

The Great Glory and the Greater Glory, p.2

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Bible Text: 1 Timothy 3:15-16
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Let's go to 1 Timothy 3. We're in 1 Timothy. Ah, as Timothy is that practical or one of the practical what we call pastoral epistles where the apostle is writing to his disciple, Timothy, about how to oversee or pastor the church, in particular Timothy's at the church in Ephesus, and for the conference, I went ahead to chapter 3, put a lot of work in developing these sessions and as I was developing them, I thought, "I'm gonna have to preach this to our folks on Sunday morning." It, it's so much of what we are. Ah, um, if you're new around here, we don't reinvent ourselves every 4, 5, 6, 8 years, we, ah, anchored down some fundamental truths about what the church is, what the church is to do, and why, ah, from the word of God, ah, decades ago and we've been working on that ever since. Now we've matured some and we sharpened some things but the main things we're about have stayed the same and here's the point: if it's God's word, it doesn't change anyway. God's word gives us some primary means and methods to function by and, ah, those never change because the Scripture never changes, and so we've been committed to those trusting that God's Spirit will enable us to be successful – now listen – as we live out God's wisdom for the church. We don't want man's wisdom in the church. Now, there's some things that we can be variable on church to church, certainly there's a lot of things, actually, but there are some main things we must do exceedingly well because the Bible is very clear about those things and in the end of it all, the reason why we do God's work God's way is for God's glory. If we come in here and we do a lot of stuff and it looks very successful and the numbers are good and the money's good, uh, but it's not done God's way, then we get some credit but God doesn't get any because it's our cleverness, our creativity, but we want to show to the world, and that's our purpose here at this church, is to show to the world God's wisdom is superior, God's way works. And by the way, it throws you in a desperate situation, it throws you on God, because if God doesn't bless it and empower it, it's going to fail but that's a great place to be. It's where we want to be. We're doing God's work, God's way, by God's power, therefore makes much of God, shows forth that his wisdom is greater than our wisdom.

Alright, to kick this thing off we went to 1 Timothy 3 and we begin in verse 15 and go through verse 16. Paul writing to Timothy says,

15 but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church, the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. 16 By

common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

So Paul said, "Now Timothy, all that I'm writing to you is to the end that you folks know how to function as God's household, as God's local church," and he says, "The church is the pillar and support of the truth. The church is the organization whereby God's truth is preserved and spread forth. God has no Plan B there. Whatever else you're involved in for God, the church should be the centerpiece because that's what God's ordained."

Then he said it's all about Jesus when he says, "great is the mystery of godliness." He means there's something that was hidden to our forefathers during the Old Testament dispensation. They saw shadows of it and figures of it but they didn't see it clearly and that was this, that God's building his true people through his Son Jesus Christ. He will come, he will die on the cross, he will bear their sins, he will be buried, he will be raised for their justification, he'll ascend back up into the glory and intercede for them, he'll intercede until the day he returns and glorifies them and unifies all of them, but it's all through him. That's the great mystery. The Jews couldn't grasp it. They thought becoming pious or right before God was a, a, a, a part of a, keeping rules or regulations or rituals and they began to be rank hypocrites and phonies and cosmetic in their religion, they'd put on outward appearance of righteousness but their hearts were wicked, but only those who are saved through Christ become the true people of God and really are the pious or devout ones. Not that their, their actions are always perfect but in Christ they stand as righteous in Jesus Christ.

Now all of this was to the great great end that, again, God's glory would be made known in the earth and that's what God's all about. Now let's talk about this in review just briefly. And by the way, we entitled this "God's Great Glory and the Greater Glory." God's great glory and the greater glory. We talked last time about some preliminaries. What do we mean by the preliminaries? That is that all that God did in the Old Testament was to the end of pointing to what he was accomplishing through Jesus who came and was unveiled and revealed in the New Testament. So God primarily glorified himself through Israel and even through Israel's foes. As, as God would work through the nation of Israel, he would command her to do certain things and honor certain rules and certain laws and certain statutes, and it showed God's superiority to the nations around them because they had not, did not have those insights, those principles, those laws. Those were given as a blessing to Israel. And then God would even use the enemies of Israel. He would enable certain armies to come against her to, to discipline her and then God would a, a chasten them or rather I should say, punish and judge them for their sins against Israel, but in the end the Bible makes it very clear all of this was so that God would be seen and God would be known. But we find out and this is, this comes to our second major point and we just began developing it and it's all we will do this morning, and that is that the great glory God was making of himself through the Old Testament was all pointing to the greater glory God would bring to himself through the church, through Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Ah, when we say to glorify and I, I told you before the word "glory" or "to glorify" is a multidimensional, multifaceted gem. There's a lot to it, but basically for our purposes, you could view glory as deeming one worthy of honor and praise, and, and, and what God wants his people from their hearts to deem him worthy of honor and praise. Now let me get to the whole point very briefly then we'll unpackage it. God right now has purposed that primarily he's gonna get his great glory through his church as we function his way, by his power, for his purposes, then he will show much of himself. He will bring great glory to himself and that's his primary way of doing it. He'll bring all of this to a climactic conclusion at the end of time when all of us are unified and glorified and we become one great glorified church and all the universe will marvel over this great work of God. Now we get to get in on it now, but the point I want to develop is that the great glory God brought to himself in the Old Testament era was just pointing to the even greater glory he's purposed to bring to himself through Christ and Christ building his church and we get to get in on that.

