

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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God's Glory Defined

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, we just want to thank you for who you are. We thank you for the fact that you are the gift of Christmas, and we thank you for that gift, the gift of your Son. So again this morning, Lord, for this month we're going to be focusing in on you, Lord, and the glory that is Christmas. And so I pray this morning, Lord, for wisdom. I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit. I pray as we go through this material your Holy Spirit would accompany us and that it would be of lasting value, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as you well know we're officially into the Christmas season and it's time to pause and reflect on the enormity of the idea that God would become one of us, that he would leave heaven itself and enter into human flesh not as a king, not as a ruler, but as a helpless baby born in a manger. Christmas is about incarnation, God becoming flesh, but it's also about something even bigger than incarnation. In fact it's bigger, it's older, and it's the ultimate reason for Christmas. Is as the hymn says: Hark! the

herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!" See more than anything Christmas and the Christmas season is about glory, God's glory. Glory is not only the heart of Christmas, it is also the central focus of the gospel. And if you don't understand what glory is, you're going to have a hard time fully grasping the gospel. And so I decided I want to take the entire Christmas season and I want to work our way up to Christmas by looking at three different aspects of glory. First, we want to understand what glory is to us and to God. We want to define it so that we can grasp it, so that we can understand it. And secondly, we want to understand the glory of the incarnation that is Christmas itself, as God, leaving the glory of heaven to enter into human flesh, which is the essence of glory denied. And thirdly, we want to look at Christmas itself and why it is the essence of glory delivered. So we're going to be spending the next three weeks looking at glory defined, glory denied, and glory delivered.

So first let's look at glory defined. I was looking back through a lot of old messages about glory and I realize that I've spent many, many words talking about the glory of God, and what I want to go over this morning is things that I've touched about, about glory in past messages. So if you've heard this before, let me apologize ahead of time but much of this stuff simply bears repeating. Now, according to John Piper, glory is -- quote -- "The public display

of the infinite beauty and worth of God." That's the working definition. Now the billboards that God chooses to publicly display his glory on and through is human beings. *Matthew 5:16* says: *Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.* So it follows, then, that glorifying God is putting on display God's character and his attributes. See, our good works glorify God because God's character is expressed through our redeemed lives.

So the first question that we want to ask is an obvious one, it's why, why does God need us to display his infinite beauty and worth? Now, awhile back I tried to frame this question by speaking about Terrell Owens who was a once-great football player. Owens had an abundance of talent. I mean as a receiver he could outrun, out-jump, and out-catch just anybody who tried to defend him. He was one of the most naturally talented players to ever play the game, and yet his career was marked by nothing but turmoil. I mean just look at his record. He played for the 49ers, the Cowboys, the Eagles, and finally the Bengals, and in each place where he arrived, he very quickly wore out his welcome. Eventually no team in the NFL would even take him in spite of his overwhelming talent, and his career ended on this sad note. This is from a sports page: "Terrell Owens' football career ended Tuesday" -- this is 2010 -- "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." What destroyed Terrell Owens was his ego. I mean he's what people call a glory hound. When he played, when he was 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 really proved to be his undoing. Well, 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.*

Okay. Now instead of a football game let us go back in time to look at something a lot 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. Now if you're familiar with the story at all, you realize that Pharaoh and Egypt has really 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. So Moses is insisting that Pharaoh let his people go and Pharaoh's refusal results in the ten plagues that beset Egypt. Well, after

Pharaoh gets crushed by these plagues, he sends the Jews away but then he has second thoughts. And he desperately decides he needs to recapture them. And so we learn from scripture that Pharaoh's panic was at the hand of God and it was all 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 God tells Moses that he's going to manipulate Pharaoh into destroying the last remnants of his army and in the process of pursuing the Jews, God was going to get glory for myself. *Exodus 14* 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 we have the Israelites who have left Egypt, they see the approaching Egyptians and they begin to cry out. But this time they're crying out that God has brought them out into the desert simply to destroy them. We pick up at verse 15. 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. I mean, the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground and they're pursued by the Egyptians and their charioteers who also enter on dry ground. Now they're lured into the sea and they pursue the Jews thinking that they're about to overtake them. We pick up at verse 27. It says: *Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back into 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.**

Now if someone was going to ask you why is it, why did God part the Red Sea? Well, you can answer that in order to provide an escape for the Israelites. I mean you could also say that he wanted to rescue the Israelites and destroy the threat that the Egyptian army might still pose in the future. And both of those answers would be

true but they would be incomplete. See, the real answer to the question why did God part the Red Sea is provided by God himself when he says once again: *"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."* And so it's pretty obvious that God orchestrated Pharaoh's destruction so that he might gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.

