

The Glory of God

Exodus

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If you will join me, we will take our Bibles and we will turn to the last chapter of the book of Exodus, chapter 40. I'll be reading verses 34 through 38, the very last verses of chapter 40.

34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 36 Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. 37 But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. 38 For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

This is God's word.

Let me pray.

Father, to read that the living God of glory was with his people, that in itself is beautiful beyond words but that the God of glory would journey with his people, that really speaks to us today. So Holy Spirit, make this reality that the Lord of glory, the King of glory is journeying with his people. Make that sweet to us today. Make that more valuable than any of the fading treasures of this world. And we do ask this in the name of the King of glory. Amen.

Back in September of last year, we began our journey through the book of Exodus, the Old Testament. The Old Testament. You know, in some circles the Old Testament is out of favor. I try to keep up with over the years try to keep up with different trends, you know, in the church, and one of them was, you know, I'd hear different ones say, "Don't waste your time in the Old Testament. You've gotta preach in the New Testament. You've gotta stay there." Then I'd hear the other extreme, people would get bogged down in the Old Testament, you know, 50 sermons in the book of Zechariah or something. I've heard people say it this way, "I love the New Testament. I love the New Testament but, oh, the

Old Testament. Ah, I just get so wearied reading the Old Testament." And I understand. I mean, you read the book of Philippians, read that letter and it doesn't take very long at all. It's just full of joy, but then you read a book like Lamentations, no comparison. But there is a story line. In other words, when you pick up the Bible and you, say, read the book of Genesis, Exodus, and you might feel like, "Good grief, you know, this just seems so disjointed. There's this book, this book, this book." But I hope that you know that there is a story line that flows. In fact, I hope that you've been able to see it in the book of Exodus.

Let me walk through just a few slides that you'll see. As believers, once we were enslaved in the Egypt of our sin. Now let's just take that little phrase, for example. We've been looking at the book of Exodus and it's titled that because of the exodus, the people of God being brought out of Egyptian bondage into the wilderness on their way to the land of promise. Just like they were enslaved, the book of Exodus speaks to our situation, that we were once enslaved in the Egypt, so to speak, of our sin, but then Jesus came and set us free. He is our Passover Lamb.

You'll remember in the book of Exodus in chapter 12 we spent a Sunday looking at the Passover and looking at the lambs that were slain and the blood that was spread over the doorposts and over the lintels, and this was all to give hope for the people of God; that the death angel would pass over them because someone took their place, a lamb was slain in their place, and what we should as New Testament believers, Jesus is our Passover Lamb and shed his blood on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. But then we also see this, he also brought us through the Red Sea. We looked at that one week when God brought his people across the Red Sea safely. In Christ's burial, Jesus passed through the deep waters of death but by his resurrection he landed safe on the other side. You see, these are things that we should see emerge, not forced but emerge as we follow the story line. Then we see this, all of this signified Christian baptism. The exodus from Egypt was a forecast of an even greater exodus. In other words, the exodus in the book of Exodus is pointing to an even greater exodus that we are experiencing right now. We have been delivered from the bondage of sin. We are journeying now through our wilderness on our way to God's promised land. The exodus was a forecast of even greater exodus, deliverance from sin through the death, burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I hope, I hope that these are some things that have emerged for you from the book of Exodus because we're in the final chapter now, the very last verses of the book of Exodus. And the story began with the people enslaved and now we see these people have been brought to their God that he might dwell with them.

I want you to see something in Exodus 29. God said, "I will consecrate the tent of meeting," we'll come back to that in a moment, "and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the people of Israel," notice this, "I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them." You and I, I think, are tempted to minimize salvation to just simply, "Have you believed in Jesus?" Yup, I believe in Jesus. "Were you baptized?" Yeah, I got baptized years ago. None of this has any effect upon my life now but I've done it, I've

done those things and so I'm good to go. I really think I'm good to go should something happen. And we minimize salvation down to just that, not realizing that at the heart of God, God wants to dwell with his people. I mean, we read here in these passages this tent of meeting is otherwise known as the tabernacle. You'll see a picture of it here. God instructed Moses to build a tabernacle. Now this is a portable tent. This is gonna travel with the people. They're gonna set it up, they're gonna camp around it, and then when it's time to move on, they're gonna pack up everything and take it with them. And God said, "I'm gonna dwell, I'm gonna dwell with you. I want to dwell there. I want to be your God and you be my people." Isn't that so much bigger than just, "Hey, I prayed a prayer. I prayed a prayer and now if I die, you know, I think I'll go to heaven, Maybe I will, maybe I won't, I don't know. I think so, maybe." You know, that's so much bigger that God wants to dwell with his people. He wants you to be his people and he to be your God. So much bigger.