Mark 9:5-7 and "Peter answered said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified." This is the mount of transfiguration and God's glory was showing over them and Moses and Elijah appear and Jesus is there glorified with them before these disciples and they're terrified. Verse 7, "Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!'" Now you can't esteem anyone more than a Jew would of have esteemed Moses and Elijah, but what God is saying to them is this, "Moses and Elijah were the preliminaries, Jesus is the main event. This is... Now those were great men and great prophets but this Jesus is My beloved Son, listen to Him." It all rests on he's the greater one.

Ah, John 1:45, "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote--Jesus of Nazareth.'" We found the one that all of the Old Testament points to. Now, again, from a Jewish perspective when you said the writings of Moses, everybody perked up. "Yes, absolutely. That's our Bible. That's what we believe." And he says here, "Well, everything Moses wrote points to Jesus. He's the great One. His work is gonna be the great work of God." Moses did a great work of God, God did it through Moses, of course, but that's not to be compared with what Jesus is going to accomplish in doing this great work God the Father sent him to do.

Ah, then we looked at Hebrews 3:3, "For He," Jesus, "has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house." Jesus built Moses. Jesus, ah, Jesus is Moses' creator. He's the greater of them all.

Now we come to this conclusion that God has ordained that his purposes and his glory for both time and eternity would be centered in his Son Jesus Christ and in the church Jesus builds. The church here, the word "church," I use it a lot, it's the word "ekklesia." It literally means an assembly of called-out ones. So God is now in this business of

assembling these local churches all over the earth who one day come together in the glorification as one great church, but right now they're in local churches everywhere and we're one of those, and God's making these local churches everywhere, these called-out assemblies of people so that they might honor him and function by his wisdom and in his power to bring God the greatest glory. God now is no longer glorifying himself through a nation like he did in the Old Testament nation of Israel. Now he's calling out his assemblies of people that is made up of individuals from all nations, tongues, and tribes.

So his church can be everywhere. You see, this was a mystery and that's what 1 Timothy 3:16 means, great is the mystery of godliness. The Jews never understood that God's gonna go outside the confines of just being a nation and he's gonna form his people out of peoples of all the nations. There are assemblies of called-out ones in China and in Russia and in Canada and in Central America and South America. Every point of the earth almost has, has assemblies of called-out ones that Jesus is saving. What a mystery this was and now it's been made known. Let's keep reminding ourselves, though, that the church and for now that means the local church, this local assembly, is the centerpiece of God's purposes and God's glory for time and eternity.

A couple of verses to, to support this. Ephesians 3:21, "to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." Now notice the, the, the, the parallel here, a, the, the same plane he puts Jesus and the church. Now I'm in no way saying the church is somehow equal to Jesus but I am saying this, the church is the work of Jesus. The church is the, the bride. He's the groom. The church is the body. He's the head. The church is the building. He's the builder. So Christ and his work, the local church, and then one day the unified, glorified, universal church. Not now though. You can't function in the universal church right now. I'll talk about that a little more in a moment but right now these local churches and Jesus Christ is the pentacle of God's work and God's glory both for time and for eternity.