Now I think there is a question that lurks in the backs of the minds of anyone who has seriously studied the old testament and God's ways. And let me just bluntly put the question this way: Terrell Owens is a microscopic version of what happens when everything stems from your own ego. Here's the question: Why isn't God's actions toward the Egyptians simply a macroscopic version of the same thing? Why is Terrell Owens' ego something destructive and sinful and yet God's seeming display of ego is something to be applauded? Why is God seemingly obsessed with his own glory? I don't think that's an idle question. In the 17th chapter of the gospel of John, we find Jesus praying his high priestly prayer, and this is what he says, 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." I mean the Father and the Son are clearly and absolutely committed to glory coming to them through us. And 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. You 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 is right, it is fitting that we glorify God, and I'll explain. And number three, glory is also a gift from God to us.

Now the first reason why God demands glory from us and pursues it is because glory is really just an accurate description of who God is. In fact it is the only truly accurate understanding of who he is. Just for instance, take the case of an athlete, if you will. Say Terrell Owens' skill level isn't just much, much greater than anybody else who ever played, let's say he's a freak of nature who is ten thousand times better than any athlete who has ever played.

Well, wouldn't he be guilty of false modesty if he pointed to anybody else as an example of how you're supposed to play the game? I mean, wouldn't accuracy demand that he regard himself as the very best at what he does? But don't just limit this to athletics. You see, we're talking here about what simple accuracy demands, and 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'd be speaking about men like Einstein, men like 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 that it encompassed all of the intellects of every human who ever lived? And let's say 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? What if that individual was omniscient, that he not only knew everything there ever was to know about everything that ever existed but he also knew everything that could ever be discovered about anything to ever be known in the future. Wouldn't it be deceitful for that person to point to anyone but himself when it came to intellectual prowess? I mean, accuracy would demand it. How about creativity? I mean, what if there was an individual who had the creative artistry of ten thousand Picassos, Rembrandts, and Michelangelos and he exercised that creativity not by creating statues of David, as Michelangelo did, but by creating the actual David, who he

miraculously knitted together in his mother's womb, down to the very nerves, sinews, and muscles that made up his body? Would he not be guilty of false modesty if he pointed humanity to other artists other than himself? And what if his creative canvas was not just the medium of paint or clay or marble but instead was of creatures and stars and planets and solar systems? What if instead of paint or crayons or pencils he used stars and galaxies and the universe and he created drawings made up of stars? *Job 9 says: 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 49 says: I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.* I mean is God pointing to himself? Absolutely. Is there anyone else who God could possibly point to who would in any way resemble the one that he's describing? Absolutely not. In fact, if there was such a person, he would be God and whoever was pointing him out would not be God. I mean, do you see how there can only be one such ultimate God and that by his very nature he has no choice but to point to himself as the source of all glory? Wouldn't that person be exhibiting a

grotesque form of false modesty if he inaccurately pointed to anyone else other than himself in terms of glory? I think of one of the most famous boasters of all time, it was the boxer Mohammed Ali. Do you remember he used to say, "I am the greatest." Remember that? And you know what? When it came to boxing, he unquestionably was. Now, should he have pointed to a lesser boxer as the greatest? When it comes to boxing, there was another quote that he used to say that rings true. He said, "It ain't bragging if you can do it." Well, there's no doubt that in terms of raw personal power, Mohammed Ali could stop the average man in his tracks and that when it came to boxing, Ali could do it. He simply stated the obvious and it was absolutely and obviously accurate.

