

The Holy Trinity Part 4: John 17:5 - Shared Glory

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, as you may remember, we recently began a study in our evening services on the Trinity.
- We began this quite a while ago because during Cullum's placement, he was taking the evening services for the six weeks and he took us through an excellent study in the letter to the Philippians.
- But I want us just this week and God willing, next week, to come back to our study on the Trinity for two more evenings to look at two more great topics under this amazing doctrine.
- The doctrine of the Trinity is a remarkable subject to look at. And as we've been saying all along, when you study the Trinity at one level, you see what we've been calling the beyondness of God.
- The fact that God is beyond the limits of our understanding. And as we contemplate God himself, we are stretching our minds to the very limits of our understanding.
- [1 : 1 1] We see the beyondness of God, but at the very same time, we see the nearness of God. Because God is revealing himself to us.
- And the whole reason we have a doctrine of the Trinity is because God has chosen in his love to show himself to us so that we can get to know him.
- He is sharing himself with us. We've looked at various topics. The first time we looked at our title was shared nature. We highlighted the fact that God has one substance, one nature.
- God is indivisible. He cannot be separated and he is unique. Only God has that nature. God is the only being that has God nature or Godness.
- But that nature, that single unique nature of God is made up of three persons. God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit, which is why God is three in one.
- [2 : 1 4] He is one substance, three persons, that is the unique shared nature of God. Secondly our title was shared life.
- And we highlighted the fact that God alone is the one who has life in and of himself. He is independent. He is completely self-sufficient.
- And indeed it is he and he alone that is the source of all other life. But that life is shared between the Father who alone is the Father and the Son who alone is the Son from eternity and the Holy Spirit who alone proceeds from Father and Son.
- So within the life of God there is this sharing whereby they rely on each other and they delight in each other, there is a shared life in God.
- And as we saw that life is shared with us, the God who is totally independent and who does not need you or me nevertheless wants to share himself with us.
- [3 : 2 8] Thirdly our title was shared work. We looked at this at the end of May and we saw the fact that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit work together in beautiful harmony.
- They work together in the creation and in the sustaining of the universe. They work together in the revelation of God particularly as we have it here in scripture.

And they work together in order to save sinners like you and like me. God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, they work together perfectly and that work is for you.

This week our title is shared glory and our focal point is going to be the words of John 17 verse 5 where Jesus says, and now Father glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Now one of the fundamental truths that the Bible presents to us throughout scripture is the fact that God is glorious. There are many many places where this is highlighted.

[4 : 40] I have two passages here. Exodus 24 then Moses went up on the mountain and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai.

God is glorious. Psalm 138 verse 4 is the same all the kings of the earth shall give you thanks O Lord for they have heard the words of your mouth and they shall sing of the ways of the Lord for great is the glory of the Lord.

Here and in many many more places the Bible presents to us the fact that God is glorious. And furthermore the Bible highlights the fact that that glory belongs to each person of the Trinity.

Father, Son and Spirit are all possessors of that glory. You've seen Matthew 16 verse 27 the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father.

God the Father is glorious. The Son the words we read at the beginning 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.

[5 : 44] Likewise the Holy Spirit in 1 Peter 4. If you are insulted for the name of Christ you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that when we think of God, when you think of God you should be thinking glory.

But all of that raises a fascinating question. What is glory? And that's the kind of question that is both easy and hard.

One level it's easy because when I mention the word glory we know what we mean. Glory is pointing us towards the idea of splendour, majesty, honour and excellence.

And of course these things are true of many things in the world whether it's nature or whether it's the glory of a ruler or of a spectacular building or anything like that.

We know what we mean when we talk about glory and of course all of these things apply in their truest sense to God. God is majestic, God is magnificent, God is the one who is preeminent and who is the one worthy of all honour.

[7 : 02] And in many ways the word glory is almost like a collective term that describes all of God's attributes. So at one level the question is easy but at another level it's really hard because you can find yourself going round in circles.

If somebody asked me what's glory I would perhaps say, well glory means majestic and they would say well what does majestic mean? I would say well majestic means magnificent and then they would say what does magnificent mean?

Well I would say magnificent means glorious and I would find myself going round in circles. We know what it means but yet it's sometimes hard to define exactly what the word glory is referring to.

