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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**December 17, 2023**

**Glory to the Newborn King**

**Selected Scriptures**

**Prayer:** *Father, I just want to thank you again for the privilege of being able to gather, being able to meet, being able to just share our joy in what you have given us, for the gift of Christmas. Father, this morning again we're going to look into your word. We're going to again examine some of the aspects of Christmas, and I just continue to pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit. Would you guide us, would you come alongside us, would you give us the ability to make this of permanent value, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king. Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled. Well, that's the gospel. That's the gospel in a nutshell and the whole point of the gospel is captured in one single word. I want to spend the next two weeks re-examining an incredibly misunderstood word that lies at the center of the Christmas story, and that word is glory.

Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king. And so why

glory? Well, consider this message to be kind of a "best of," if I can call it that. I was looking back through lots of old messages and I realized I've spent many, many words talking about the glory of God, and so what I want to go over this morning is things that I've touched on about glory in past messages. So if you've heard it before, let me just apologize ahead of time but I believe much of this stuff bears repeating.

According to John Piper, glory is -- quote -- "the public display of the infinite beauty and worth of God." Now the billboards that God chooses to publicly display this glory on and through is us; it's human beings. In *Matthew 5* Jesus says: "*Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.*"

Well, it follows then that glorifying God is putting on a display of God's character and his attributes which is just a fancy way of describing who God is and what God does. Our good works glorify God because God's character is expressed through our redeemed lives. And so the first question that I want to raise is kind of an obvious one, and that's why does God need us to display his infinite beauty and worth?

You know, awhile back I tried to frame this question by looking at

one man's pursuit of glory versus God's and by speaking about this one particular man, he was once a great football player; the man was named Terrell Owens. Most of you have heard that name. He had an abundance of talent. As a receiver, he could outrun, out jump and out catch just about anybody who tried to defend him. He was one of the most naturally gifted players to ever play the game, and yet his career was marked by nothing but turmoil.

He played for the 49ers, then the Cowboys, then the Eagles and finally the Bengals and every place he went he very quickly wore out his welcome. Eventually no team in the NFL would take him in spite of his overwhelming talent, and his career ended on this sad note. This is -- quote -- "Terrell Owens' football career ended Tuesday when the Allen Wranglers of the Indoor Football League came to the same conclusion each of the 32 teams in the National Football League realized after the 2010 NFL season - Terrell Owens was no longer worth the bother he once was. The Wranglers cut Owens."

Well, what destroyed Terrell Owens was his ego. He's what people call a glory hound. When he played in the locker room in his off time, Terrell Owens was primarily concerned with Terrell Owens. And his desire to put himself first at the expense of everyone else around him is what proved to be his undoing. And God says in

*Philippians 2: Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Well now instead of a football game, let's go back in time to something far more serious. The nation of Israel has just left Egypt. They've been enslaved there for hundreds of years and God has raised up Moses as their champion who's going to lead them out of Egypt to the promised land. If you're familiar with the story at all, you realize that Pharaoh in Egypt has no intention of letting the Jews go. They were his major labor force and he had no intention of seeing that resource disappear merely because they wanted to worship their God.

Moses insisted that Pharaoh let the people go and Pharaoh's refusal results in those ten plagues that beset Egypt. Well, after Pharaoh gets crushed by the plagues, he sends the Jews away, but he has second thoughts and he desperately tries to recapture them. So we learn from scripture that Pharaoh's panic was actually at the hand of God and was designed for one thing. This is *Exodus 14*. It says: *Then the LORD said to Moses, Pharaoh will think, 'The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.'* And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue

*them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." So the Israelites did this.*

So God's telling Moses, he tells Moses he's going to manipulate Pharaoh into destroying the very last remnants of his army and in the process of pursuing the Jews, God was going to -- quote -- "gain glory for myself."

We pick up on it in *Exodus 14:5*. It says: *When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!" So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly.*

So now the Israelites, they see the approaching Egyptians and they cry out once again that, God, you brought us here only to destroy us. It says: *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the*

*Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."*

Well, we all know what happened, the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, they're pursued by the Egyptian army and its charioteers, and they're lured into the sea, they're pursuing the Jews and they're on that same dry ground until -- quote -- "*Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant."*

Now if someone was to ask you, okay, why did God part the Red Sea? You could answer, well, in order to provide an escape for the Israelites. You could also say he wanted to rescue the Israelites and destroy any threat the Egyptian army might still pose to them some time in the future, and both of those answers would be correct but they would be incomplete. You see, the real answer to the question why did God part the Red Sea, well, that's provided by God himself when he says: *"I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."*

Well, it's pretty obvious if God orchestrated Pharaoh's destruction so that he might gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen. But this is what raises a question that I think lurks in the backs of the minds of anyone who seriously studied the Old Testament and God's ways. Let me just bluntly put the question this way. If Terrell Owens is a microscopic version of what happens when everything stems from feeding your own ego, why isn't God just a macroscopic expression of the very same thing? I mean, why is Terrell Owens' sin something destructive and evil and God's seeming display of ego something that we applaud? Why is God seemingly obsessed with his own glory? I don't think it's an idle

question.