So Moses sets up this tabernacle on the very anniversary of Israel's exodus from Egypt, one year to the very day. And this is just a model. This is just a model, not the real thing, of course. And then we read in our text that the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Now get the picture, this is built, it's erected, it's on the anniversary of the exodus and what happens? This cloud comes over. This cloud comes over the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord fills the tabernacle. Three things today: what is the glory of God; secondly, we're gonna take a few minutes to look at our glory hunger, our glory hunger; thirdly, we're going to see how our glory hunger is satisfied.

So first, what is God's glory? If you, you know, some of you are tracking back in your mind right now, we sang some songs this morning that mentioned the glory of the Lord. Justin sang just a moment ago and I didn't know what he was going to sing, I had no idea but I heard that phrase, "the glory of the Lord." What is the glory of the Lord? We talk about it. We read about it in Scripture. We sing about it. What is the glory of the Lord? Let me say at the beginning, it's almost impossible to define it. It's at least difficult to define, almost impossible. It's like trying to define the word beauty. We know it when we see it but to put it in a definition, to say beauty is this, it's almost impossible. Same way with the glory of the Lord.

What is it? How do we finally come to some kind of conclusion? What can help us this morning to better understand because the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. What is the glory of the Lord? Well, I heard someone put it this way a few years ago. They said here's a good way to think it through and so it helped me, so I think it'll help you. Instead of starting with God's glory, let's start with his holiness. We also sang about that this morning. No accident. We sang about his holiness. Only a holy God. Now if we think about God's holiness, it will help us, I think, answer what God's glory is.

So what is God's holiness? Well, that's a little easier to define because it comes from a word that means set apart. So God is set apart from all of his creation, from all other beings. Let's say it this way, there's no one like the God of the Bible. There's no one to compare God to. We're challenged in the book of Isaiah in particular, you know, just find somebody to compare, you know, there's nothing that compares to our God, okay? Now

we're gonna look at this verse in just a minute but I want you to listen to me: the holiness of God, it's got uniqueness, he's different, no one can compare. Let's say it this way, he is in a class by himself. The God of the Bible is in a class by himself in his perfection, his greatness, his worth and his character. It cannot be, God cannot be improved upon. God will not be better next week than he is this week. God will not be better next year than he is last year. He cannot be improved upon.

Now there's a number of verses that speak about the holiness of God but I love this one because it helps explain something. Isaiah 6:3, "And one called to another," that's just the cherubims and the angels, one called out to the other one, one is calling out, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!" And they'll call back to one another, talking about the holiness of the Lord and then it says, "the whole earth is full of his," now I would expect it to say, I would expect it, maybe you, you would expect it to say, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD, the whole earth is filled with his holiness." It doesn't say that. "The whole earth is full of his glory!" Wait a minute, I thought you angels were talking about his holiness? You see, this is really helpful right here. This is really helpful. To define God's glory we start with his holiness and what do we find? God's glory is the beauty and the radiance of his holiness. The beauty, the radiance of his one-of-a-kindness, his uniqueness, his incomparability. The beauty and the radiance of all of his holiness is his glory.

The Hebrew word that we get "glory" from is "kabod." It means "weight or heaviness." In other words, God is a being with a heavy reputation, with a heavy significance. Now I want you to think with me for a minute. Some of you younger folks, you've got people that you see on television, you hear on the radio and you think, "Wow, I'd love to meet them. Man, I'd love to meet..." They're like your idols. "You know, I'd love to meet that person." Or maybe you as an adult you know someone that you admire, you think, "Boy, if I could ever meet them." And then let's say you get to meet them and they're so important, they're so weighty, and you meet them and you're almost trembling, you know, your hand is kind of trembling like, "I can't believe I'm, I'm, I'm meeting you for the first time." And you're just all out of sorts and you hardly know what to say. Just beware that their glory is but a mere pebble in comparison to the boulder of God's greater glory. That's what the Bible's teaching us when it speaks about the glory of God. We get enamored with people and singers and movie stars, the actresses and all these kind of people, get enamored with them like, "Wow, if I could just meet them!" And their glory is but a mere pebble compared to the glory of God.

