

Glory And Love

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Preacher: Phil Pickett

[0 : 00] How will the world believe? How will they believe? I wonder if you've ever asked that question. Maybe you've looked at your children, your grandchildren, your nieces, your nephews.

Maybe you've looked at the youth that find us, or the children in Sunday school, or the children in our church. You've said, thought to yourself, how are they going to believe? How will they come to Christ?

How do we win them for Christ? Or maybe your children are grown up. Maybe they've sat in church, but now they won't come near it. And you look at them, maybe with desperation you think, how on earth will they believe?

Maybe your spouse doesn't follow Jesus. Or there's another loved one in your family. And it's your daily prayer that they would come to know him, but you wonder, you ask, how on earth is that going to happen?

They have no interest. How will they believe? In a time when church attendance has declined, we maybe ask that question with more and more desperation. How will these people, who we love so much in our life, believe?

[1 : 08] And at the end of John's Gospel, he tells us that the purpose of his Gospel is so that people would believe. He says, these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, have life in his name.

John writes his Gospel so that people may believe and keep believing, that they would have life and keep holding on to Christ, abiding in Christ so that they may continue having life in his name.

So what's John's mission strategy? What does he want to show us that's so powerful that will make people believe and that that will keep people believing? What do we need to show to the world so that they may believe?

I want to suggest that our passage this evening has two core themes that run through John's Gospel, that are, well, two core ideas that have been central to the growth of the church both in the past and in the present, and will be in the years to come. So how will people believe? If we ask that question to John, I suspect that at least two of the things he would say will be these.

Show people glory, show them glory, and show them love. First, show them glory. If we want to win the loss for Christ, we need to show them God's glory. But what is God's glory?

[2 : 25] We came across that a few weeks ago when in chapter 12 the Greeks came to Jesus asking for him, and Jesus said, now is my hour has come. Now will the Son of Man be glorified? And again we see that in our passage in verse 31. He says, now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. But what is God's glory?

We need to take care because the word glory is used in different ways. It's used in different ways in the English language. It's also used in slightly different ways in the Bible. But when John's Gospel talks about glory, it's primarily talking about the display of God's perfect attributes and his person. It's talking about God revealing something of himself. And God displays his glory in several ways. This is actually a way that it's used in most of the Bible, I'd say. He does it through his words.

So for example, if you were to look all the way back in the book of Exodus, Moses asks God to show me your glory. And what does God do? He put Tux Moses away in a cleft of a rock, and he passes by Moses. Moses can't see him saying, the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious one, slow to anger and abounding instead fast love and faithfulness.

God shows Moses his glory by speaking and telling him, revealing what he's like. So God displays glory through words. He displays it through works. When Israel was grumbling in the wilderness saying, oh, we're better off in Egypt, we had better food, God said that he was going to provide manna. And in providing manna, he says, in the morning, you shall see the glory of the Lord. In

other words, the provision of manna was going to display God's glory by showing his compassion and love. One more example, God displays, so his words, his works, also physically in the Old Testament, God displayed his glory in that cloud of fire that was on top of Sinai and then came down that glory cloud into the tabernacle that symbolized God's presence with his people and then later on in the physical temple. But all these displays of God's glory pointed forward to, they were just shadows, and they pointed forward to the ultimate revelation of God's glory to come.

[4 : 38] In the beginning of the Gospel of John, he says, where all those glory arrows point to? He says, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the Father, full of grace and truth, truth. That word dwelt is the word tabernacle, tabernacling, just like the tabernacle, the temple. The word became flesh and dwelt, tabernacle, among us, and we have seen his glory. In other words, all those pictures of glory and God's word and his works and the temple, that all is seen in Jesus. Jesus is that supreme revelation, that supreme display of who God is. God the Son become flesh. If you want to see what God is like, in other words, look at Jesus. Jesus doesn't just teach us about God, he shows the glory of God in his person.

Jesus shows it in his miracles. For example, Jesus, when he turns water into wine in John chapter 2, John makes a note afterwards, and he says, this, the first of his signs, Jesus did in Caler and Galilee, and manifested his glory. So just that miracle itself manifested his glory, because he showed something of what God is like as the bridegroom redeemer come to bring his people, come to redeem, come to rescue his people.