In the 17th chapter of the gospel of John we find Jesus praying his high priestly prayer. He says: *And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them."*

*"And glory has come to me through them."* And here we see the Father and the Son, they're clearly and absolutely committed to glory coming to them through us. So why is it that when we pursue glory it's sinfully wrong but when God himself pursues it, it's a profound blessing?

Well, let me give you three answers as to why pursuing glory in God is vastly different than humans pursuing their own glory and why it is in fact a profound blessing. See, God is determined to pursue his glory through us because, number one, glory is an accurate depiction of the reality of God. Glory just describes who God is. Number two, glory is an appropriate response to the reality of God. It's right, it's fitting that we glorify God and I'll explain. And third, glory is a gift from God to us.



The first reason why God demands glory from us and why he pursues it is because glory is an accurate description of who God is. In fact, it's the only truly accurate description of who he is.

I mean, just take the case -- we've been talking about athletes, take the case of an athlete, if you will. Look at Terrell Owens, say Terrell Owens' skill level isn't just hundreds of times greater than anyone who's ever played the game, let's say he's just, by some freak of nature, he's ten thousand times better than anybody who's ever played the game. Now, wouldn't he be guilty of false modesty if he pointed to anyone else as an example of how you're supposed to play the game? Wouldn't accuracy demand that he regard himself as the very best at what he does? But don't just limit this to athletics, I mean, we're talking about why simple accuracy demands that God point to himself as the source of glory.

Let's say we're going to talk about intellectual glory. We might be speaking about men like Einstein or Stephen Hawking, but what if there was a man whose intellectual capacity made Einstein and Hawking look like schoolyard dunces? What if his intellect was not just superior but it encompassed all of the intellects of every human who's ever lived? And let's say that his understanding was not just of some but of all knowledge that ever existed from the dawn of time to the end of the future. And what if that individual

not only knew everything there was to know about everything that existed but he also knew everything that could ever be discovered about anything in the future. Wouldn't it be deceitful for that person to point to anyone but himself when it comes to intellectual prowess? I mean, accuracy would demand that.

How about creativity? I mean, what if there was an individual who the creative art industry of ten thousand Picassos, Rembrandts and Michelangelos, and that he exercised that authority not by creating a statue of David like Michelangelo did but in creating the actual David who he miraculously knit together in his mother's womb down to the very nerves, muscles, and sinew that made up his body? Would he be guilty of false modesty if he pointed humanity to other artists instead of himself?

What if his creative canvas was not just the medium of paint or clay or marble but instead what if his medium was of creatures and stars and planets and solar systems? What if instead of paint and canvas he used stars and galaxies and the universe and he created drawings made out of stars?

Job says of God in *Job 9*: *Who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars; who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea; who made the Bear and Orion, the*

*Pleiades and the chambers of the south; who does great things beyond searching out, and marvelous things beyond number. Now wouldn't such a one be guilty of false modesty by pointing to anyone other than himself as the source of all glory? I mean, is it boasting to insist that you are who you are? Isaiah 46 says: Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.*

Well, is God pointing to himself? Absolutely. I mean is there anyone else whom God could possibly point to who would in any way resemble what he's describing? Absolutely not. God is simply stating a profound fact. There is none like him. And if there was such a person, he would be God. And whoever was pointing him out would not be God. You see, it can only be one such ultimate God and that by his very nature has no choice but to point to himself as the source of all glory. I mean, wouldn't that person be exercising a grotesque form of false modesty if he inaccurately pointed to anyone else other than himself in terms of glory?

I remember one of the most famous boasts of all time was that of the boxer Muhammad Ali. He used to say, "I am the greatest." And you know what? When it came to boxing he was unquestionably the greatest. Should he have pointed to a lesser boxer as the greatest? I mean, Dizzy Dean once said another quote that rings

true. He said, "It ain't bragging if you can do it." There's no doubt in terms of raw personal power Muhammad Ali could stop the average man in his tracks. When it came to boxing, Ali could do it. So saying he was the greatest is simply him stating the obvious. It was absolutely accurate.