Look at some verses with me, okay, as we think through what is the glory of God. Well, the heavens declare the glory of God. When you look out and you see the clouds and the beautiful sun-shiny day or at night and you see the stars and all the activity in the heavens, it's declaring, it's shouting to you, okay? It's shouting to me. But then notice this next verse, "yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor." What is that speaking of? It's speaking about God's creation of man. Out of all of creation, he crowns man with honor and glory. Then look at this one speaking of the church, "And he put all things under his feet and gave him his head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." Notice

he fills all in all. What are these verses telling us? Listen, listen carefully: the heavens, humanity and the church, that's not all but those three things are shouting to us the glory of God. The heavens are shouting to you and I as we go about our busy lives, shouting to us the glory of the Lord. Humanity, when you meet people that are different than you, they're wired differently, they look different, they are shouting the glory of the Lord to you. When you look at the church around the world, Christ filling his church, it is shouting, it is declaring the glory of the Lord.

So the obvious question would be this: why don't people see it? Why don't people see it? In fact, let's just put it this way: why is it that we, why is it that we, the people of God, get used to God and we stand sometimes unamazed at the glory of God? How do we answer that? Well, let's say you take a four year old, put them in the car and you want to teach them something about the glory of the Lord. You're driving down the highway and you see in the distance a tower. There's a large tower and you ask your four year old, "Hey, how big do you think that tower is?" "Oh, I don't know, dad. I don't know. It's big. It looks big." You say, "Well, look, just take your thumb and your finger here and just measure it. Just put it up there to the window of the car and just measure it." So he puts his little hand up there, a four year old hand and he puts it up there and he's got it into focus and he goes, "There it is, dad. It's that big. It's that big." And so you're just trying to teach him about the glory of the Lord and so you drive, you drive closer and you get closer to the tower and you get there at the tower and you get out of the car and you have your son, your four year old son, "Go over there and stand. Go and stand beside the tower." And they're going, "What?" Because now the tower is 100 times bigger than they are. Now what made the difference? You got closer and you beheld. You got closer so that you could behold.

Why is it that people don't see the glory of the Lord in creation, in humanity, in the church? Why do even believers, why do we have times where we are so, just so unamazed at the glory of God? What can fix that? Draw closer and behold. Over and over in the Scripture we're called to behold the Lord. You see, that will not be accomplished, that will not be accomplished by a mere glance, a mere nod, you know? To behold is to set the gaze of your heart upon this being, to look intently at. It's not a passing glance.

I read the other day where, an interview, an interview of, listen, an interview of regular attenders to a church. Regular attenders and the poll was like, you know, out of regular attenders, here's what regular attenders said about this subject. Then I got to the end and they defined what regular attender was, almost fell out of my chair: twice a year. I mean, gee, I thought, I thought regular attendance would be at least once a month, you know? Even that I scratch my head at, you know? Twice a year. You will not behold the glory of the Lord that way. No.

I mean, some of you are sitting here right now and you're wondering, you're wondering, I know you're wondering, "Why is he, he seems a little excited, you know? He seems a little passionate." I know, I know, I know that you're probably wondering. You're like, "Why does he get excited about this?" I mean, as long as I see God as this little little thing I've measured out, my understanding of him is this, as long as it see it that way I'm

not gonna be, I'm not gonna behold that. I'm not gonna stand in amazement to that. But when I see and behold as he is revealed in his word, how big, how mighty, how glorious, how one-of-a-kind that he is, that moves me. That moves me and I'm amazed at that. That is something big enough to capture my heart.

Or do it this way, just one other thing, one other thing, when you go home today, stand at the sink, turn the water on and you go, "I am gonna capture all of the water in the palms of my hand," and you put your palms out there. Within just a few seconds what's gonna happen? It's gonna run over and then just remember as God was describing his incomparability in the book of Isaiah he asked this, "Who has held the oceans in his hands?" You're standing there and you go, "This is just running out of my hands in a matter of seconds," but God is saying, "I am so big, I am so great, I am so mighty, who else but me can hold the waters of the ocean in my hands?" Behold. Move close and behold the glory of the Lord.

