

Introduction: according to the answer of the well known catechism question, our chief end, our primary purpose, is to glorify God [and enjoy Him forever].

- There are two realms or spheres I would like for us to consider. One more briefly under this heading, and the other under the next two headings.

I. **DISPLAYING GOD'S GLORY CREATIONALLY**

A. **God's Display**

- *We will be looking at several passages that tell us that God clearly displays His glory in the things He has created.*
- **Psalm 19** Two "categories" of God's glory revealed to us. "General" or "creation" revelation, and "special" or "redemptive" revelation. The necessity of the 2nd does not diminish the reality and glory of the 1st. It is necessary for God's Word to convert the soul, while at the same time there is a clear "voice" to the 1st.
- **Psalm 104** Primarily a "creation" song. v.31 "may the glory of the Lord endure forever." His glory as particularly illustrated in the creation, even in its fallen state.
- **Romans 1:19-20** God's invisible attributes (particularly His eternal power and deity) are clearly understood by the things that are seen. This is such a powerful and clear declaration, that people are held accountable for their lack of responding in worship and thankfulness to the God who is there.
- **Matthew 5:45** – God's provision of the sun and rain is a display of His love and goodness to the undeserving.
- **Acts 14:15-17** To turn to the living creating God, who though He in longsuffering has delayed universal judgment, did not leave Himself without "witness" (amarturos – a + marturos).

Application: We are encouraged by Scripture to recognize, enjoy, and glory in what God has done in creation.

- Though the world is fallen, His creation still speaks clearly. Even the reality of the bad (disease, death, suffering) and dissatisfaction with it is a witness, as it "agitates" us. The Christian has a clear answer as to why this is so. While some would want to use this to discount God's truth, it is actually a demonstration of it.
- We must be careful of not falling into Platonism (the created world is inherently evil) or Gnosticism (Truth is only abstract). Our desire isn't "escape", but an appreciation of what remains and anticipation of what is to come.
- **Romans 8:18-23** Part of the "glory that is to come" is the release of the creation from its bondage of corruption, being made once again "good".
- This also allows us to appreciate those things that are good but not perfectly good, including that which remains in those created in God's image (good in unbelievers).

B. **Our Display**

- *In these Scriptures, we will consider how we are created in the image of God, and so ourselves are to display God's glory in our works.*
- **Genesis 1:26** Fundamental to our being created in the image of God is the exercise of dominion over the earth. Think of the newly formed world in its unfallen condition. The animals, the elements, the vegetation, all to be under the oversight of the first human beings. The exercise of this dominion is seen in the care of the garden and the naming of the animals. This would also include the proper use of all of God's gifts, including music, visual arts, decoration, organization, literature, work/labor, parenting, serving others, etc.
- God reveals Himself as an exquisite Creator who displays His glory in gorgeous variety. He created the world with colors, smells, sights (instead of an odorless, colorless, black and white world). We reflect that image as we create things that are beautiful in these ways.
- **Psalm 8:6** - While being ultimately true of the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 1), this Psalm alludes to humanity's responsibility to rightly use the work of God's hands. Even after the fall, there is a glory and dignity to mankind. He is crowned with honor and glory.
- Part of understanding the full "story" of the Bible is that we are "not right" because of sin in relationship to God, to ourselves, to others, and to the creation. Part of the redemptive plan that is being worked out in the present age includes our working within the creation itself in a way that displays God's glory.
- Things are "beautiful" as opposed to "ugly" as they reflect the character of God, who is the ultimate standard. This is the problem with much of our culture, that has no ultimate standard to judge anything. Everything then has to become equally valid. Everything becomes a matter of taste or preference as opposed to right or wrong.
- So as we live, we are to be like God in living in a way truly virtuous, truly good, truly reflective of His goodness.
- **Matthew 5:13-16** The emphasis here (though not exclusive) is on our witness to the world in good works (as seen in vv.3-10). It is by our "good works" that we "glorify" our Father in Heaven. Let me say directly that this is not the ultimate end. We do desire to get to the reality of the need for Christ's atoning work to bring man back into fellowship with the righteous and Holy God. And for this there will be persecution (v.11).
- **Matthew 5:45** Jesus calls us to be like our Father in heaven in doing good even to those who are undeserving.