And when it comes to being the creator and sustainer of life itself, accuracy again demands that we point to the one that fits that description. That would be the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the demonic world had no trouble whatsoever accuracy depicting Jesus as their ruler and Lord. And you know, when folks are frightened about spirits and ghosts and things like that, I tell them just go to the scripture and look at every single interaction that Jesus ever had with demons.

And by the way, ghosts, there's a TV show about ghosts now, they're everywhere. Understand, ghosts are just demons who are pretending to be the spirits of departed persons. But each and every time Jesus went up against a demon you will notice the demon inevitably was quaking in his boots and begging him for mercy.

One such incident is *Mark 5*. It says: *Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes. As soon as He got out of the boat -- this is Jesus -- a man with an unclean spirit*

came out of the tombs and met Him. He lived in the tombs. No one was able to restrain him anymore -- even with chains -- because he often had been bound with shackles and chains, but had snapped off the chains and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. And always, night and day, he was crying out among the tombs and in the mountains and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and knelt down before Him. And he cried out with a loud voice, "What do You have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You before God, don't torment me!" For He had told him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" "What is your name?" He asked him. "My name is Legion," he answered Him, "because we are many."

Here we see literally legions of demons, they're begging Jesus for mercy. So the spirit world radically acknowledged the accuracy of his claim to be "the Son of the Most High God." In fact so does nature itself. And we also know that Jesus commanded nature itself and it instantly obeyed.

The disciples were caught up in a squall so severe that they're certain they're going to drown and there's Jesus asleep in the boat. And so they wake him up and he rebukes the storm and instantly nature itself obeys. The disciples now find themselves far more terrified of the power of Jesus than they were of the

storm itself. *Mark 4 says: He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Silence! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Then He said to them, "Why are you fearful? Do you still have no faith?" And they were terrified and asked one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey Him!"*

So we see when it comes to giving God glory even nature itself obeys. And so we see if God himself can demand that the world of wisdom and creativity and demons and the world of nature itself acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ for who he truly was, for the one to whom glory itself rightly belongs for accuracy's sake alone. And secondly, acknowledging God's glory is absolutely appropriate.

Allow me again to use the example I used before of an elementary schoolteacher to illustrate the idea that pursuing the glory of God is simply the appropriate thing to do. Let's say you're a second grade teacher and you decide you're going to take your kids on a field trip to a museum. And you don't have to but you think it would be a good thing for your students, for their experience. So you put on a fundraiser, you raise the funds, you get the necessary funds to get the buses all lined up, you spend the day with some chaperons overseeing these kids' time in the museum. And the day's a complete success and the kids seem to have had just a wonderful

time and everybody goes back to school and after a week or so back at school you decide as a teacher who really cares about these kids, you decide something's just not quite right. Not a single child or parent ever thought enough to say, "thank you." Now the teacher could either chalk that up to thoughtlessness and let it go or perhaps could try another approach.

And what matters for this discussion is what is the teacher's motive here? If the teacher's motive is to have people say wonderful things to her about what a lovely teacher she is and how much effort she put into that day, then she's just trying to use her students to stroke her ego, and that's not right. If, however, if she genuinely believes that it is right and proper, appropriate for young people to learn to appreciate something they'd been given and to say, "thank you" for it, then her motive is simply to get her students to recognize what is right and proper, to understand what an appropriate response is.

So she sends a letter to the parents stating the fact that nobody said "thank you" and suggesting that it might be a good idea for parents to encourage their kids to write thank you notes. Well, the parents -- particularly if this is the 21st century North American school, they're outraged. "How dare you demand praise and thankfulness from my little Johnny? Who do you think you are? We

pay our taxes. We expect this kind of thing."

Now, if the teacher's motive, if her motive is to rightfully get her students lined up with doing the right thing, she in all likelihood is going to think to herself or maybe even say out loud, "Do you really think I need the praise and thanksgiving of seven-year-olds to make me complete? I mean, if I was desperate for thank yous, do you think I would seek out second graders for that? Or do you think maybe saying, 'thank you,' is a skill your second graders should master?"

Well, that's not far from what God was expressing in *Psalm 50*. This is what he said: "*Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.*"



What God is saying, he's not demanding glory from us because any need on his part, but because giving him glory is absolutely appropriate for us. *Job 41: "Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine."*

What God is saying is that the calls in scripture to glorify God, they never stem from neediness on his part.