We know that glory is telling us that God is special and amazing but what exactly does it mean?

Well here is where the Bible helps us a lot and there are two key words that we need in order to understand what glory is and these two words are heavy and bright.

[8 : 19] Now you might be thinking that sounds a bit strange Thomas what do you mean? Well I shall explain why. If you look at this slide you see the Hebrew word for glory is the word kabod and you may remember in 1 Samuel chapter 4 we read of ichabod which means the glory has departed.

This child that was born and the ark had been stolen, ichabod, same word ikabod, the glory has departed. That's the Hebrew word for glory.

The Greek word for glory is doxa as in doxology, sometimes you'll see the word doxology in the Bible where glory is ascribed to God.

These are the two key words for glory in the Bible and the basic meaning of the word kabod is to be heavy and we see that in 1 Samuel 4 18 as soon as he mentioned the Ark of God Eli fell over backwards from his seat by the side of the gate his neck was broken and he died for the man was old and heavy.

That word heavy is the same root as the word for glory and the Greek word doxa is used to convey the idea of brightness.

[9 : 40] Paul describes how he says that I could not see because of the brightness of that light and in the Greek there it says I could not see because of the doxa of that light.

And so one of the main things being conveyed by that word doxa, the Greek word for glory is the idea of brightness. So these are the two key words heavy and bright and these two words are very helpful in order to understand what glory is.

First of all glory in terms of being heavy. Now that might seem very very strange at first but the link between heaviness and glory is to be understood in terms of the idea of weightiness.

Something that is glorious is something that carries weight, something that is substantial and the illustration I often have in my mind is a bar of gold.

If you imagine you could pick up a bar of gold it would be heavy, it would be weighty and it would be glorious in its magnitude in many ways.

[10 : 46] And we actually have a word in English that does the same thing, conveys the same idea and that's the word impressive. When we talk about something being impressive we're saying that it's making a firm and strong impression on us.

You see something remarkable and you say that's impressive. But if you think about that word the word impressive is coming from the idea of imprinting a pressed shape or form into something.

My children often play with play-doh and you can press into that a shape if you wish. Celebrities do it on the pavement don't they? I can't remember is it their hands or their feet?

I can't remember. But in order to make that impression you've got to be weighty. You've got to be heavy don't you? And in many ways it's telling us that the opposite of that weightiness is the idea of being flimsy or superficial or lightweight.

Glory has that weightiness ascribed to it. And so this link between heaviness and glory is telling us that the glory of God is describing the fact that every single attribute of God whether it's his goodness, his holiness, his wisdom, his power, his truth, his justice all of these attributes are as big and as heavy and as substantial as they can possibly be.

[12 : 15] And if you think about it here I must apologise because I'm probably going to appeal to men more than women but we men I think are often impressed by the biggest and the heaviest that something can be.

So if we see a big lorry or a big tractor or a big boat we are always impressed, maybe nobody else I'm always impressed by it. You see these things they're big they're substantial.

I remember in engineering sometimes you would work with very small spanners but every so often you would take out a spanner that was about this big and you think wow that's a big spanner and it's impressive that weightiness and that impressiveness that immense weight that idea of being so substantial that is what we are meaning when we talk about the glory of God.

But I was trying to think of a word that captures this but in reality the truth that we're trying to convey here is reflected in those moments when words fail us.

You know when you see something really big and really amazing you tend to just go because you don't have the words.

[13 : 39] That's what God's glory is like. God's attributes are on a scale of their own. God's love, God's power, God's goodness, God's wisdom.

All of these are at heavyweight level. And that's why Psalm 19 verse 1 makes such perfect sense. It says the heavens declare the glory of God and it's reminding us of the fact that if you want to compare something with the glory of God only the universe itself is big enough.

To come close we need an immeasurable universe to function as a reflection of the glory of God.

So glory is in terms of heaviness, weightiness. But glory is also conveyed to us in terms of brightness and that's probably a bit more familiar and a bit more understanding, more easy for us to understand because it is pointing us to the fact that God's nature is radiant and spectacular.

We imagine a bright beautiful sunny day and we'll have to use our imagination tonight because the weather outside is so terrible. But you think of the beautiful weather we have had.

