

Glory to God

John 17:1-10

“I am glorified in them.” What does that mean? What does it mean for us to bring glory to Jesus? Come to think of it, what does it really mean to bring glory to anyone?

The Greek word for “glory” also forms the root of the word Doxology, that short song we sing every Sunday morning: Praise God from Whom all blessings flow. In that song, we call all Heaven and Earth to join us in praising Father, Son and Holy Ghost. To glorify God is thus to bring Him honor by praising Him.

We saw an example of this in our responsive reading this morning. There, in the throne room of Heaven, the voices of ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands and thousands of believers ring out: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.” When we sing our Doxology, we are thus not so much calling Heaven to worship, because everyone there is already doing that all the time. Instead, we are joining in a song of praise to God that has been going on throughout all eternity.

But we don’t just bring glory to someone by telling him how great and wonderful he is. We can also bring glory to a person by telling others how much that person is worthy of praise. I daresay that we will spend a great deal of time tomorrow talking about the amazing feats of the different football players in the big game tonight. They will never know what we say about them, but our words will give glory to them all the same.

But there is still another way that we can bring glory or honor to someone else, someone with whom we are in relationship. For the fact is that our own actions inevitably bring either honor or dishonor on those with whom we are closely associated. The good or the bad we do inevitably rubs off on those who are in some way connected to us.

This is obviously true where it comes to sports. The avid fans of a team share deeply in the joy of a win and the sorrow of a defeat, even though they never practiced or played with the team. And our Cadets know all too well that when one guy in a company screws up, everyone gets to enjoy the consequences.

It is also possible to share in the credit that people who are close to us receive. Just this week a church member commented on how well the CHA boys sing in worship. Whether you are

one of the singers or not, you got caught up in that bit of praise. What one member of a group does has a direct impact on everyone else.

And the closer our connection is to others, the more we share in their glory or shame. This is one reason why our parents are so proud when we do great things – in some sense, they share in our achievements. At the same time we hear their warning: “Don’t embarrass us. Don’t bring shame on the family.”

So, how close is the connection between believers and Jesus? In verses 9 and 10, He says that believers belong to the Father and that the Father has given us to Him. We belong to Jesus – you can’t get any more connected than that. So, we can bring glory to Jesus not only by what we say to Him and about Him. To the extent that people know we belong to Jesus, we can bring honor and glory to Him by the good things that we do, just as we can bring shame on His name if we fail to live in a way that is consistent with our profession of faith.

So what exactly can we do to bring honor and glory to Jesus? Verse 6 says that we are to keep His Word. “Keep” doesn’t just mean that we make sure our Bibles are safe on our shelves or even that they are in our hands all the time. No, to keep God’s Word means that we hide it in our hearts and minds, valuing and cherishing it. Moreover, keeping God’s Word means that we observe its teachings, that we do what it says.

And why should we keep God’s Word? Well, because it is God’s Word. That’s what Jesus tells us in verses 7 and 8. The words that Jesus gave His disciples, the words that they wrote down and handed down to us through the generations in the pages of Scripture, these are the very words of God. Jesus gave to the disciples the very words that He had received from the Father, the very words translated into English that we have read today.

But if we belong to Jesus we should also value and cherish and obey God’s Word because of the contents of that Word. For from Genesis to the Revelation, in one way or another, the Scriptures testify to the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

And that is what Jesus emphasizes in today’s passage. In verse 8 he says that the disciples have received God’s Word, and as a result they have believed that Jesus came forth from the Father and that the Father sent Jesus into the world.

In other words, one of the main ways that we can bring glory to Christ is by knowing and believing the truth about Him, the truth that has always been believed by all Christians in all places, the truth that the Church has summarized in the great creeds of the faith – that Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God, who was also truly a human being who was born of the Virgin Mary. Whether

we understand it or not, we believe what Jesus tells us in today's passage that, even though He was truly a man who was talking with his friends after having dinner with them, He also shared in the glory of the Father before the world began as verse 5 says.