Ephesians 3:10-11, in order "that the manifold wisdom of God." Let me stop there for a, manifold means variegated, multifaceted wisdom of God. God's wisdom is so, it's like, it's like the most exquisitely ah, ah, chiseled gem. It has so many facets and so many wonders and glories to it. God's great manifold wisdom is seen where? Seen where? Seen where? "Might be made known through the church." Do you realize what you're a part of? Do you realize the grandeur, the majesty, the wonder of this? Not that we're special, we're wretched sinners he saved but in saving us, calling us together, giving us this book to function by as a local assembly, the Bible says if we do it right by God's power and enabling according to God's wisdom, God shows more of his multifaceted wonders and wisdom to the world than in any other way.

When I was a, a, the youth guy here three plus decades ago, um, we were kinda on a roll of, "Boy, if we could just get this, this, this, this movie star to tell, to say they love Jesus. If we just get this athletic superstar to give a testimony and say that they love Jesus, then that would really help people come to know Jesus Christ." That's the most foolish nonsense in the world, as if God's wisdom needs man's strength to do God's work. No, when we do God's work, God's way, by God's power, he builds it. There should be no

explanation for Grace Life Church other than God's putting this thing together. God makes this happen so that the multifaceted gem of God's wisdom is shined out as we come together and the Bible says as we love each other the way only Spirit regenerated people are able to love each other. Through your small groups as we care for each other, as we reprove and rebuke each other. All the ministries we're to have one to another and function the way God wants us to function should cause the community to say, "That's different." It should cause them to see something of the manifold wisdom of God.

Now in this verse, put it back up there again if you would, Tommy, Ephesians 3:10-11, that "God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. " What he's saying is there are things even the angels don't know yet. The angels had to learn through time all that God the Father was going to accomplish through God the Son. The angels didn't comprehend the church yet. They didn't comprehend God was gonna save this one, and this one, and this one, and this one, and this one, from all these different peoples, tongues, tribes and nations all over the globe and he's was gonna call them together in these local assemblies of called-out ones and they're gonna begin to learn to function according to God's word and God's wisdom and live out that wisdom so that the multifaceted glory of God would be shined. As a matter of fact, what he's saying is the world may not quite get it, they might just think we're different and often they consider us as sheep to be slaughtered, they just don't get us, but he says the angels aren't tainted by sin, when the angels see what God the Father is doing through God the Son, the angels will marvel over the great wisdom of God in doing God's greatest work through Jesus Christ building his local assemblies to function according to his truth that God gets the glory.

This is what I get up in the morning for. This is what I live for. This is the only thing that keeps you going. You can't join a church because it's got the coolest youth program. That won't keep you going. What happens when the youth program's no longer cool? You can't join a church because the pastor's funny. It's okay to have some humor, I'm not saying that's all wrong but that's not a basis. You can't join a church because they have the best stage show in town. You've gotta be locked into this is about God manifold, manifesting his manifold wisdom and I want to be a part of that. And when God saves you, there's at least the seed, the germ of a desire for you to be a part of something that God's doing so that God will be glorified because, you know, God is crazy about his own glory. Have I told you that before? God loves glorifying God because God looked around the universe and he said, "I can't find anybody else worthy of glory but Me. I'm the only One in all the universe worthy of being made much of. I'm the only One in all the universe worthy of being deemed, ah, ah, ah, worthy of honor and praise, and I'm going to bring to manifestation more of why I'm worthy of honor and praise through forming these local churches and then one day glorifying it all in one great universal church than anything else I've ever done."

You know, we marvel over things like, um, a, a, a beautiful sunset or a sunrise and that's one of the reasons why I like getting out in the woods and hunting and things, is there's just this beauty out there that you don't see unless you get out there. You only have so many sunrises to see. And God is glorified in that. It does show the glory of God but

that's not even to be compared to the wisdom and the power and the beauty and the glory God is showing forth through building his local churches. You see, all that happened through Moses and all that happened in the Old Testament was great glory but it was the preliminary. It pointed to the greater glory of what God's doing through Christ in building his church.

You know, when we have, um, wedding rehearsals, often if we have a wedding rehearsal, the, the bride will say, "You know, I'm gonna, I'm gonna sit out there in the pew while you go through the rehearsal and I'm gonna ask this lady to stand in for me and she's gonna act like she's the bride, ah, because I want to sit back there and just see how it looks and make sure everything's set up the way I want it to be." I think that's a good idea, ah, but then when the wedding day comes, she doesn't dare let the stand-in girl go up there. No, it, it, it's the real thing now. That, that, that other girl stood up there during the rehearsal but she pointed to someone else. She was a shadow, a type of someone else. On the wedding day, the real bride stands in. That's what God's saying, he's said, "Everything that happened through Moses, everything you've seen in creation, everything I did through my law, everything I did through a, Israel's enemies to manifest my glory, that was great glory but that was all the preliminaries. That was the rehearsal. Now the bride is being built. My Son's bride is being established. The local churches of God are being established and that's the great big event of all time."

