

The Glory of Christ

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 December 2017

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0 : 00] When Diane and I built our house, and actually we hired people to do that, in 1996 up on the farm, we made sure we had a security light.

! The house provided some sense of security for us while we slept.

And many times since then I have awakened at one and two and three in the morning and turned off the alarm and gone outside and been able to turn the light off.

And I stand or sit on my tractor out in the pasture looking up in the sky and I see stars and planets and a good portion of the Milky Way galaxy.

And I see the glory of the one who created the heavens in a moment in time, in a spoken word. He didn't even break into a sweat.

[2 : 27] He spoke it into existence. The night sky reminds me of Isaiah 40 26. Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these things.

Who brings out their host by number. That's the stars. That's the stars. That's the stars. He calls them all by name. By the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one is missing.

The night sky reminds me of Ephesians 3 9. God created all things through Jesus Christ.

The night sky reminds me of Colossians 1 16. For by Him, that is Christ, all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.

For by Him, that is Christ, all things were created through Him and for Him. And the night sky reminds me of Revelation 4 11. You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power.

[3 : 53] For you created all things and by your will, they exist and were created. So the night sky reminds me of the glory of Christ.

So does the day sky. Last summer, I was actually with my good friend Jimmy Ritchie, the police chief of Collinsville, here with his wife Michelle.

We were in Ardmore for the Chiefs Conference and I had bought a book, a second-hand bookstore by a pastor of another generation. And he asked a question in the book and then answered in pastor style.

He said, what are we going to be doing for eternity? Because eternity is a long time. And his answer was that we are going to pick the gold nuggets off of the glorious cross of Christ and meditate upon them forever.

And he went on to say the cross and the gospel of Christ hold inexhaustible nuggets of gold to be examined forever.

[5 : 11] Now we as believers love the word of God, but we don't often hang out in the book of Leviticus.

It can be a difficult read. It is shrouded in some mystery. And I do recommend as Christ followers spend some quality time in the 16th chapter of Leviticus.

It is there that we read about the earthly high priest and he is about to enter the holy place on the day of atonement.

And by the way, that was done in the earthly type only one day a year. And only the high priest could perform the mandated ceremony.

And it is all spelled out in scripture. And he had to do it perfectly. And it had to be so perfect.

[6 : 16] And since he is the only one that could enter in, they tied a rope on him. And if he did it imperfectly and God struck him dead, they reeled him out of there because no one could go in after him.

When he entered the holy place, the high priest took into his hands sweet incense from the golden table of incense.

He also filled a censer with fire. And that was taken from the altar of burnt offerings. And by the way, we won't develop this this morning. All that points to Christ.

Everything in Leviticus is Jesus. Everything in the Bible is Jesus. This was where in the earthly temple, atonement was made once a year for the sins of the nation.

And most significantly for us in the New Testament era, that atonement was made by the blood of an innocent animal that was shed, obviously a type of Christ.

[7 : 34] When the earthly priest entered through the veil, he put the incense that was in the censer on the fire.

And a cloud of smoke rose up and it covered the ark and the mercy seat. And it began to fill the holy place within the temple.

Now, why was he doing all that? He was presenting to God, who was there, on behalf of the people, a sweet smell from the sacrifice of propitiation.

That is the sacrifice of atonement. Which is obviously looking forward to the cross of our Lord.

He is our propitiation. Now, we have a corresponding chapter in the New Testament to Leviticus 16.

[8 : 44] And we have there the great high priest of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, praying to the Father.

It's the inner Trinitarian prayer of John 17. And we get to listen in. I say to the Monday night guys, we're the fly on the wall. We get to listen to the Lord Jesus, pray to His Father.

Why was Jesus offering this prayer in John 17? Because, like the earthly high priest, He is about to enter into the holy place.

Because the cross is mere hours away. And by the way, it was a holy place not made with human hands. This was the heavenly holy place.

We refer to this as the high priestly prayer of John 17. The words offered by our high priest, Lord Jesus, on that occasion, was magnified by the blood of His sacrifice, which would be shed upon the cross, in just a few hours from the time the prayer was offered.

[10 : 06] And just as the smoke rose in the earthly temple, when that prayer was offered by the Lord Jesus, in John 17, it filled the heavens above.

This is the place of the glorious residence of our heavenly Father. His heavenly home was filled with a cloud of incense that was the smell of the Lord's blessed intercession for His disciples, and for all who would follow Jesus down through the ages to our present day, including believers in this room right now.