[14 : 59] You think of the dazzling light of the sun. You think of the radiance and the creation of our interest. And on a day like that we always say the weather is glorious.

Don't we? Because God's glory is being presented to us in terms not just of that weightiness but also in the sense that he radiates brightness and purity and splendour towards us.

God's attributes are radiant. His goodness is so good that it dazzles in its perfection. His strength is so strong that it glows in its power.

And God's love is so great that it shines and radiates in its beauty. And this idea of brightness is pointing us towards the idea of overflowing abundance.

If you think of the light bulbs that are lighting up this church, they are able to light up this building because they are overflowing in terms of their brightness. They're not just lighting up the bulb itself and its own space.

[16 : 05] It is overflowing and reflecting off the whole and all the different areas of this building. That brightness is pointing us to an abundance.

And we are seeing here the fact we've been reminded of the fact that God's attributes are always at the level of abundance. God's wisdom is abounding.

His strength is abounding. His love is utterly abounding. And that is what we mean when we talk about the glory of God.

And all of this should shape how we view God. When we think of God, we should be thinking of all this glory.

We should be thinking of the sheer weightiness of God's nature and character. And we should be thinking of the amazing brightness of God's being and his attributes.

[17 : 14] If you think about it, all of these things should stop us in our tracks. Because when, if you think about it, heaviness is awesome.

But it should make us very, very careful. You're dealing with something incredibly heavy. You are very careful because you realize you're powerless in the face of the weight of this object.

And brightness is so attractive and so irresistible, but at the same time it's unapproachable. You look at the sun and you're drawn to look at it because it's so bright and yet at the same time you can't gaze at it too deeply because it is so bright.

It is unapproachable. And all of this is reminding us of the fact that God's glory is something to marvel at. But it's also something that we must take immensely, seriously.

God is glorious. But God forbid that we are ever casual or careless concerning the glory of God.

[18 : 37] God is the God of glory. But I want us to highlight the fact tonight that the glory, this glory, which is an inherent feature of God's nature, it is a shared glory.

It is shared between God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit. And that takes us back to John chapter 17. We'll read verses one to five again.

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come, glorify your son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

And this is eternal life that you may know the only through God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Now, there's an awful lot in these verses, but I just want to highlight a couple of things briefly. First of all, we see in these verses, we see Christ's own eternal glory.

[19 : 54] Verse five there is one of these remarkable verses that just gives us a glimpse into eternity. In many ways, we don't know much about the realm that existed prior to the world coming into being.

And in many ways, rightly so, that realm is beyond us, but every so often the Bible gives us a glimpse into that realm. And verse five of John 17 is one of these places. And that verse is telling us that from all eternity, God the Father and God the Son have shared their glory.

And this is the reason why the place where God's glory is seen most clearly is in Jesus Christ.

If we were to ask, where do we go if we want to see the glory of God? The main answer to that question is look at Jesus. The Bible makes that clear.

Hebrews one expresses it beautifully. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his son, God has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed the aid of all things through whom also he created the world.

[21 : 14] He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. And that's why John could say the words we read at the beginning.

The word became flesh and dwelt amongst and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

God's glory is seen in Jesus Christ. And at this point, we are learning an important lesson.

Then we will say or we will hear the phrase, Jesus laid aside his glory. And I've probably used that phrase myself many times.

And at one level, it's a very helpful and a very accurate phrase because when we speak of Jesus coming into the world, we describe that in terms of humiliation, the fact that Jesus was made low.

[22 : 16] And so in many ways it's helpful, but we must be careful using that phrase because we must not think that Jesus came into the world without glory.

Yes, Jesus laid aside the glory of heaven and was born in poverty and humility and endured so much suffering during his time in this world.

But yes, he laid aside the glory of heaven, but as Jesus came into this world, he did not lay aside the glory of God because it is in him, in Jesus that we see the glory of God.

That's why John said, we saw him and we saw the glory of God in him. Jesus Christ is the very place where we see the glory of God revealed to us.

It is a shared glory that God has. And so we see in John 17.5, Christ's own eternal glory that he brought with him to earth and revealed God to us so amazingly.

[23 : 35] But secondly, we see that in this verse, in verse 5, Jesus's pre-existent eternal glory, it was not just his glory.