Or when Jesus feeds the 5,000, he's not simply doing a miracle, it's an echo. It's an echo back to the manor incident, when God revealed his glory by providing miraculously for the people. Jesus is showing that in a greater way, he's that same God who reveals God's glory. If we want to win the loft for Christ, we need to show them God's glory. And we do that by showing them Christ. The one who perfectly embodies God's attributes, the one who perfectly displays his character in his actions and who speaks the words of God. I wonder what comes to your mind when you think about glory. Maybe it's Carloway lifting the league cup. I had to look this up on the Carloway football website. Apparently they have won it twice. Am I right? They go, Kobe's nodding. That was a moment of glory for Carloway.

Or maybe Carloway will beat Locke's and win the lawn shield. Has that happened before? But it will. Maybe it will. There we go. There's another moment of glory we can look forward to. Or in one week's time everyone will be thinking of that moment where it's either New Zealand or South Africa will lift up the Rugby World Cup and that'll be a glimpse of, that'll be their moment of glory. Or what's the climax for Jesus?

If Jesus shows us God's glory, where is that glory most clearly displayed? What about the raising of Lazarus from the dead? That was a pretty impressive time. Jesus says to Martha, did I not tell you that if I believed you would see the glory of God? Maybe it's that. No, look with me at 1st 31. Jesus said, now is the Son of God, Son of Man glorified and God glorified in him. The climax of Jesus' glory is the cross.

[7 : 51] If you're not convinced, just look at a few things. First look at the context. It's immediately when Jesus leaves that Jesus says, now the Son of Man is glorified. Or in 30 verse 32 he says that God will glorify him at once. And actually if you read through the next few chapters in what's this, this upper room discourse, this conversation that Jesus has with his disciples, Jesus speaks numerous times about this moment of glory is coming. He begins his prayer by saying, Father the hour has come, glorify your Son. The hour of Jesus' glory, the hour when he displays God to the world is seen in the cross. And we can be sure of that because in John's vision, in Revelation, when the same John who wrote this Gospel was pretty old and exile on the Isle of Patmos, what does he see? He sees the heavenly throne room and he sees myriads of angels surrounding this throne and who's on the throne? It's the Lamb who was slain. And what's the anthem in heaven? It's worthy as the Lamb who was slain. The focus is on Christ, crucified. That's the moment of glory. That's the display of glory. That's when God shows, displays himself to the world. The cross isn't just the root to glory. The resurrection is part of that arc of glory, yes, but the cross isn't just the root to glory. It's not shame followed by glory. The glory is also there in the shame. And Jesus proves that as well in the title he uses for himself, Son of Man. Do you notice? I accidentally almost said

Son of God. We're used to saying Son of God, but Jesus calls himself the Son of Man. And the Son of Man is a title that Jesus has taken from the Old Testament from Daniel chapter 7, where Daniel

has a vision of the coronation of God's messianic king. Let me just read this portion from Daniel 7 for you.

Daniel says, I saw in the night visions and behold with the clouds of heaven, there came one like the Son of Man. And he came to the ancient of days, that's God, and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory in a kingdom that all peoples and nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom won that shall not be destroyed. The Son of Man was this divine human figure who's given rule over all creation. Who's the king of creation, this God himself, but man, ruler over all things. And Jesus uses that title because it's a great way of describing himself. He says, I'm that Son of Man that was prophesied about. But the surprise is that Jesus's dominion, Jesus's coronation, doesn't come by him getting up on a throne, but by him being nailed on a cross. That's his crowning moment as it were. The climax of Jesus's glory is the cross. Or why does that matter for us? Well, if glory in John's Gospel is all about displaying God's perfect character and work, then John is telling us that that display is brightest on the cross. That's where all the spotlights are shining. That's where all the signs are pointing. That's centre stage. The cross is centre stage. So for us, if we want to know what God is like, we need to look at Jesus, who's the ultimate revelation of God. And if we want to know what God is like in Jesus, we need to look at the cross. That's the pinnacle. That's the HD full colour display of God, of who he is. And that might seem counterintuitive because the cross looks like defeat, but it's the moment of victory. So do you want to see what God is like? Do you want to see his love? Well, look at the cross. In chapter 15, Jesus will say, greater love has no one than this, than someone lays down his life for his friends. The glorious depth of God's character, the depth of his love, is seen as Jesus lays down his life. Jesus lays down his life for his people. And the cross doesn't just show, isn't just a display of the lengths God will go to to love us. The cross is where God's love achieves something. If I said to Helen that I loved her, and then jumped off a pier and drowned, that would just seem a bit stupid and pathetic. But if I jumped off a pier and drowned while trying to save her because I loved her, well, that would be my love achieving something. It's a poor illustration, but Jesus' love isn't just a, I love you, look how much I love you.