But when it comes to being the creator and sustainer of life itself, accuracy once again demands that we point to the one who fits that description, and that would be the Lord Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, and it's only our world of flesh that doesn't see that. You see, even the demonic world has no trouble whatsoever accurately depicting Jesus as their ruler and their Lord. When folks are frightened about spirits or ghosts and things like that, I simply tell them go to the scripture and look up every single interaction that Jesus has ever had with demons. And by the way, there is no such thing as ghosts. I know ghosts are very, very popular today. Ghosts do not exist. When you see a ghost, what

you are seeing is a demon pretending to be the spirit of a departed person. That's what ghosts are. And you have to understand in scripture, each and every time Jesus went up against a demon, the demon inevitably is quaking in his boots and he's begging Jesus for mercy. Let me give you one such incident. This 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 -- that's Jesus -- got out of the boat, 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 any more -- 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. Do you think this is a scary enough dude, I mean, this guy's living in a graveyard and he's snapping chains. That's how powerful this person is. It says: 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." I mean these are literally legions of demons, they're begging Jesus for mercy. So the spirit world radically acknowledges the accuracy of his*

claim to be the Son of the Most High God. And in fact so does nature itself. I mean we all know that Jesus commanded nature itself and it instantly obeyed. Again, remember the story, the disciples are caught up in a squall so severe, they're certain they're going to drown and Jesus is asleep in the boat. They wake him up and he rebukes the storm and instantly nature itself obeys. The disciples now find themselves more terrified of the power they see in Jesus than the power of the storm. *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 when it comes to giving God glory, God himself can and must demand that the world of wisdom and creativity and demons and the world of nature itself acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ for who he truly was, the one to whom glory itself rightly belongs for accuracy's sake alone.

Secondly, acknowledging God's glory is absolutely appropriate. Once again, I've done this before, let me just use the example I used before of an elementary school teacher. I want to use her to illustrate the idea that pursuing the glory of God is simply the appropriate thing to do. I said let's say that you're a teacher of second graders and you decide you're going to take them on a field

trip to a museum out of the goodness of your own heart. This is not something that you're required to do but you think it would be a good thing for your students to experience and so you put on a fund raiser to get the money to be able to provide for the funds for the bus and for the whole trip and the whole day. And you spend the day with some chaperons overseeing the kids in the museum. The day's a complete success, everything worked out great and the kids seemed to have a wonderful time and everything goes back to normal. And after a week or so you decide as a teacher who really cares about these kids that something is just not right. And what's not right is that not a single child or parent has even thought enough to send one thank you. Now the teacher could either chalk it up to thoughtlessness and let it go or she could try another approach. And what matters for our discussion here is the teacher's motive. I mean, if the teacher's motive is to have people say wonderful things about her, what a lovely teacher she is and how much effort she put into the trip, she's just using the students to stroke her own ego and that is wrong. But if, however, she genuinely believes that it's right and proper for young people to learn to appreciate something that they've been given and to say "thank you" for it, well, 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, just states the facts, it says, by the way, nobody said "thank you"

and then she suggests that it would be a good idea for parents to encourage the kids to write thank you notes. So 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 these kind of trips. Well, now, if the teacher's motive is to rightfully get her students lined up with doing the right things, she in all likelihood is going to think to herself or out loud, do you really think I need the praise and thanksgiving of seven-year-olds to make me complete? I mean, if I were desperate for thank yous, do you think I'd seek out second graders for it? Or do you think maybe saying "thank you" is just a skill that second graders should master? Well, that's not far from what God is expressing in Psalm 50. Let me just read it to you. God says: *"Hear, O my people, and I am 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 fold. 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."

Do you hear what God is saying here? God is saying he's not demanding glory from us because of any need on his part. He's demanding it because giving him glory is absolutely appropriate for us. *Job 41* says: *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 never stem from neediness on his part. The next logical question would be well, then, what does God's call for glory stem from? And this is the heart of the matter. This is what I really want you to get out of what all of this is about. Understand, God's call for glory comes from our need to give glory rather than God's need to get glory. You see, glory is what we were designed for. Glory to God is an accurate description of what God is entitled to. Glory to God is an appropriate response for any living creature and glory to God is also a gift from God to us.