Secondly, our glory hunger. There's the glory of the Lord, only scratched the surface, forgive me, but our glory hunger. Notice this in Psalm 8:5. We looked at this a minute ago. If you want to know something about yourself, look, look, whatever well you want to go to, you can go to the well of secular society and let them tell you about yourself. You can go crawl up in their lap and they'll tell you, they'll say, "Oh, well you were made this way. And you were this and you were that." Or you can go to your Creator and let him tell you. Here's what your Creator said, "Yet you," the Creator, God, "you have made him," that's man, humanity, me and you, "a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor." Man. First off, we learn here that we are not divine supernatural beings no matter what some guru may tell you. We are not. We're a little lower than the heavenly beings, okay? But notice it says we were crowned, we were crowned with glory and honor. Man, I'm telling you, this is such a bigger picture than what the world will tell you. So what does it mean? It is a picture, it's a picture here of a king bestowing dignity and importance and significance and splendor to humanity. It is God creating humanity and saying, "Out of all my creation, boom, crown you. I'm gonna bestow upon you out of all my creation, I'm gonna bestow upon you glory and honor."

Now if you believe that, what that means is God is looking at humanity and going, at creation and going, "Very good. You are very good. Very good." What that means is this, you and I were made for glory. You were made for glory yet something went very wrong with God's very good. Instead of being content with this crowning that Adam and Eve were given, they believed the fake news of Satan. Satan came into the garden and said, "Hey, what's up?" Well, you know, things are pretty cool but we can't eat from that one tree, God said we can't eat from that. "Did God really say that? Did God really say that? Well, you know, you know he just doesn't want you to have fun. You know he just wants to measure life. You know that he's just keeping you from really really achieving your greater dreams. You can be like gods." And they believed it and they began to long for a promotion and here's what happened in Genesis 3. If you just think it was just mere disobedience, it was that but it was a lot more. That's why we read in Romans 3 and I think this is incredible, Romans 3, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." We did not live up to our crowning. We did not live up to God's very good. We fell short

of the glory of God which means that now, today our glory is tainted and fading, and since we were made for glory, we have a glory hunger. I mean, we were made for it but we fell and our glory is tainted and fading yet we still have this hunger for glory because we were made for it.

So we hunger for that very good. Imagine God coming to you and saying, "I don't care what this world says about you, very good." And Adam and Eve said, "No. We want something else." And that leaves us longing for God's very good and that is why – listen, glory hunger drives many men and women in their decisions and their actions. You sit back and you wonder, "Why did he do that? Why did he do that? Why did he destroy his life? Why did he walk away from his family? Why does this addiction consume this person? Why? What happened here?" Glory hunger. Glory hunger will drive our decisions and ultimately our actions because we're searching for ways to satisfy the glory hunger and as we do, we become glory thieves. You see, instead of living for the glory of God, we live for the glory of ourselves. We take credit for what only God could produce and we want others to worship us.

Now, see, I had some of you, some of you are sitting there going, "No, not me. I don't care anything about people worshiping me and I don't care a thing about that, preacher." Yes, you do. Yes, we do. Yes, we do. How do we know this? Because Jesus said so. John 12, look at what he said, "Nevertheless many even of the authorities believed in him but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it." In other words they, "Yeah, we believe, we really do believe but I'm not saying anything. I'm not gonna come out. I'm not gonna come out and be baptized. I'm not gonna come out and align with Jesus in a public way." Why? Do you see this, "For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God." What does that mean? It means they valued the very good pronouncement of others over that of God's. It means that I care what this world thinks about me. I care how the world sees me. I care how my friends, my coworkers, I care how they see me, how they look to me, how they admire me. I care more, I value that more than I'll ever value what God thinks. I want their very good so I'm gonna line up my life in order to get their very good and that's exactly what they were doing here in John 12 and that's what we do in our glory hunger and – listen – when we do that, we at least need to know this, that our glory is fading.

In 1 Peter, "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers and the flower falls." What is Peter talking about here? If we went to the ocean and you're standing there, already you think of the ocean and you think of wonder and grandeur and glory, you're standing there on the banks of the ocean, right on the shore there you're standing and I say to you, "I'll sell you the third wave that comes in. You want to buy it?" And of course, you'll go, "No. I can't hold onto that. We can't hold onto that." That's what Peter's talking about, you can't hold onto your life. You and I are like a cut flower, our glory is fading. All this accolades from others, all worrying to death what other people think, just feeding, feeding, feeding this bottomless pit of glory hunger, and all the while we can't hold onto it.