It's on the cross, his love is achieving something by saving us. His death saves. Another example, if you want to see God's justice, people long for justice in this world. If you want to see that we have a just God, look at the cross. Paul in his letter to the Romans, comments on Jesus' death saying that Jesus' death was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. In other words, the cross shows the glory of God's justice because it shows that God doesn't just ignore people's sin. He doesn't just say, oh, you can come into heaven. I'll just push your sin to the side. I'll just ignore sin. It shows that God doesn't ignore sin. It shows that sin will always be punished, but it shows that sin is punished by laying it on Jesus Christ. Jesus takes the punishment on the cross for every person you trust in him. I won't keep going, but you get the idea. The cross is Jesus' hour of glory. It's when God pulls back the curtains and shows what he's like. So how will people believe? John says, look at the cross. I think a lot of people think that Christianity is all about what you do and what you don't do. If they add that Jesus, maybe they add that Jesus is a good teacher and you need to look at Jesus and he's a good example, Jesus was all those things. But if that's all you think it's about, if you miss out the cross, you'll never understand who God is. You'll never understand who Jesus is. And so if you or if someone else you know is wrestling through who Jesus is and what it means to follow him, point them to the cross. Look at the cross. And read the last chapters of John's Gospel. I'll tell you, they are a riveting read and discuss them. I'm happy to chat about it. In Christian life, there is also one of battling unbelief. As we go in on in our faith, there will be times when we lack assurance, when our sin weighs us down, when we're grieving, when we feel guilty. In all those times we need to go to the cross. Maybe we're facing difficult, maybe we're facing difficult things, maybe we're questioning God's goodness, for example.

At those times we need to go to the cross. At the cross we see God's goodness. We see that we see his splendor. We see that mercy and kindness all revealed in its glorious splendor on the cross. You might say that it's through the open wounds of Christ, God's glory shines. It's the cross that displays God's glory. So first, show them glory.

[15:18] Second, show them love. I wonder what you'd say are the distinguishing markers of a Christian. Or the distinguishing markers, or precisely the family of God. How is the family of God marked out? What makes followers of Jesus different?

What are their defined features? What would people go, they must be Christian because that. Is it that they go to a church on Sunday? That's what makes that they must be Christians. Or they're there caring for the vulnerable.

Those must be Christians. Or they're not getting drunk. Or those people don't have sex before marriage. Those people must be Christians. And now while those things should all be true for Christians, perhaps more revealing is what do our friends and family and neighbors, what do those people who wouldn't call themselves Christians, what would they say defines us? What would they say are that's that's what marks people out in the church. I once heard someone joke that the free church in the Highlands and Islands has is marked out or is their distinguishing feature is that it is authoritarian, sabbiter and sectarian. That's really sad. That's really bad if it's true. I hope that even if that was true in the past, people can now come into the church and they can see that that's different. What should they see that well on the eve of Jesus death, he says that what should mark out his people is a love for one another. Let me read again from verse 34. Jesus says a new commandment I give to you that you should love one another. Just as I have loved you. You also are to love one another by this. All people will know that you are my disciples. If you have love for one another, Jesus's command is simple. Love one another. That's what Christians should be. That's what should mark Christians out as different. That's what should make them distinguishable by their love. And love isn't just an optional extra. I don't know if you noticed in the reading that we had in one John, John says beloved, let us love one another for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Love is the marker that someone has been born of God. And later at the end of this chapter, he says this commandment we have from him whoever loves God must also love his brother. Love is a defining characteristic, not an optional characteristic of a follower of Jesus. It's non-negotiable.