So again, we ask the question why is 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, we first have to understand that God does everything according to his standard of perfection and that means that nothing is done by God for one single set purpose such as his glory alone. There are

multiple reasons why God does everything and that includes his glory, but it also includes our benefit as well. To understand, it's very easy to get stuck in the weeds here. But I think one simple answer as to why God pursues the praise of his glory through us is because we are the ultimate beneficiaries of that glory. We are creatures designed by God to find our greatest joy and deepest pleasure through offering praise. That's just the way God designed us. That is our ultimate purpose and it is our glory. You see, the glory of a creature lies in capturing the essence of what it was designed for. We look at creatures in their glory and we recognize that they're in their glory when they're doing exactly what they were designed to do at the very peak of what that means. I mean, an eagle soaring is in its glory. And so is a great white shark on the hunt. I love to watch *Discovery Channel*, and if you watch that, Shark Week, they always have this clip of this 3500 pound 14-foot great white shark leaping high out of the water and it is glorious. In fact it's right here. I have it cued up or Isaac has cued it up, just so you can see what I'm talking about. I think. There you go. I mean you've probably seen this if you've watched this at all, but this is what I'm talking about creaturely glory. That's good enough.

You get what we're saying. See, that picture was, that was done with a high speed camera slowed down tremendously so you can see

exactly the power and the grace in this creature. Literally what you're catching here is a creature at the height of its glory and one of the shows they were talking about how they got their shot, they were towing a decoy behind a boat and they had a cameraman with his face in the water literally for hours and hours on end just trying to get the right shot. And when they finally did, everybody's fist pumping, everybody's jumping up and down and the reason why is because they knew they had caught an apex predator at the height of its glory, and it was doing precisely what it was designed to do with an incredible sense of power and grace and beauty. And the glory involved in this comes from seeing a creature doing exactly what God designed it to do. See, God's creatures oftentimes demonstrate their purpose by virtue of their design. You can look at a shark, and you can see obviously this creature is designed to swim in water. You look at an eagle and you can see that it's designed to fly and you look at cheetahs and say they're obviously designed for speed. But here's our big problem. When you look at human beings, you have to say what was he or she designed for? I mean, animals know their purpose because it's in their design. Birds fly, fish swim, hunters hunt, grazers graze. We humans, we're the only ones still wondering what were we designed for? And we wonder that because we're no longer aware of what our purpose 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. Listen to

what 1 Peter says. He says: *For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from the fathers, not of perishable things like silver or gold, but the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.* Why do you suppose Peter tells us you were redeemed from this empty way of life inherited from your fathers? I mean, you think he's just trying to be insulting or is God trying to tell us something about the emptiness of life as we know it, because you see, if anyone knows what our purpose really is, it's got to be God. And we are creatures who were designed by God for praise. And we, too, have a unique glory that's associated with us, and it's a glory far higher than any eagle or great white shark. You see, we were created to reach our highest creaturely glory as we're worshiping the God who created us. I mean God created sharks as apex predators. He created human beings as apex worshipers. And when we're offering up God praise and worship, we are fulfilling precisely what we were designed for. I mean we're like an eagle soaring or a great white shark leaping out of the water. We are doing precisely what we were designed for because we were creatures created to bring glory to 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 great white shark plays when its behavior is gloriously on display. I

mean, if you could actually sit down and ask an eagle or a shark what is the high point of your existence, my guess is it would tell you that it's when they are at their most glorious, when they are doing exactly what they were designed to do to the very fullest extent of their abilities. Would it not follow that our greatest joy, that our deepest pleasure would be in doing exactly what we were designed for? And we were designed for praise. Listen to how God puts this in *Ephesians 1:11*, it 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.* He says you and I were designed to be that. We were designed to exist to the praise of his glory. Because of that, God has 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 has to be God. I mean if God would direct our worship to anything but himself, then that in fact would be God. I mean, do you see that? Do you see how important it is? God has determined for us to pursue what is best and he just happens to occupy that position. Therefore he's determined to bless us with himself at the risk of sounding like he needs our approval. He does not. C.S. Lewis says this in the *Reflections on the Psalms*. He says: 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' (Psalm 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."