Moreover, we believe that Jesus is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. As verse 2 says, we believe that He has authority over all flesh. We cannot bring glory to Jesus if we fall into the trap of pluralism, imagining that the claims of Christ are mere matters of opinion, or that allegiance to Christ is somehow optional. No, because we know that He sits today at the right hand of the Father and that He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, we know that He will share His glory with no other god.

And how did Jesus come to deserve all this power and glory? We confess that before He ascended into Heaven, He was crucified, dead, and buried, and then rose from the grave. As Jesus prayed the prayer that is recorded in today's passage, He was anticipating these events, which are recorded in the chapters we will study over the next few weeks.

But at the same time, as Jesus prayed this prayer, He knew that there were no more actions He Himself needed to take. Instead, He knew that the things that would take place over the next few hours – the things that Judas and the mob and the Jewish leaders and Pilate and the Roman soldiers would do – would be things that would be done to Him, not done by Him. And so in verse 4 He could say that His work was finished, even though He had not yet been crucified. And that's why only at this point in John's gospel can He ask the Father to glorify Him – because it is only through His perfect sacrifice that He has earned the right to rule and reign over all the world.

For what are the words of the song, the words that are even now ringing through the throne room of Heaven? The Lamb of God is the One Who has the authority to open the scroll of history, the authority to bring judgment on all the world precisely because He was slain, precisely because He took upon Himself the judgment due to all His people from every tribe and tongue and nation. The Lamb of God is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing because He was slain, slain so that all who trust in Him might be saved. And it is because His perfect work of salvation is finished that we will one day join in that same song around that same throne when we see the Lamb of God face to face.

But we should give praise to Christ also because of what He has given to all His people right now. We have already seen that He has spoken the Word of God to us. But more than that, verse 6 says that He has revealed God's very name to us. In the way that Jesus lived and died He has given us a window into the very heart of God, illustrating God's character in an unmistakable

way. We no longer have to wonder what God is like. The cross has clearly shown us that God is holy and righteous, unable to turn a blind eye to the sins that we commit every day. But the cross also shows us that God is loving and kind and merciful. He is a God Who is willing to take our burdens on Himself, a God Who is willing to forgive us, not because we are worthy of forgiveness, but because of the amazing grace expressed in His perfect sacrifice.

But Jesus didn't just come to tell us things about God in His Word. And He didn't just come to show us things about God in His life, death, and resurrection. He came to us so that we might know God, truly know God, so that we might have an intimate, loving relationship with Him. That, Jesus says in verse 3, is the essence of eternal life, knowing the only true God through Jesus Christ Whom He has sent. The good news is that we can experience that eternal life not just when we gather around the throne of Heaven in the life to come, but here and now, every day that we walk in the light of Christ's love and bring glory to Him through our words and our works. The good news is that eternal life lived in the presence of God starts now for all those who trust in Jesus.

But there's at least one more mystery in today's passage. For Jesus doesn't just speak of the ways in which His disciples glorify Him through our words and deeds. He also speaks of He Himself as bringing glory to the Father. And He links His glory with the glory of the Father. What does all of this mean?

We've already seen that it is the cross of Christ that most clearly displays His glory to the world. In the same way, we understand that the cross brings glory to the Father Who is willing to give up His Son for the salvation of all His people. The glory of Christ and the glory of the Father are thus inextricably linked to the suffering of the Lamb of God.

But there's another way in which Christ through the cross brings greater glory to the Father. Without the cross, there can be no salvation for any human soul. So unless Christ was glorified through His sacrifice, the song of praise in the throne room of God would have been much quieter. The angels and the cherubim and the rest of the host of heaven would still be praising God, but none of us human beings would be singing along.

And so it is in His saving work on the cross that Jesus Christ is glorified. And it is precisely by saving a world full of sinners that Jesus causes the praises of God to swell as they pour forth from ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of Christians throughout all space and time.

So let us not only glorify Jesus by our words, as we tell one another of the great things He has done in our lives. Let us not only glorify Jesus by our actions, as we treasure His Word and

put it into practice, loving God and loving other people each and every day. Let us also add our voices to those which are even now ringing out through the very halls of Heaven, joining with all the saints through all the ages as we sing His praise.