goes something like this: God created all things. He created human beings. God has certain moral standards that He expects human beings to keep. If they keep those standards, He will reward them both in this life and in the life to come. If they do not keep those moral standards, He will punish them both in this life and in the life to come. That is the God that you wind up with if you take away Jesus.

It is a god that resembles the god of the Muslims or the Jews although not precisely but in his essence. It is the god of the Deists and Theists of various varieties. That being the case it is unfortunately the god to which our American constitution refers. It is the gods of the myths of ancient times although those gods were also capricious and did not stick to their own moral standards.

Now here is the problem with this god that keeps track of what we do right and keeps track of what we do wrong and rewards and punishes us accordingly. It reduces God to nothing more than a score keeper.

My government teacher in high school wanted us to actually open the newspaper and look at political articles. This was the days before the internet. So he required us to bring him five articles about politics that we had cut out of the newspaper and turn them in to him first thing on Monday morning. It was a simple objective assignment. It made us at least read the headlines of the newspaper which is what he really wanted us to do. He gave us points toward our final grade if we did it and did not give us points if we failed to do it. He credited enough points to this exercise that if we did not do it at all we would fail the class. And he told us, "I am just the scorekeeper. Whether you pass or fail is now up to you."

When God is nothing other than a scorekeeper who keeps track of our good deeds and keeps track of our sins and rewards us accordingly He has no more glory than the glory of my high school government teacher! Now I ask you. Is that glory?

When God is nothing other than a scorekeeper who keeps track of our good deeds and keeps track of our sins and rewards us or punishes us accordingly He has no other glory than the glory of the referee at the football game. Now I ask you, how many of you go to a football game and cheer on the referee?

No! You don't go there to cheer on the referee! You go there to cheer on the team! Therefore if God is going to have more glory than the glory of the umpire or the ref, He is going to have to be the God who is revealed in and through Christ Jesus.

The God who is revealed in and through Christ Jesus is the God who is Christ Jesus. That is the first leg of His glory right there. No other God has this kind of glory. In Christ Jesus God has become human. The humanity of our Lord is not a fraud. He is not God pretending to be human. He is God actually become a human being. So the God that made the heaven and the earth and the God that is your God is the God who has gone through everything that makes anyone a human being. He was conceived. He was born. He grew up. He had a vocation. He did His job. He was tempted.

No other god has attempted this. They were either pretending to be human or they never bothered to be human at all. No other God ever came to be with us with this kind of intimacy. No other God has had the compassion to come and live our life with us. He could have remained on high safe in His glorious heaven, safe from our violence and uncleanness. Instead He loved us and came to be with us. He had compassion on us and to show us that He was not afraid of us He came and spoke to us personally.

This is the true and living God. This is the glory of your God.

And He is not merely human, He is here to die for us.

The glory of God is His cross. That is to say that the glory of God is the death of God. The glory of God is that He died to save. The glory of God is that He died to save us.

Jesus commanded us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. And so Jesus lives by that standard also. He loves His enemies and prays for those who persecute Him. Jesus prayed for His enemies when they nailed Him to the cross. He prays for His enemies right now. Jesus loved His enemies by giving His life then and He loves His enemies right now by giving His life then.

We were His enemies. We were and are in rebellion against the way that He created us to be. Since we are in rebellion against the way things ought to be everything we do is corrupt. We call this sin and the sins. Such rebellion makes us enemies of God. Or to put it in a Genesis, chapter three, sort of way, we took sides with the devil in rebellion against God. We became obedient to the devil and his suggestion rather than to God and His command. Once we are obedient to the devil we are the enemy of God.

And God died for us. He died us to redeem us from our enmity against Him. He died to forgive us of our sin against Him. That is what He did. He did not leave us to our sins. He did not annihilate us and start over again. He died and redeemed us. The price that justice demanded for what we had become in sin, He paid. He paid it all. He paid it all in full.

Therefore you are not damned. You are not lost. You are not under God's condemnation or wrath. You are not blighted by the mark of the things that you have done wrong. You are not blanketed by shame. He has removed it all.

He died for you. He has no greater love for you. It is past human knowing. It is impossible to describe God becoming human. And if that does not blow the mind enough, then He goes and dies for us. This is His glory. It is the glory of His love. It is the glory of a love that surpasses all other glory. There is plenty of glory for those who die for causes in which they believe. There is surpassing glory for the One who dies even for His enemies and saves them and makes them His friends.

And then He does not merely die for us, He rises again.

He does what no one else has ever done. He does what no one else has ever claimed. Oh other religious claim that their god descends into the underworld to do some daring deed or another, but none of them really goes so far as to say that he died. Our God dies. Our God rises again. Who was running the universe while God was dead? Well, God was, of course. Who else would run the universe while God was dead except God? He surpasses our understanding.

And then with His resurrected body, He gives it to us to eat. He gives it to us to eat. All of the fullness of God dwells in bodily form in Him. Therefore His body contains all of the fullness of God. And it is His body that He gives you to eat. Therefore you are consuming the fullness of God. You are consuming God Himself.

The Sacrament of the Altar is the holy of holies spoken about in the Old Testament. The Sacrament of the Altar is the reason why Jeremiah prophesied that the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament would be lost and would not be sought after and another one would not be found. We have the presence of God in our midst. No wonder the acolytes give reverence to the altar. Who wouldn't? For our God is here in our midst and in of all places in our mouths. There is no greater miracle that our God can do. He places His life in our lives. He places Himself in us and in so doing creates the new inner man in us.

Who can fathom what God has done? Who can express these wondrous things? Oh it is true: He can do much more than we either ask or imagine. He has done and is doing much more than we can either ask or imagine.

This is the glory that sustains the inside person.

If there is an inside person, there is also an outside person. The inside person is renewed under the power of the glory of God which is received by faith. The outside person slowly wastes away.

Some of you have pointed out to me recently that I have more gray hair now than when we first met. That is true. Some of you have even joked that you might be the cause of all of my gray hairs. That is not true. My hair is gray for the same reason that your hair is gray or for the same reason that some of you dye your hair: we're old! We are getting old. And as some of you who are older than I have pointed out: we are only going to get older! And as we get older we waste away. I do not hear as well as I used to hear. I do not do physical things with the same exuberance as I used to do them. I have often joked that parenting is for someone in their twenties. What I mean by that is the physical demands that small children make upon their parents, especially when they say, "Again! Again!"

This is the outer person. The outer person is wasting away. The outer person is subject to sin and death. The inside person is the new creation in Christ Jesus. The inside person is renewed day by day. The inside person is renewed each day by the glory of Jesus. The glory of His great love. The glory of His great sacrifice for me. The glory of His great Sacrament of the Altar for me. All of it gives me daily power and strength to keep hustling on even though my outer person is wasting away. In fact the renewal of my inner person is the only thing that keeps me going and sometimes I am more aware of that than at other times. The same is true of you.

The outer man is the sinner pushing through life to the grave. The inner man is righteous and holy in Christ Jesus pushing his way out of the grave and into everlasting life.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.