Notice Jesus doesn't say, give me back the glory that I once had for myself. Notice that Jesus says, he talks about the glory that I had with you.

And that's pointing us to the fact that the glory of God is always a shared glory. And that's teaching us that it's never a selfish glory.

And that's what makes God so wonderfully different from the world because so often our own glory and the world's own glory is utterly self-focused.

And we see that in celebrities who look to promote themselves. We see it maybe in businesses who are trying to strengthen their own position and magnify their own greatness.

[24 : 43] And sometimes we even see it in churches where people want to exalt themselves as much as possible.

But Jesus does not operate in that way. And Jesus here is speaking about the glory that he has with his father. In other words, Jesus is saying to his father, I don't want any glory without you.

I don't want any glory other than that which is totally bound up with the fact that you are my father and I am your son. And that's highlighted in verses 1 to 5 of John 17, where we see that the father and the son glorify each other.

It's such a beautiful picture. Glorify your son that the son may glorify you. Then verse 4, I have glorified you. Verse 5, now father, glorify me.

There's such a beautiful balance and relationship here whereby the father wants to glorify the son and the son wants to glorify the father and each delights to glory to glorify the other, each delights in the exaltation of the other.

[25 : 58] And these verses of course are focusing on the father and the son's shared glory. But just in the chapter before this we see that the Holy Spirit is also exactly the same.

It speaks in verse 13 of chapter 16 of the fact that when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. God's glory is never a selfish glory.

And we must make sure we grasp that because many, many people make the desperate mistake of thinking that God is ultimately self-interested and almost egotistical.

But we must not think of God that way because that's a worldly way to think of God. And we must never think of God in worldly terms. Yes, God's glory is at the very centre of his purposes, but that glory is never selfish.

[27 : 09] That glory is a shared glory. And it's the doctrine of the Trinity that shows us how precious and beautiful that shared glory is.

It's a glory that is mutually shared, a glory that is lovingly promoted in each person, and a glory that exists in perfect fellowship.

As we look at Jesus we see the glory of God and we see that it is a glory that is beautifully shared. God's glory is a shared glory.

But I want us to ask a question. Where is it that God's glory reaches its climax?

In other words, what is the pinnacle of God's glory? How would we answer that question?

[28 : 14] Can we even answer that question? Where's the pinnacle of God's glory? Well, there's lots of things that come to mind. We could think of heaven. For example, we think of Isaiah's vision in chapter 6 of the prophecy of Isaiah where he sees the throne of God.

God's holiness is so abundantly clear before him and he recognizes the fact that the whole earth is full of God's glory. We could think of heaven.

Maybe that's the pinnacle of God's glory. Maybe it's creation. Like Sam 19 talks about, you stand outside on a dark clear night and you see the vastness of the stars and that's declaring God's glory.

Maybe that's the pinnacle of God's glory. We can think of the big moments in the Old Testament where God acted, the flood, the exodus or at Mount Sinai where he came down and the mountain shook.

These moments were glorious. Maybe they are the pinnacle of God's glory. Or we can think of the temple where God himself came to dwell. The cloud of God's glory came to dwell in that place.

[29 : 25] And again, imagine being there. Imagine being at that moment when the temple was dedicated and the cloud came down and the glory of God came to dwell in that place.

It's astonishing. Maybe that's the pinnacle of God's glory. Well let's look again at what Jesus says in John 17 and see if we can answer our question as to the pinnacle of God's glory.

Just read it again. When Jesus had spoken these words he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father the hour has come. Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you. Since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

And this is eternal life that they know you the only through God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now Father glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Here Jesus is saying that the hour has come for the Father and the Son to be glorified. This appears to be describing a moment of immense significance for the glory of God.

[30 : 44] And I think that we can justifiably say that it is in these verses that we are finding the answer to the question regarding the pinnacle of God's glory. The climax is being reached, the hour has come.

Jesus is talking about the fact that God's glory is going to be shown. This is the pinnacle of the glory of God. But what is Jesus talking about?

He's talking about the cross. He's talking about his death and resurrection.

And it is here at this point that in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the glory of God is reaching its climax.

And the reason we know that that is true is because all the moments that we spoke about from the Old Testament that refer to all of these are just shadows. All of these are looking forward to the greater moment, to this moment, pointing forward to this hour, this time.