That's for whom the prayer was offered. On that day and during that prayer, the Lord Jesus, the true high priest, ignited in His soul a great desire expressed to the Father.

It was that all of the benefits of His sacrifice on the cross would accrue abundantly to the church.

And it has down through the ages. Now, while the Lord expressed many desires in the upper room, the greatest of His were that His people, the church, might be with Him in order to behold His glory.

[11 : 51] That's what Tressa sang about. It is very clear that the Lord was referring to His own glory that would be seen by every true believer for eternity, forever and ever, bearing witness to the glory of the Lamb.

Only the sight of the glory of Christ, seated beside the Father, can ever truly satisfy God's people.

We are sojourning on this earth. We live our lives out in a veil of tears. We are restless until we come to Christ, whether through death or the yet future rapture, and we behold His glory.

Anyone who can be totally satisfied in this life without yearning to see the glory of Christ has not yet met Him.

They are not yet saved. In the context of John 17, that is not a soul for whom Christ prays for. He says, I do not pray for the world.

[13 : 20] He's praying for the church. The greatest privilege that a believer has is in eternity to behold the glory of Christ Jesus.

But this morning, I want to take it a step further. The greatest privilege that a believer has in this life is to behold the glory of Christ.

While we are still alive on this earth. Those who do not believe see no glory. And they will never see any glory in Christ.

There is nothing attractive about Him when He was in the incarnation, when He walked among us. That was pointed out by the prophet Isaiah and others.

He is still despised by men and women who reject Him, reject His message, mock and persecute His church.

[14 : 31] Unbelievers, such as many in the extreme liberal churches, and certainly politicians campaigning in the Bible Belt, may cry out like Judas, hail master.

But in their hearts, they've already rejected and crucified Him. As the scriptures reveal, they strip Him of His glory and deny the Lord that purchased a people by His precious blood.

They substitute in His place a false Christ, who is a very good guy, a pretty good philosopher, and He loves everybody.

And it is a Christ who makes no demands on anyone such as, follow me, believe in me, trust me with your eternal soul.

In due time, God the Father will vindicate the honor and glory of His Son from the sinful attempts by sinful men to strip Him of both His honor and His glory, and reduce Him downward to just another religious leader.

[15 : 57] One of many that came to this earth, I might add. As believers, it is both our duty and privilege to give testimony to His person and His glory.

And by doing so, we are saved, and those already saved are strengthened in their faith. It strengthens our faith.

And while nobody in this room, I am confident, needs to be reminded of this, I would like to say that Jesus is not Mohammed. Jesus is not Buddha.

Jesus is not Krishna of Hinduism. Jesus is not Abraham, nor is He Moses of Judaism. Jesus is not Joseph Smith of Mormonism or Charles Taz Russell of Jehovah Witness.

Jesus Christ is the eternal God made flesh who dwelt among us.

[17 : 03] He walked among us. In Greek, He pitched His tent with us. He tabernacled with us. And let me say to you, this Christ whom we worship this morning is coming back.

Now, I don't know if He's coming back in 5,000 years or today, but we're a lot closer today than we are 5,000 years.

And to Highland Park and my dear brothers and sisters, may I just say, look around this world. Look around what's happening in this world. Israel is in the land.

Ancient Persia, ancient Babylon, Syria, Rosh, which is Russia, and Asia Minor, which is Turkey, are threatening Israel today as we sit here.

The stage is set. As Dr. McBride just said, we need to keep short accounts with God. Because we could be standing before Him at any moment.

[18 : 13] He is coming back. And let me tell you one of the principal reasons He's coming back, and we don't think of this often. What's the last view the world has of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?

The last view the world has of Jesus is that of a criminal hanging on a cross in a Jerusalem sky covered with blood and spit and filth.

No one believer saw Him in resurrection. That's the last view the world has. And let me tell you something, if I don't get emotional.

God the Father will not permit that to be the last view the world has of Jesus Christ. He's not going to allow that to happen. They're going to behold Him as King, and they're going to cry out in the greatest revival in history, and pray to rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

The greatest privilege we have as believers is to one day behold the glory of Christ. As Tressa sang, we shall behold Him.

[19 : 38] We will see and experience His present glory in heaven, and when we get there, we're going to be like Him because we're going to see Him as He is.