God says in *Acts 17*: *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.* See, the reason why God insists on our worship is for our sake and not his. We need to worship him far more than he has any need of our worship because we were designed for praise. C.S. Lewis brilliantly has pointed out why. This is what he says. "The most obvious fact about praise -- whether of God or anything -- strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honor. I had never noticed" -- and listen carefully here what he says -- "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?'" And here's the key. He says, "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."

You see, we're the only creatures who experience the pleasure of praise. And again, another example I've used before, I say let's say you go to a restaurant, you get the best steak you've ever tasted. One of the first things you want to do is share that experience with whoever you're with, "You've got to try this! You've got to taste this. It's incredible!" We say that because the pleasure in the steak is increased by our ability to praise it. Like I said, there's no other creature on earth that's created like that. There's none that has that capacity. You know, when my kids moved east, so did their dogs: Bella and Beanie and Eli. So let's say I brought home that very same steak and I gave it to Bella and let's say Bella gets to experience the very best steak she's ever tasted. How interested in praising that steak by sharing it with

Beanie and Eli do you think Bella is? See, dogs have no need, they have no capacity to praise something to enjoy it. That's uniquely human and that's because we alone were designed for that unique pleasure because we're designed for praise and worship.

And again, let me put it to you in terms of sport. And again, I just to go back, this is re-runs again but I'm talking about Odell Beckham's catch. Odell Beckham is a football player. He made a catch a few years back that was considered to be the best catch ever made in football, and I was watching it live. And as I was watching I started getting a host of texts on my phone, it was my kids who were from all other parts of the country who were watching the same game and they're all saying in the text very same thing. They said, "Did you see that catch?" In fact we have it right here. So you'll see what I'm speak being here. And listen to the announcers. (video playing) I want you to understand. Understand how the announcers are reacting. What the announcers are saying, they're all chiming in to praise the catch. You see, when my kids text me, they were not informing me of anything because they knew I was watching the same thing. What they were really doing was they were increasing their pleasure at seeing something glorious by praising it. That's uniquely human. I mean I've said the same thing about I'm out in the sunset in the deserts of Arizona, you see something like that all by yourself, it's great, but how much

more pleasure is if there's somebody next to you, you can say, "Did you see that?"

We are creatures designed to seek out the pleasure of praising. And far greater than any sunset or mountaintop or creature is the source of ultimate glory and that is God. You see, worshiping who God is is the most glorious thing we can do. And then consider not just who he is but what he did. I mean, the very same God of glory took on flesh and he lived a perfect life and then he offered that life up on the cross so that we could by faith claim his righteousness instead of our sin. How could he just be worthy of all praise? The simple answer to the question what is an empty life is that it's any life that doesn't have the glory of God at its center. I mean a full life is a life whose purpose is centered on realizing that glory is what we were made for and a full life is what God wants for us. I mean, 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 joyful lives, and what if the creator of human beings knew exactly what fulfilled the deepest longing of those creatures, and what if he alone knew that the answers to all of those questions was himself? Would he be wrong in pointing all these things to himself? 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 our lives at anything other than John Piper's definition of glory: "The public display of the infinite beauty and worth of God"? John Piper's created what has now become almost a Christian mantra, and it's rooted in that exact truth. He says, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." That's our purpose in praising.

So why does God seek our praise and glory? Number one, it is an absolutely accurate response to who God is. Number two, it is a profoundly appropriate response to what he has done for us. And number three, it is most certainly a gift from God to us. Let me just finish with *Ephesians 1:11*: *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.* Let's pray.

Father, I thank you that your efforts to gain glory are really efforts to give us the ability to do what we were designed to do, to give us the fullness and joy of praise, to put us exactly where we need to be in the most glorious of positions and that is to be giving glory, honor, worship, and praise to you. Father, as we are entering into the Christmastime, the time where it's somewhat safe to talk about how glorious you are, I pray that you would just

continue to enlarge our hearts, enlarge our spirits with the idea and the notion of who you are and what you've done for us. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.