Do you understand? Are you listening to me this morning? I'm gonna make you stand up and do jumping jacks if you don't listen. God, God has ordained that we are a part of his greatest work ever and he's even in his wisdom called us to work to help it along, not that he has to have our help, in his wisdom he has given us the privilege of, excuse me, getting in on it.

To show you again that one was the preliminary, the other is the fulfillment, one was great glory but the other is his greater glory, Hebrews 12:18-24 contrasting the giving of the law with Christ building his church through grace. Hebrews 12:18, "For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and to the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, 'Even if a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.' And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, 'I am full of fear and trembling.'" That was when God gave his glorious law to Moses. He said that was a great work but there's something radically different and wonderful about this new thing God's doing. Verse 22, Hebrews 12, "But you have come not to Mount Sinai but to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly," that's the church, called-out ones, the "church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven." Your citizenship is not in some physical city Jerusalem and some physical nation Israel, your citizenship is in heaven. That's a little better, isn't it? That's a little more wondrous, is it not? "And to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel." Everything about this is a greater work and more wondrous.

We looked at that verse a while ago, Ephesians 3:21, "to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." As we think about that verse, let's remind ourselves that he's writing to a local church. He's wanting to exhort this local church to be the bride she ought to be, to be the church she ought to be. Now one day there's going to be a universal church, I've talked about that, all the believers of all the ages, all gathered together when Jesus returns, all perfected, glorified and then in wondrous unification, but today we are confined to time and space history. We can only function in time and space. We're not eternal in our being right now so we can only serve God and glorify Christ in local churches, ekklesias, local congregations of called-out ones. As a matter of fact, when you look at the New Testament and you see the word "church," the original Greek word "ekklesia," about 95% of the times it clearly talks about a local assembly of believers. And let me say this to you, brothers and sisters, I had to learn this lesson myself as a young Christian. You don't get to pick your way to serve God. You don't get to pick your way to glorify God. Now God may lead you to a number of things outside of your church but they are never to supersede or take the place of what God picked for you. That's why you're called his called-out ones. You didn't pick it, he called you to it.

So God called me, Jeff Noblit, in my early Christian days when I was thinking about how much I loved Jesus and I'm gonna do this for Jesus and this for Jesus and this for Jesus, and Jesus said to me and, and I like, I like to say, you say, "Did he say it with audible voice?" No, it was louder than that. He said, "I've got a way to do My work. I've called you to something, now you get in there and be a part of it." And that's what we're all doing. Then you take that everywhere else you go. You take it to the workplace and try to be a good disciple and an influence for Christ there. If you employed by a man, try to be an influence for Christ there. If you're the employer, try to make your company an influence for Christ there. If you're a student at school, try to be an influencer for Christ there. But all that is an extension and an overflow of what God's called you to. You're his called-out ones, his ekklesia, his local church, because that's where his manifold wisdom is best glorified or best made much of.

We, there have been those through the ages who would talk about, "Well, I don't have to belong to a local church. I don't have to attend a local church. I don't have to serve in a local church. I'm part of the universal church." Well, yes you are but how do you tithe to a universal church? How do you do church discipline in a universal church? How do you meet with a universal church? Who are the elders and the deacons of the universal church? I mean, if that's the horse you ride, I'm just a member of the universal church, then you ride a mythical horse. You ride a vapor as far as service and worship and dedication and honoring God in this life is concerned.

Again, to illustrate the greater glory now is in his churches and not in the old dispensation, Revelation 5:9-10, "And they sang a new song." Wait a minute, wasn't the song of Moses good enough? The song of Moses was wonderful. Remember the song of Moses? They sang the song of Moses after they got through the Red Sea and glorified the greatness of God. That was a good song. Nothing wrong with that song, but they've got a

better song now. "They sang a new song saying, 'Worthy at thou to take the book and to break its seals.'" Why? Because in this new truth, this new revelation, this new thing that's happened, "thou wast slain, and thou didst purchase for God with thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." You're not just using a nation anymore and delivering a nation anymore, you're saving people from all types of peoples, countries, tribes, tongues from all over the world and they're becoming believers in Jesus Christ, some of them being forsaken by their families, some of them being rejected by their culture, some of them being martyred or put in prison, but all over the world God's saving his people, the ones Jesus died for and he's bringing them together from all over the world and this is a new song. It's not the song Israel could sing. This is a new song. You have to get back, you have to get to Jesus and his death and building the church to understand this new song. Verse 10, "And thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