Let me actually just also, there's this good quote that I found in here when I was flicking through it as well. David Cassidy says love is the authenticating mark of the believer. And its lack is the warning light that a faith professed is not a faith, faith possessed. That's quite sobering, isn't it? That if people look at our lives and they don't see believers loving each other. Well, first of all, that's not a good witness to the outside. But also, John would say that would call to action. Are these people just professing to believe, just professing to have faith in Christ if their lives and their loves don't match up? So love is non-negotiable. It's a non-negotiable marker for a believer. But when a family of God is marked by love, it will be an amazing witness to the world. If we want to win the loss to Christ, then we need to give them love. And elsewhere, Jesus commands his disciples to love every person. He commands them to love your neighbor as your system, yourself, love your enemies. And so it's right that we speak about loving those outside the family of God. Here, though, Jesus is particularly focusing on love inside the family of God. And I wonder if you ask yourself which one do we sometimes find harder? Loving other Christians or loving people who aren't Christians? Jesus commands us that we should love one another. And he says that he's focusing on that because he says it should be a special and unique love that should mark Christians out. Now, I say unique for a reason. Because in verse 35, Jesus says the Christians love should mark them out as disciples. And the world then should see that love and think they're different. They must be followers of Jesus. That isn't to say that people who aren't trusting in Jesus can't love. We all are the recipients of an amazing amount of love. And that's because God graciously restrains sin in this world. And that even if people aren't trusting in Jesus, he still, by his grace, brings forth love in people's lives. So that's not to say that there isn't love in this world. That's because of God's common grace. But the universal ability to love doesn't mean that God's church doesn't mean that his people can't and shouldn't be marked out by a special love. That's not because it's not a unique love because Christians are better. We're sinners by nature. The difference, though, is that we're saved sinners. [20 : 33] When someone trusts in Jesus, they are, they're saved. As Jesus says in John chapter three to Nicodemus, you must be born again. And when we're born again, God puts his spirit into our hearts. He gives us new life. And he changes our desires and our wants and our hearts. And so it's pulled so that we're new creations. And so that actually our desires, he gives us an ability to love that we never could before. And so that's why Christians can and should be marked out by this special Christ like love.

That's not to say we'll be perfect. Every Christian is a work in progress. But in that process of renewal and transformation, God will grow and show in the Christian life a love that is completely unlike anything in this world can see or possess.

It's a love that can only come from Christ. That love, again, it's not something to be boast about. It flows from God. However, that doesn't, that doesn't mean we don't need to work at it. That doesn't mean we don't need to strive to grow in love for each other more and more. And to understand just what that looks like, I just want us to go back to the example of Jesus, because you'll notice that that command in verse 34, love one another. And then again, you're also to love one another. That's those two things sandwich the example of Christ. He says, just as I have loved you in the middle of verse 34, so you are to love one another. So we've got the demonstration of Christ's love. How did Jesus love?

I just want to look at two things. We could go through the Gospels and find a huge number of ways in which God has, as Jesus has loved us. But even just in this chapters that we've seen, I want us to see two examples that we're being set by Jesus's love.

[22 : 19] First, Jesus loves the unlovable and the undeserving. At the beginning of chapter 13, verse 1, Jesus, we read this. Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world, and having loved his own who are in the world, he loved them to the end. So who did he love to the end? Well, his disciples. But who are among those disciples?

What was Judas, who was about to betray Jesus, who Jesus knew would betray him? And there's Peter, who's about to deny him three times.

And Jesus knew that Judas was moments away, and he still washed Judas' feet. Jesus knew that Peter would deny him three times, and he still washed Peter's feet. In fact, none of these disciples deserved Jesus' love, just as none of us do.

And yet Jesus loved them to the end. People say that the difference between a dog and a cat is that dogs are faithful in their affection, and cats are mercenary. I don't know if Annie can correct me on this. She loves dogs and cats. Dogs are loyal.

You have a dog. A dog will always love you. But cats will love whoever treats them well. They'll affectionately rub up against you just to get you to give them treats. If your cat isn't like this, then I'm sorry, I hope I haven't offended any cat lovers.

[23 : 46] But I think while we all like to think of ourselves like a faithful dog, I think the reality is, often, too often, our own love is mercenary. We love the people who love us back. We love the people who we know will give us some return. We love the people that are easy to chat to.

We pour our time and efforts into those we find easy, not those we find hard. Those who, there's some benefit back. We gravitate towards those people. But if that's how we love, all we're going to do is beautifully blend into the world, because this world is full of mercenary love. And rarely do people, instead, see people loving their enemies.

See, people loving those they don't get on with, people who don't deserve love. But that's where the church is to stand out. Within this room, within this island, there shouldn't be cases where believers, brothers and sisters in Christ, don't speak to each other.

Where there's rifts that cut through families, where there's rifts that divide different churches and denominations, that shouldn't be the case. If people look at the church, and the church is full of all these scars and rifts, well, they're going to look at it and say, well, see how they can't stand each other. They're going to think that that church, those people are no different to me.

They get annoyed at each other, they don't get on, they stop speaking to each other. They just talk to the people they like. They're no different to me. See how they hate one another. Brothers and sisters, this shouldn't be.