And so the next logical question would be: Then where does God's call for glory come from? And here's really the heart of the matter. See, God's call for glory comes from our need to give glory and not God's need to get glory. You see, glory is what we were designed for. Understand first, glory to God is an accurate description of what God is entitled to; second, glory to God is an appropriate response for any living creature; but thirdly, glory to God is a gift to us from God.

So why is our giving glory to God a gift from God to us instead of the other way around? And why does God appear to be constantly pursuing his own glory?

Well, first we have to understand that God does everything according to his standard of perfection and that means that nothing is done by God for a single set purpose such as his glory alone. I mean, there are multiple reasons why God does everything and that

includes his glory, but it also includes our benefit as well.

And I understand it's very easy to get stuck in the weeds here, but I think one simple reason of why God pursues his glory through us is because we are the ultimate beneficiaries of that glory. You see, we are creatures that were designed by God to find our greatest joy and deepest pleasure through offering praise. That's just the way God designed us, and that's our ultimate purpose and that's our glory. You see, the glory of a creature lies in his capturing the essence of what it was designed for. And we can look at creatures that are in their glory and we recognize it's when they're doing exactly what they're designed to do at the very peak of what that means. I mean, an eagle soaring in its glory, so is a stallion when it's in full gallop, and the glory comes from seeing this creature doing exactly what God designed it to do.

And God's creatures oftentimes demonstrate their purpose by virtue of their designs. I mean, you can look at a shark and you can see that it was designed to swim; you can look at an eagle and see that it was designed to fly. Cheetahs are obvious designed for speed. But when you look at a human being, when you look at them, you have to ask yourself, what was he, what was she designed for? I mean animals know their purpose because it's right there in their design, I mean, birds fly, fish swim, hunters hunt, grazers graze.

We humans, we are the only ones still wondering what were we designed for because we are no longer aware of what our purpose actually is. And if we don't know what our purpose is, we can't know if our lives are good or bad, full or empty.

I think it was Tim Keller who once said, The only way you can tell if something was good is if it fulfills the purpose for which it was designed. He says a watch is very, very good for telling time; it's actually miserable for hammering nails. If you don't know the purpose of a watch, you might try to hammer a nail with it and say, "Well, this thing stinks. It's awful." Without knowing a watch's purpose you can't tell whether it's good or bad. And in the same way, if you don't know the proper purpose of a human being, you can't tell whether or not his life is full or empty, a success or a failure.

Peter made this observation in *1 Peter 1:18*. He said: *For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from the fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.*

So you think, why do you suppose Peter tells us you're redeemed from this empty way of life inherited from your fathers? Do you

think he's just trying to be insulting or is God telling us something about life's emptiness as we know it? You see, the essence of an empty life is being disconnected from the very purpose for which you were created. You see, if anyone knows what our purpose really is, it's got to be God; and he tells us explicitly that we are creatures designed by God for praise.

In *1 Peter 2:9* he says: *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

We, too, have a unique glory associated with us. It's a glory far higher than an eagle or a stallion. You see, we were created to reach our highest creaturely glory when we worship the God who created us. God created eagles as apex predators; he created human beings as apex worshipers. And when we are offering up to God praise and worship, we are fulfilling precisely what we were designed for. We're like an eagle soaring or a stallion galloping. We are creatures created to bring glory to God our creator.

So why does God seek our worship? Well, the answer to that question lies in understanding the role that an eagle or a stallion plays when his behavior is gloriously on display. I mean, if you

could actually sit down and talk to an eagle or a stallion and you asked him, "What's the high point of your existence," my guess is they would tell you that's when they are at their most glorious, when they're doing exactly what they were designed to do to the fullest extent of their abilities. And would it not follow that our greatest joy and our deepest pleasure would be in doing exactly what we were designed for? And we were designed for praise.

This is how God puts it in *Ephesians 1:11*. He says: *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.*

I mean, you and I were designed to be to the praise of his glory. Because of that, God is determined to point the crown of his creation to the greatest good and the highest honor there is in existence; and who or what is that? It's God. It has to be God himself.

If God were to direct our worship to anything but himself, then that in fact would be God. I mean, do you see that? God is determined for us to pursue what is best, and he just happens to occupy that position. So he is determined to bless us with himself

and at the risk of sounding like he needs our approval. Trust me, he doesn't.