But there's so much more, as I've already alluded. True believers also behold the glory of Christ while we're in this world. We behold His glory not face to face, but by faith.

By faith. The writer of Hebrews tells us that faith is the evidence of things not seen. And when this life is over, we will look upon His glory in the next one.

Beholding the glory of Christ and meditating on it in this life is part of the sanctification process by which, as believers, we are gradually being transformed into the image of Jesus.

We're becoming Christ-like. Unbelievers saw no glory in Him.

[20 : 49] They saw no glory. We look around our world today, and we see a lot of false Christs, false prophets, and false teachers.

I imagine there are many in this room that remember Jim Jones, who was a false Christ, and talked 900 people into committing suicide.

I was an FBI agent in those times, and by one phone call, I missed going down there and working on that, because I had previous experience as a homicide detective, and I missed the phone call. The FBI estimated at that time of Jim Jones there were 1,600 people in the United States with the same messianic complex, believing them to be Jesus Christ.

Believing them. And we may think, because we have false Christs and false teachers, you know, if we could go back to the early church, first century church, use them as a model.

[22 : 02] But in the early church, when the church was in its infancy, there were swarms of false leaders that rose up in the church.

The church has always been plagued by people who do not believe. And many of them rise to leadership roles, and they lead people astray.

During His earthly walk, Jesus battled false religion. And false religious leaders, we can say false religion crucified Him, physically.

Paul had to deal with the false religion of the Judaizers. John dealt with the false leaders of the Gnostics.

Jude came along and had to abandon his plans to write to us about our common salvation. And instead, he had to substitute in its place a tremendous work of 27 verses, the book of Jude, telling us, contend for the faith.

[23 : 09] Because many false teachers have come in and infiltrated the church. Paul warned the church at Ephesus there are going to be false teachers.

Peter comes along and says, false teachers are here. Jude comes along and says, they're destroying you. When you come to the church of Ephesus in Revelation, it's done.

It's over. And I've been to Asia Minor, which is Turkey. There are seven churches. There's only two that are left. There's a church in Smyrna, and there's a church in Philadelphia.

The brothers are gone. And those are the two that received no condemnation. The two twin church that have been denied from the beginning and continues to this day, people deny the Trinity and they deny the Incarnation.

People reject the very idea that God can be one, and yet there are three. Equally, people reject the idea that God would leave his heavenly home, come to this earth, and walk among us.

[24 : 16] Those two truths, though, are the foundation stone of Christianity. Anyone denying either one or both are unsaved and do not have genuine repentance and are doomed for eternity unless they repent and see the light.

Someone has estimated that true Christianity only makes up 3 to 5% of the world. There are seven billion people on this planet.

But we do know this. God, in his appointed time, will vindicate the honor and glory of Christ and rip it from foolish men who have tried to strip him.

And that's where the church comes in. That's where we come in. It is our duty to testify to the divinity of Christ.

To tell people he is God in human flesh. It is our duty to tell people he came to this earth, the Incarnation.

[25 : 29] And to glorify him. We are to tell people of his glorious attributes according to the abilities God has given us.

So how do we behold the glory of Christ in this life? Because we don't see him face to face. How do we behold that glory?

Well, we behold his glory by faith. Faith that we have in this life. He is to tell people of sight by the next.

And the central meaning of the whole message... By the way, that was all introduction. Now that my time is almost up, we're into the message. The central meaning of the message today, you can mark this down in your mental file, is to repeat what the old Puritans of old believed.

no one shall ever behold the glory of Christ in heaven who has not in some measure beheld it in this life first. The person who does not catch a glimpse of the glory of Christ in this life is unprepared and does not have grace, does not have faith to behold his glory in heaven.

[26 : 48] So this leads us to a question. How do we, as Christ followers, behold his glory in this life?

Because the scriptures are very clear. They say that no man can see God and live. You can't live. The glory of Jesus, how did he walk among us?

How did people live through that experience? In the incarnation, the glory of Christ was veiled in human flesh.

He veiled his glory in human flesh. If he hadn't, it would have had tragic consequences for those around him. And I find it interesting that that glory peeked through on occasion.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, the glorified Christ came down, joined the two prophets. Peter, James, and John were there.

[27 : 55] The Father was merciful. He knocked them out. So they wouldn't die at seeing the full glory of Christ. In the garden, when the soldiers and the Romans, the Jewish temple police and the Roman soldiers came to arrest him, and we don't know how many there were.