[31 : 51] In the death and resurrection of Jesus we are seeing the pinnacle of the glory of God, the Trinity. And if you think about it all makes perfect sense.

Because in the death and resurrection of Jesus there we see God at His heaviest because it is here that He crushes Satan.

And it's here that He destroys the power of sin. And it's here that He defeats the kingdom of darkness once and for all with glorious heaviness.

This is where we see God at His heaviest. And in the death and resurrection of Jesus this is where we see God at His brightest. Because God has abolished death through His Son and He has brought life and immortality to light through the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

And now He calls to eternal life. He calls every one of us to eternal life in Him. And as 2 Corinthians 4.6 says, for God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[33 : 08] The glory of God reaches its climax in Jesus. And the climactic moment in the experience of Jesus Christ is in His death and resurrection.

That is why He came and that is why Jesus, when He speaks of His approaching death, He says, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

And do you see what that means? It means that in Scripture the moment that the glory of God reaches its pinnacle is in the moment when He came to save you.

All of this is revealing the astounding truth that the triune God does not simply want to share His glory with Himself as Father, Son and Spirit.

The truth is that He wants to save you and He wants to share that glory with you.

[34 : 23] The pinnacle of God's glory is not in His unapproachable magnitude and brightness. The pinnacle of God's glory is when He takes you in His arms and makes you His own and comes to dwell in your heart and transforms you into the image of His Son.

God's glory is utterly astounding and yet His great goal, His great work is to save you so that He can share all that glory with you.

And you might be thinking, Thomas, you're going too far. And at one level it does seem too far.

How can we possibly have any share in God's glory? You think of God's glory in its heaviness, its magnitude.

You think of God's glory in its brightness, in its radiance. We think, how can people like you and me have any share in that?

[35 : 48] How can that be true? Well, we know that this is true because Jesus Himself says it.

And He says it in this chapter in verse 22. The glory that you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.

God's glory has been shared with you and with everyone who puts their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul highlights the same thing when he says, and we all with unveiled faith behold in the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

God's glory is a shared glory. It is shared between the persons of the Trinity, between Father, Son and Spirit. But it's also shared with you.

[37 : 03] God wants to share His glory with you. He is bringing many sons and daughters to glory. As Paul says, when Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

And the astonishing thing is that all of these privileges that God is offering to us, the only thing that God asks from us is that we put our faith in God the Son.

God says I'll share my glory with you, put your faith in my Son and the glory that I've given Him will be shared with you.

It's so simple and yet so amazing. God's glory is a shared glory within Himself and with all who come to Him.

But there's one final point. In Jesus Christ we see the glory of God.

[38 : 32] And in Jesus through faith in Him we share in that glory as Christians. But the Bible reveals to us a vital consequence of that for our lives as Christians.

Because as Christians not only do you and I see God's glory, we are also to display it in our lives.

That's what Jesus goes on to say in this verse. The glory that you've given me, I've given to them that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

God wants the glory that He has shared with you as His child to be seen by everyone you meet. Everyone you meet this week that they'd see the glory of God in us.

And that means that our lives should be weighty. Lived in a way that honours God with due weight and substance.

[39 : 48] And it means that our lives should be radiant. A bounding in love and joy and peace and hope that overflows to everyone that we meet.

We live in a world where people are addicted to displaying their own glory. That can be through their work, through their possessions, through Facebook, through whatever, in that world.

Our goal is to be people that when others look at us they will see nothing less than the glory of God.

And may God grant that it will be true of us all. Let's pray. God our Father we acknowledge that you are the God of all glory.

And we are so aware that our minds are so limited and our understanding is so small.

[40 : 54] But we thank you that you have revealed your glory to us in your word and especially through your Son Jesus Christ. And we marvel at your perfect glory.

And we thank you so much that you are willing to share that glory with us. Whereby you have come to save us and to make us your own. And we will never grasp just how privileged we are.

But we thank you Lord. And we pray that your glory would be seen in us as a body of your people. And as we go through our daily lives that we would not be living for our own glory.

But that we would live for you and so that when people see us they would see that we are the children of our glorious God.

Help us and draw us all to yourself and have mercy on us. In Jesus' name. Amen.