C.S. Lewis in *Reflection on the Psalms* said this, he said, "The miserable idea that God should in any sense need, or crave for, our worship like a vain woman wanting compliments, or a vain author presenting his new books to people who never met or heard him, is implicitly answered by the words, 'If I be hungry I will not tell thee' (Ps 50:12). Even if such an absurd Deity could be conceived, He would hardly come to us, the lowest of rational creatures, to gratify His appetite. I don't want my dog to bark approval of my books."

And God says in *Acts 17*, he says: *The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*

And so we finally arrive at the reason why, the reason why God insists on our worship. It's for our sake and not for his. We need to worship him far more than he would have any need whatsoever of our worship, because we were designed for praise.

And C.S. Lewis again brilliantly points this out. This is what he says: "The most obvious fact about praise – whether of God or any thing – strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honor. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise unless shyness or the fear of boring others is deliberately brought in to check it. The world rings with praise – lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, I had not noticed how the humblest, and at the same time most balanced and capacious, minds, praised most, while the cranks, misfits and malcontents praised least. I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: 'Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent?' I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed." (93-95)

And that's unique to us. We're the only creatures who experience the pleasure of praise. Just think about is there any other creature on the whole earth that experiences the pleasure that simply praising something gives? There's no other creature on

earth created with that capacity. Praise is something that's uniquely human, and that's because we alone were designed for that unique pleasure because we were designed for praise and worship.

And again, I want to put this in terms of sports. We started out on a football note, I did this I think eight years ago. I put the same clip on. I wanted to show you something in sports that is glorious and I want you to listen to how the announcers react when they see something glorious. Do you have that? I think you'll understand what it is if you've got it up there. There it is. Run that, if you would. (video playing)

I want you to listen to how the announcers react. They are completing their pleasure by praising it. They're seeing something glorious. Piper said a three-point shot can be glorious as well, so I'm not just out there in left field.

But you know, when Odell Beckham made that catch, was interesting, that was like seven, eight years ago and a lot of my kids were scattered across the country. And I started getting texted, I got a phone call from my kids saying, "Did you see that catch?" I said -- well, obviously they're not informing me of something. They know that I was watching the very same thing. Why did they say that? Why? Because simply praising something glorious



increased and consummated their pleasure of it. There's no other creature in the world that acts like that. There's no other creature in the world created with that same capacity.

I said the same thing about seeing a mountain sunset in the deserts of Arizona by yourself. How much more pleasure does it provide by simply having someone to share it with? Because we're creatures that were designed to seek that pleasure through praising. And far greater than any sunset or mountaintop or football catch is the source of ultimate glory, which is God. And it follows then that our peak experience as human beings comes through glorifying God, in understanding that God himself took on flesh, that he lived a perfect life, then he offered that life up on the cross so that we by faith could have his righteousness instead of our own sin, and that's the reason why he's worthy of all praise. That's why we sing of God's entry into humanity today this very morning, we sang, "hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king; peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."

You see, we're going to spend all of eternity growing in our understanding of that glorious fact. And the simple answer to the question what is an empty life is that it's any life that doesn't understand its purpose, and our purpose is clearly stated in question one of the *Westminster Catechism*. What's the chief end of

man? Well, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. So a full life is a life whose purpose is centered on realizing what we were made for. We humans were designed by our creator for the express purpose of glorifying him by bearing his image.

And so what if God knew what was the absolute best thing for human beings and what if he knew exactly what he needed to point us to for us to live the most fulfilled and happy lives and what if as the creator of human beings, he knew exactly what fulfilled the deepest longings of the human heart and what if he alone knew that the answer to all of those questions was himself? Wouldn't he be wrong in pointing all things towards anything else? Wouldn't he be guilty of some type of gross idolatry if he pointed to anything other than himself? And wouldn't we be equally guilty if we pointed to anything other than him as the source of all good things?

John Piper's created what's now become almost a Christian mantra, and it's rooted in this exact truth. He says: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." That's our purpose in praising. You see, it's for our good and his glory.

Why is God determined to pursue glory through us? Because fixing

our eyes on God's glory is, number one, absolutely accurate; number two, profoundly appropriate; and number three, it is certainly a gift of God. This is the reason why we recognize the ultimate gift of God and that's his Son, and that's why we sing, "hark the herald angels sing, glory the newborn king." Let's pray.

*Father, I just thank you that you are the source of all glory, that you have created us to find ourselves, find our purpose, find our meaning in offering you praise. And we do just that, Lord, we praise you, we thank you, we bless you, and we glorify you for the gift of your Son, for the gift of Christmas. And we praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.*