There may have been a half a dozen, or there may have been 6,000. We don't know. And they came to Jesus, and Jesus said, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus, they snarled, Jesus of Nazareth.

Now in your Bibles, it says, I am he, and he is in italics, because he didn't say that. He looked at those soldiers and police, and he said, I am.

You ever heard that before? I am. Same thing he said to Moses in the burning bush. The most sacred name of God in the universe, Yahweh.

And when they said, we're seeking Jesus of Nazareth, he said, I am. And they all went to the ground. However many were there, every one of them went to the ground.

[29 : 12] For a brief moment, they were in the holy presence of the Lord. And I've said before, I believe John is the favorite disciple.

I know you can't play favorites. But John was the youngest. I think the Lord took care of him. I think he made sure he had plenty to eat, camped near the fireplace.

Jesus probably woke up on a cold night, gave him his blanket, covered him up. He's described as the disciple whom Jesus loved. I used to get kind of frustrated with John saying that.

It's a little egotistic. Then one day I realized the Holy Spirit wrote that, quit being offended by that. You know, that's the Spirit of God wrote that. On Patmos, John saw the glorified Christ.

And he fell at his feet as if he were a dead man. This is the favorite disciple. Now there's a lot down through the centuries who have tried to mimic the glory of Christ.

[30 : 23] They make images of him out of stone, out of metal. They depict his suffering on the cross. They do a painting about his resurrection.

The great master artists of the world usually depict Jesus as having some type of halo of light around his head. We even see that in paintings of the baby Jesus in the manger.

By the way, the manger was a food trough. But he didn't have a halo. There was nothing about him that drew attention.

He didn't look special to anyone, save perhaps Mary who knew the circumstances and Joseph whom the angel had revealed.

Sort of reminds me when Abraham Lincoln was born and two of his older cousins, I think they were nine and eleven, lived down the road of the log cabin and they walked down. They would see this baby and there's young Abe about this big and his eleven-year-old cousin looked at him and said, well, I don't expect he'll amount to anything.

[31 : 38] Yeah, nothing, huh? Same with Jesus. Jesus gives us a glimpse of his glory when John tells us through the Spirit of Christ, we beheld his glory.

John's talking about in the life, in this life. We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Now, there's a key there. One way we see the glory in this life is through his grace and through his truth.

His word. And his word starts at Genesis 1-1 and finishes just before you get to maps in the back. That's the words of Christ.

We see his glory through the dispensing of grace and truth. We are to meditate upon his grace and upon the truth that he came to reveal us.

[32 : 54] And we see his glory through the truth of the gospel of Christ. You want to see the glory of Christ? It's in the gospel.

But this brings up another question. What is the gospel of Christ? We hear that all the time and we know it means good news and it is. But I'm wondering if we handed out paper today and said write down the gospel of Christ.

Would we be able to do that? I mean, in any depth? I've done this once before on a Sunday night. I'll do it again. Teach this to your children and to your grandchildren. This is the gospel of Christ. In accordance with the Father's good pleasure, the eternal Son who is equal with the Father and the exact representation of his nature.

[34 : 04] Willingly left the glory of heaven was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin and was born the God-man Jesus of Nazareth.

As a man, he walked on this earth in perfect obedience to the law of God. In the fullness of time, men rejected and crucified him.

on the cross, he bore man's sin, suffered God's wrath, and died in man's place.

On the third day, God raised him from the dead. The resurrection is the divine declaration that the Father has accepted his Son's death as the sacrifice for sin.

Jesus paid the penalty for man's disobedience, satisfied the demands of justice, and appeased the wrath of God. Forty days after the resurrection, the Son of God ascended into the heavens, sat down at the right hand of the Father, and was given glory, honor, and dominion over all.

[35 : 43] There, in the presence of God, he represents his people, and he makes requests on their behalf. That's his intercession ministry.

He ever lives to intercede for us. All who acknowledge their sinful, helpless state, and cast themselves upon Christ, God will fully pardon, declare righteous, and reconcile unto himself.

This is the glorious gospel of God, and of Jesus Christ, his Son. The apostles saw the glory of Christ's person and office as he revealed the gospel to them.

Christ administered grace and truth, and they saw by faith. Faith is the great gift given only to those who are received, and they receive him, and they believe on his name at the prompting and drawing of the Father.