[25 : 31] Maybe there might be other Christians that we find difficult. Maybe there's people who have hurt us, who have disappointed us, who have let us down. Maybe there's people who you really struggle not to hate. Maybe there's just Christians who are plain annoying.

But it's when you love those people that the watching world will look and will probably look again and say, what's going on there? Who do they belong to? See how they love each other.

It's that kind of love that made the early church stand out. In the second century, the church leader, Tertullian wrote that it is the many... Sorry, I'll start this again. Tertullian wrote this, it is mainly the deeds of love so noble that lead many to put a brand on us.

A brand? That's like a mark. He's saying that we're branded. Christians are... The brand on Christians is love. That's what marks them out like sheep. They've got a brand that says love. See how they love one another.

They say for they themselves, that is the rest of the world, are animated by mutual hatred. How they're even... They're Christians. They're ready to die for one another while the rest of the world

would soon be putting people to death.

[26 : 44] May the mark, may the brand on us that sets us apart be one of love. So I mentioned first love like Jesus, loving unbearable and the undeserving.

Second love like Jesus. Jesus loved with deep humility and self-sacrifice. And in many ways this is just reiterating the point that we made last week but it's worth making again.

In washing people's feet, Jesus humbled himself as a servant. It wasn't just an act that set the standard for humble service. His humiliation pointed forward to the humble death he was going to die to bring people back to him to wash them clean by his blood.

Jesus loved and prompt him to sit on a throne but to die on the cross. That's the kind of love that will shock the world. Love that isn't love when it's convenient for us, not love when it's easy for us.

Jesus asks us to follow him in uncomfortable and costly love. Love that scrunches up our pride and throws it in the bin. Love that scrunches up our comforts and chucks it out the window.

[27 : 58] Love that's difficult. Love that's painful. Love that hurts. Love that goes out of its way to serve, to speak, to forgive. Love that's patient and kind. All these things are going to cost but that's love like Jesus.

Love that doesn't do the minimum. Love that's extravagant. Love that bears with other people's failings. That kind of love is going to be tiring. It will involve a lot of holding back words as if in our mouths and not speaking and a lot of forgiveness.

But that's love like Christ. The more we realize what Christ has done and the more we realize that he has done so much more than that, the more we realize that we're only just beginning to display God's love to the world as we love one another like that.

So when people look at Christians, they want them to see this radical love of Christ being acted out. Love like Jesus says so that all people know that you are my disciples.

And that kind of love attracts. I just want to close with the testimony of a pastor called Jason Holopolis. He's instantly written a very good book on baptism if you're interested.

[29 : 09] But let me just read his testimony. He says, as a freshman college student and self-declared atheist, I attended a campus Christian fellowship to fulfill a promise I made to a Christian friend.

A lot of people start university like that. I'll go to church just once. I'll go to see you just once just to make my family happy. Anyway, he says, I only had the intention to go once. I was merely duty and upholding my word, nothing more.

I went begrudgingly, but I went. My life was never the same. I walked into a room full of Christians and was struck by what I observed. Here was a diverse group. They were from every walk of life. I remember scanning the room and labelling people in my mind. There is a jock over there as a geek and walking in through that door as a boy scout. But what struck me was that they were together.

They weren't just together in the same room. They were together in every sense of the word. They were actually talking with each other and genuinely seemed happy to be together. They didn't seem to be division.

[30 : 07] Even in my atheist mind, I knew what I was seeing. They loved one another. I had no categories for this, so I kept returning to find out why they had love like this for one another.

Over the course of a few months, I found the answer. Or more accurately stated, the answer found me. One of the best evangelists and programs you can start in your church is to pursue loving one another well.

At some point, people will have to hear the gospel proclaim from your lips or the pulpit. But that strange love that you display will set the table before them. People will know that you are his disciples because it is a shocking love.

It has a gravitational attraction because it is a love that is foreign to this world. A love that the inquirer, if seeking an answer, will find comes from heaven.

Isn't that a wonderful testimony? I hope that inspires you as to what our love for one another can do. God uses the love of his people, one for another, to display to the world the love of Christ and to save people.

[31 : 21] So what are we going to show to the world that they may believe? First, show them glory, show them the cross. God has revealed his glory in Christ and Christ has revealed his glory on the cross.

Show them the cross. Second, show them love. Let your interactions with other Christians, whether brothers and sisters in this church or in other churches, across the islands in the country, may they be so selfless and so sacrificial that people will look at you and say, see how they love. Let's pray.