- Ephesians 2:10 Salvation includes not only salvation from the penalty of our sin, but also the good works God created for us to walk in beforehand. In this, we ourselves are His workmanship. This word (Gk. poiayma –) is only used elsewhere in the NT in Romans 1:20. We ourselves are a part of that display, that witness, to the majesty of God.
- We see that not only what we say, but also what we do, are a witness. We are either living lives toward others that are something beautiful, or something ugly. We can be saying beautiful and right things, and yet contradicting them by our actions and deeds.
- As these things are worked out, we then see that we are what Tolkien called “sub-creators.” We are these by nature, and all of us are creating something. That creative expression may come out in flower arrangements, homeschooling, decoration, how we dress, parenting, husbands to wives, the workshop, our yards, what we do at our work, drawing or painting, writing poems or literature, photography. But even more fundamental to this is what we ourselves are. Our words, our actions, our thoughts are all a display of something, and we ourselves are the clay being molded into something.
- The Christian life is not merely a list of “don’ts” (there are certainly those), but positive demonstration of a Christian worldview, living as being truly human in God’s world.
- This is a truly redeemed life, as opposed to a wasted life. It is doing all things for, and in a way that glorifies God. It is to be a wonderful experiment in how to bring everything under His dominion, and to ask how the most minute things in my life can glorify Him.
- Let us also not miss that God created not only what we normally think of as creation, but also human beings in general. Though man is corrupted (like the creation) by sin, he still displays in many ways to God’s glory. The reality of sin does not obliterate those reflections of God’s image (in this life).

II. DISPLAYING GOD’S GLORY REDEEMPTIVELY

- My emphasis in this message is the previous point, but we must not forget this one. If so, we will end up not moving toward that which is most important. There is a glory here, but there is a greater glory to come. There is goodness and mercy here, but there is greater goodness and mercy to come.
- The Gospel is the answer to what has happened as a result of man’s rebellion against God, His refusal to use God’s creation in God’s way. Because of transgression, there is a need for redemption. There is no true redemption merely by enjoying things, but a need to find forgiveness from the God that has created us and against whom we have sinned.
- Without in the least undermining what I’ve already said, the end and purpose of these things now is for the praise and glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. We saw in Psalm 19 that “the law of the Lord” converts the soul. There is enough revealed in God’s creation revelation to bring men to a true understanding of God’s attributes, but not how to be made right with this God once we have violated His law.
- Even in what we have seen this morning regarding the display of God’s glory creationally has been directed by His Word. Because we are fallen, and because we are corrupted in mind, we need God’s truth to transform us to think rightly about these things.
- We should not be content to stop with good works, but (as God does) follow them with God’s revealed truth to give meaning and understanding to what those good works (in their full spectrum) mean.

APPLICATION

- What is Christian art? Christian music? Christian carpentry? Christian literature? In a narrow sense, we could say that it is that which expresses God’s redemptive work. In a larger sense, we can say that it is those things which reflect the whole spectrum of God’s glory.
- Different kinds of art can reflect different aspects of God’s work. There is some which reflects specific aspects of God’s redemptive work, those things explicitly Christian. There can also be things which reflect things beautiful, orderly, noble, honorable which can be recognized by even the unbeliever who is still created in His image.
- This gives a legitimacy to things that aren’t explicitly “Christian.” It is to appreciate the common goodness in life. Even in appreciating the larger scope of things in God’s world. Sometimes in the name of being Christian, things are created that are substandard as pieces of art.
- The danger of making a false dichotomy, of seeing temporal things as evil, and unseen “spiritual” things as good. The difference between the Romantic period (like Kinkade) and the Dutch painters (light in darkness).
- What do we consider as “witnessing?” Is it only the telling of the Gospel? Do we also include those common works of goodness, kindness, and provision to those who are undeserving, even enemies. We can do this, as God does, with patient endurance looking for opportunities to give meaning and answers to the great questions.
- This is part of our becoming “truly human” truly redeemed humanity. Living in God’s world as He intended. Getting practice now to live in the redeemed creation.