We must let God give us another glory and that brings me to one final point. How is our glory hunger satisfied? Our glory hunger satisfied will not be by our grasping, it'll not be by anything that you and I can reach and grab hold of. No, God must do the work of restoring. You obviously, you know, maybe you've been involved in this old home, you go in and you say to your spouse, "We can fix this thing up. We can paint it. We can fix this over here. We can change this and we will restore it to its former glory." You see, just as the glory of the Lord came down in our text, came down from heaven and filled the tabernacle, just as the glory of the Lord came down from heaven and filled the tabernacle, God's restoring work begins with his glory coming down from heaven in the person of his Son Jesus Christ. God, we fell from his glory. The glory that he crowned us with, we fell and our glory has faded. Left to ourselves we will fade but God intervenes and his glory comes down from heaven once again in the person of his Son Jesus Christ and we read this in Colossians 1, "For in him," this would be in Jesus, "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." Which means Jesus was the physical manifestation of God.

Then in John 1:14, let's see a series of verses here, "And the Word became flesh," this is Jesus, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." Hebrews 1:3, "He is the radiance," Jesus is the radiance, "of the glory of God." The very glory we're talking about, Jesus is the radiance of that. He is the physical manifestation of that. But then notice here and this ought to blow the cap right off in Hebrews 2:9, look at this, "But we see him," this is speaking of Jesus now, "who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor." Now wait a minute. Hold, hold, hold, that is a quote from Psalm 8:5 about you and me, about humanity, remember? Humanity was crowned with glory and honor but now we find the new humanity, the new humanity, the glory of God come down in the person of Jesus, we see that he is crowned with glory and honor.

What does that mean? You and I blew it. We fell from the glory of God but Jesus fulfilled the glorious destiny where we failed. I mean, that one verse right there, Hebrews 2:9, boom. Jesus came and succeeded where we failed. He came and this glorious destiny that he fulfilled is applied to everyone who will join him in faith. Have you joined him in faith? If you've joined him through faith, you are sharing in the glory of God and as we look to Jesus in faith, God is restoring us bit by bit to humanity's original glory. That's why we read in 2 Corinthians 3, what's the first word? "Beholding." Beholding. Friend, this is not some Americanized Christianity. I can say this today so I won't have to say it on Easter, alright? I will not be saying this on Easter but I can say it today. American cultural Christianity that shows up only on Easter Sunday and Christmas is not Christianity. It is not. American cultural Christianity that wraps itself in the American flag and God and country and politics and all these sorts of things, is not Gospel Christianity. It's not because none of that stuff beholds biblical Christianity, beholds and looks to Jesus and keeps its eye on Jesus and it beholds the glory of Jesus, what? And when we do, we're being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

Why do you see people who said, "I got baptized 20 years ago and I believe in Jesus," and there's absolutely no fruit in their lives to indicate that that is a reality? It's because

they are not beholding the glory of the Lord because when you are, brothers and sisters, you will be transformed, you will be changed from glory to glory. Man, I just say to you this morning, if you are wrapped up in cultural Christianity, nominal Christianity, get rid of it now. Walk away now. It will not lead to glory. It will fade.

Alright, why is this a big deal? One other thing, this leads to something far greater. Some of you sitting here this morning and you say, "Pastor Van, I've got so much trouble in my life. I know what you're saying is true and I know I ought to be thrilled about it but I've just got so much trouble. My journey is so tough right now," and I know that's the case for some of you but here's what the Bible has to say and just to put this in perspective, okay? In 2 Corinthians, you'll see this, "For this slight momentary affliction," the Bible in no way is putting down your hardship. God is not going, "Oh, you've got to be kidding me. That little little thing?" No, that's not what God's saying. He's helping you and I to put it in perspective. Whatever hardship that we're facing right now, whatever trial that we are facing, whatever pain, whatever hurt that we're dealing with is actually for the believer a slight momentary affliction and it's preparing for us an eternal, not a fading, an eternal lasting weight of glory beyond all comparison.

So in the meantime, church, let's remember this and I'll close, in the meantime we, the church, are God's temple, not some portable tent, okay? The glory of the Lord is not coming down in some kind of portable tent, it's dwelling within the church. The glory of God in Jesus dwells within us by his Spirit and just as the glory of the Lord was with the Israelites, and you notice this as we finish, he was with them throughout all their journeys and just to know, right now, you know, some of you, there's somebody important in your life and you're thinking just to know that they're with me, just to know that they're with me. I don't like this. This is terrible but just to know that you're with me. For the believer, we can look to the Lord and say, "Just to know that you're with me, that you are with me in the journey." Because here's what Jesus, the glory of the Lord embodied said in Matthew 28:20, "And behold," behold, there it is again, "And behold I am with you always to the end of the age." What does it mean for Christ's journeying presence to be with you? Does it mean enough to you to go this week and live for his glory?