So this song is different than the old song, it's better in every way. It's superior in every way. The old song as wonderful as it was, was but the warm-up band. Have you ever been to a concert and had a warm-up band? Well, quit going to them, most of them aren't worth going to but you know what I'm talking about. Then, then they have the main event. Well, the old song when Moses praised God for delivering them through the Red Sea, that was a great song but that was just the warm-up band. The new song, this is the real band. This is the one you, this is the prime, this is the main event.

You see, in the old song they celebrated temporal deliverance from Egypt, in the new song we celebrate eternal deliverance from sin. In the old song they celebrated deliverance from slavery to Egypt, in the new song we sing about deliverance from slavery to sin. In the old song they sang about how God brought them out of Egypt and made a physical body, a nation, in the new song we sing about how God's made us a spiritual family. In the old song they formed a nation, in the new song we celebrate Christ fashioning his bride. In the old song they functioned through a temporal priest and prophet named Moses, in the new song we sing about the one, true, eternal priest and prophet Jesus Christ. In the old song Egypt was caused to honor the Lord, in the new song when it's all done every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, not just Egypt, they all will. In the old song God dwelt among them, in the new song God dwells among us and within us. In the old song they celebrated sacrificing the lambs and putting the, the blood on the doorposts and the lintel so the death angel passed over their houses, in the new song we celebrate the blood of the Lamb that cleanses our hearts not just our homes. In the old song they feasted on unleavened bread, in the new song we feast on the bread of heaven. In every way it's a better song. In every way it's the greater work and in every way it gives God greater glory.

This is why when you get to Revelation, you start seeing phrases about a new heaven, phrases about a new earth, phrases about a new Jerusalem, because the old ones were all corrupted and polluted with wickedness but God's doing a new greater thing. There's gonna be a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem which is a, which is a symbolic statement of the church. The old Jerusalem represented the people of God but it

was full of corruption and counterfeiting, but the new Jerusalem's gonna be the purified, unified, glorified church. All the new is better than all the old.

No wonder Revelation 21:5 says, "And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And He said, 'Write, for these words are faithful and true.'" All things new. Not just new but new and greater, new and better. Now today, today we experience and we get to be involved in this new greater work of God that's right now functioning in the forming of these local ekklesias, these called-out ones gathering together all over the globe. It is fascinating and so humbling that God would desire to use us in building his ekklesias, his congregations of called-out ones. God's work through his Son of saving, sanctifying, and then one day glorifying his church, is the apex, the pinnacle of God's purposes and God's glory.

I want to end with, um, yeah, I want to end with this, John 17:1-5. It'll be on your screen. This is the high priestly prayer of Jesus as he's going to the cross. He's kinda summarizing where he's been and what everything is about. He, he, he's communing, we're, we're, we're let in on a glorious intimate communion of Jesus, God the Son, with God the Father and he's summarizing, "Father, this is what, this is what it's all been all about from, from eternity past." And he says, "These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may be glorified in thee.'" In other words, it's all about our glory. Glory the Son that the Son may be glorified in thee. Father, the hour, not, not an hour, the hour, the one pinnacle event of all the ages and eternity has come upon us, Father, and it's all to this end that we might get glory. Verse 2, "even as thou gavest Him," that's Jesus, "authority over all mankind, and to all whom thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life." That's how we're getting great glory to ourselves. You gave me the authority, all that you've given me, I'm gonna give them eternal life and in doing this work, all the universe will marvel over us. Verse 3, "And this is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Verse 4, "I have glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast sent Me to do." In other words, I've secured the called-out ones. I've gone to the cross. Now he's speaking as if it's a finished event because in his, his eternal mind it was. We know the cross historically chronologically is just ahead but he's speaking as if it's a finished work and he says I've finished the work you've sent me to do and glorified your name. This work I'm going to the cross to perform of redeeming the children so they can be all called-out and become our children forever, they'll live in time and space history on the earth in local assemblies but one day they'll be all together as ours forever. I finished that work. Why? To the end of what? I've glorified you on the earth. It's all about God's glory. In verse 5, "Now glorify thou Me together with thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Jesus is saying here in verse 5, "Now I'm gonna go to the cross, I'm gonna pay for the sins of the children, I'm gonna redeem them, I'm gonna cleanse them of their sin there, I'm gonna be buried, I'm gonna rise again, and I'm gonna go to be with You, and Father, I look so forward to Us enjoying the glory We had together before I came down here to start with."