You can read about that in John 1.12, by the way. This was the very glory that John the Baptist saw and declared, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[36 : 59] when we behold and meditate upon the glory of Christ, we are drawn more and more to him.

We enjoy contemplating his glory in this life, and we will experience full enjoyment in the next life.

By beholding his glory, we are spiritually edified, we are built up for life in this world.

Our faith grows stronger and stronger. When we behold his glory, our love for him increases. Strong faith and powerful love gives us rest, peace, hope, and satisfaction.

We seek these things diligently by beholding the glory of Christ in this life by faith as we anticipate beholding it in the next life face to face.

And by beholding the glory of Christ now, we are testifying that we are in the sanctification process by which we are being made fit for heaven.

[38 : 19] People ask me sometimes, how can you really know you're saved? And my answer is, where are you at in the sanctification process? Because when you are saved, you are justified by God in a moment in time.

And he puts you on sanctification highway. Everybody that's a believer is on sanctification highway. And we all go different speeds.

We all go different speeds. So don't be critical of someone who's lagging behind or envious of someone's way ahead. just make sure you're on that highway. Now I can assure you my message on the glory of Christ today is not even a drop in the ocean of the world.

The topics of the glory of Christ could not be exhausted in a thousand lifetimes. and we have looked ever so briefly at the glory of Christ revealed in grace and truth.

We can see and meditate upon the glory of Christ in every sentence of the gospel that I read to you just a moment ago. Take every sentence that I spoke and meditate on it.

[39 : 40] That's the glory of Christ. Every one. and you may be saying, but I didn't write all that down. You went too fast.

Well, guess what? I've got copies on the front row. That very statement I gave you, what is the glory of God? Pick up a copy before you leave.

But there's much more, more than we can do today. We see the glory of Christ in this life as he represents God the Father.

Hebrews says he is the exact representation of God the Father. You want to see the Father? Look at Christ. He and the Father are one.

You say, when I get to heaven, I'm going to see the Father. You're going to see Jesus Christ. He represents the Father on earth. He represents him in heaven. The Father is spirit. We see the glory of Christ in his humanity and in his divinity.

[40 : 50] And in that regard, you know, we call him the God-man, right? No one else has ever been or ever will be the God-man. And dare I say this, but not even the Father.

Jesus is the unique God-man. 100% God, 100% man. He had to be so, so he could relate to us and relate to the Father at the same time.

We see the glory of Christ in his humility. If I had written the Bible, I would have him born in a palace, surrounded by servants, with an inexhaustible bank account.

That's how the world would view God coming to this planet. He came in humility, born in a stable. There was manure on the floor.

There were cattle and other animals thereby. Humility. Who came to visit him? Kings? Now we can talk about the kings of the east. They came later. Who came?

[42 : 00] Shepherds. God revealed to shepherds. Shepherds were the most despised people in Israel. Why?

They smelled. They were not permitted in the synagogue. Why? They smelled. They stunk. They smelled like wet sheep. We see his glory in this life, in his humility.

We see his glory as our mediator. The one who stands between us and the Father. We see the glory of Christ as he interceded for us before the Father.

We see the glory of Christ in his exaltation. We see the glory of Christ in his union with the church. We see the glory of Christ throughout the Old Testament.

We see the glory of Christ as he gives himself to believers. We see the glory of Christ as he goes about the business of restoring all things.

[43 : 08] That's what's been going on since Genesis 3. God is riding the ship from the sinking of Genesis 3. He's still in that process.

And we see the glory of Christ as he exhorts unbelievers to believe in him, to follow him, to hear him, and to obey him.

And all of that is my drop in the ocean. If only we will look, we will see the glory of Christ everywhere we turn.

God is And if you've not seen his glory, you're not prepared to see it in the next life. You've got to see it in this life. And contemplate it and meditate on it.

When you wake up at three in the morning, think about the glory of Christ. Now, we've entered into the Christmas season. Make this the year that we center our thoughts not on trees and decorations.

[44 : 23] I'm surrounded by them. That's not criticism. Not gift exchange. Those aren't primary.

Let's center it upon the glory of the one who came to this earth and walked among us, gave his life for us.

2018 is about honest. Can you believe that? Someone's going to have a 70th birthday in January of 2018. I can't remember who that is.

It's here. In 2018, center your life upon the glory of Christ.