Now here's what I'm convinced is part of this whole picture. The church right now the local churches, the local called-out assemblies, being the product of God's power and God's wisdom is the pinnacle of God's work and the pinnacle expression of God's glory for all time and eternity, and through the saving sanctifying and eventually the glorifying of the church, God's glory – now listen to this, this is what I don't want you to miss – God's glory that was beforehand known only within the Godhead, the glory that God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit knew together before Jesus came to the earth, they're gonna get, they're gonna enjoy it again when Jesus ascends back up to heaven, that glory is gonna be unveiled ultimately when the finished work of the church is done and that, the final finished work is when we're all glorified together with Christ. He's saying, "There's a great great glory which mankind cannot comprehend and that is the glory, Father, that You and I had together and one day when all My work is finished," and can I tell you he will not fail at his work, every single one of the church is converted, every single one of them is assembled together at the end time, every single one bodies resurrected, bodies purified, all glorified, all unified, then will be manifest a glory the world and the universe has never seen. It was a glory that existed only in the Godhead beforehand and you're a part of that. You're not just a part of that, you're called to get in on the work of helping develop that trusting that a sovereign God even with us very imperfect and weak vessels will still accomplish his perfect work, but there's a role for us to play. So there is that climactic crescendo of final unveiling of God's glory when he assembles his church at the end of time and glorifies her and unifies her.

So we participate in this one, great, divine scheme God has ordained for his own glory, the saving and sanctifying of his ekklesias, his called-out ones to the end that one day they will unite as one glorious bride at his return. Here's what I'm saying to you, Grace Life Church, are you listening this morning? Are you getting in on it? Are you doing what you can do? Are you faithful in your small group? Are you humble? Are you committed? Are you serving? Are you seeing, are you seeing this is bigger than Jeff Noblit's got a good structure for us? My structure doesn't matter unless it's biblical and we're gonna talk real practically about our structures that we've been using for three decades now in next Sunday morning's message, Lord willing, but it's not about my structure, it's about the glory of God through his church. This has gotta get in your bone marrow. It's gotta get down in there deep and own you. But you say, "I want to tithe to that and give offerings to that. I want to find my place in small groups. I can at least go and support and encourage my teacher." And if somebody's hurting in a small group or has a death in the family, be a part in ministering to them because as we are the body, as we're faithful in the ekklesia, God's manifold glory is going to be shown forth.

You don't think that's happening? Every week I run into this, a, a, a, talking to a man this week and he was talking about a church out in the county and he said, "I got to talking to this pastor and he asked me where my membership was and I told him Grace Life Church of the Shoals," and I forgot where the man was the pastor was originally from. He said, "Man, I've been following your pastor in that church for years. That's the most biblically sound church. I've been learning from them and understanding how to build the church biblically and, and, and that's what I'm gonna try to do here." Now multiply that by hundreds and to some degrees even thousands and God's let us get in on that so that more

and more and more and more and more of his called-out ekklesias are following his wisdom hopefully with his power so that his multifaceted glory is being seen all around.

You get to be a part of something much much bigger than yourself. That's sometimes why I like to stand by the ocean, I like to look at it and think, "Boy, it's a lot bigger than me." I remember going to the Grand Canyon with my kids. Man, it was a trip getting there. It was a grand excursion to get to the Grand Canyon and you stand there and it's, wow, there's something bigger than us. Folks, church is just not a place you go and punch your ticket so you get into heaven instead of hell. Yeah, that's wonderful. That's wonderful. It's bigger than that. Get in on it.

Unfortunately not a lot of people are thundering this stuff, not a lot of people are saying this stuff so I hate, I hate to tell you this, you'll be much more accountable at the judgment bar of God because God will say, "Your pastor told you what it was all about. Your pastor told you what you could get in on and be a part of and you coasted on me. You coasted on me. You were church lite." Now look, there are seasons and times when you can't do what you maybe did, I understand that. We're not about legalism but I'm about your heart. In your heart, grab it. Give it your best. Get in on it. God's glory is worth it and here's what you'll find out, when that's your motivation, I want to see God's church be all that it can be for God's glory, it always ends up for your good. It's better for you than anything else you can get in on. Always has been, always will be.