

Ready for Glory

Listos! Are You Ready? Pt. 1

A couple of Sundays ago, I attended an Austin FC soccer match – we lost, so pretty standard result for this year's squad. But while I was at the game, I was inspired by the team's slogan. *Listos!* It's Spanish for "ready". As in, "Are you ready? *Listos!*" And I got thinking how that would be a great name for a sermon series. And I have been wanting to spend some time focusing on a particular moment in Jesus' life – the night before his death as recorded in John's gospel. And suddenly, like when the chocolate hits the peanut butter, it all came together.

There's a verse that bothers just about everybody I know – including myself - where Jesus says in **John 14:12** "*Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and **they will do even greater things than these**, because I am going to the Father.*" "I'm sorry, Jesus, what's that you say? These 'works' you mention, let's see, healings, deliverances, food magic – forget the air fryer, Jesus is the true miracle food maker – let's see what else? Oh yeah, raising the *dead!* Christian followers like me, we're going to do *greater* things than these? Sure."

But he didn't leave us without help. First of all, Jesus says that he *has* to leave so that the Holy Spirit can come and dwell in each and every one of us. And that's the power-source to do any of these "greater things". But you do need more than the power source, you have to know how to *use* the power. When I was a kid there was a TV show called *Greatest American Hero*, about a substitute high school teacher who found an alien suit that gave him superpowers, but he lost the instruction manual. And so each episode was basically him stumbling into how to use his powers – in the comical ways that only 80's television could deliver!

But we are *not* left to figure it out on our own. Jesus Christ, just before He died, went through an intensive course of instruction with His disciples in order to prepare them to be sent out into the world. And what we're going to do this fall through the preaching is we're going to look at some of these passages from the night before his death. Now, this section starts in John 12 and goes all the way to John 17. It's the longest body of teaching that we have from Jesus in the whole Bible, and it's where He is equipping His disciples to be sent out. He's getting them *listos*. And we're going to go through it – not all of it I'm afraid - so that Jesus can get *us* ready to carry on his mission in the world.

Let's go ahead and get started. I'm going to read our text for the morning and then we'll see what we can learn from it about getting ready. We're going to be in **John 12:27–36**.

“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

30 Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. 31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” 33 He said this to show the kind of death He was going to die. 34 The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, the ‘Son of Man’ must be lifted up? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”

35 Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. 36 Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light”. When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.”

Any of you young moms ever have to *hide yourselves* from your children? You know how Jesus felt! Ok, this morning we are starting in with one of the loftiest themes in all the Scriptures – glory, the glory of God. Are you ready for glory? *Listos?* See, a voice came from heaven, “I have **glorified** it and I will **glorify** it again” – talking about the name of the Lord. This theme of glory actually bookends Jesus' teaching segment because at the very *end* of John 17 - just before he is arrested – Jesus prays to his Father and says, “I want them to see my glory. I want you to give them my glory.”

It's like, according to the Bible, there's *nothing* more important than the glory of God. After a controversial discussion with the church members of Corinth, Paul summarizes his argument with, **(1 Corinthians 10:31)** “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do it all for the glory of God**.” So Christians are told to do *everything* for the glory of God.

But that term is *so* remote to us now - *so* distant to Christians. Most Christians have *heard* of course that we should live for the glory of God - but what does that *mean*? And let me tell you how important it is. Do you want to have meaning in life? Do you have some need for deep personal change? Are you concerned about justice in the world? The key to all those things is the glory of God!

So let's start looking at it, and let's ask the text *What is the glory of God? Where do you find the glory of God predominantly, and How do you get it?* What is it? Where do you find it? How do you grasp it? **So first up, What is the Glory of God?** You notice that this voice that comes from heaven, this is God, of course, God the Father saying, "I have glorified my name, and I will glorify it again". And that's actually a summary of the history of the world.

According to the Bible, the main thing God is doing in the world - the main thing *Jesus Christ* came to earth to do - is to glorify God's name; is to show the world God's glory. Now, what is the glory of God? Look, there's more to tell you than I can tell you this morning. But when I approach a big overwhelming theme in the Bible, I like to start with a word study. Just some solid definitions to grasp hold of.

So in this case we have two words to deal with. You've got to look at the word used for 'glory' in the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures, and look at the word use for 'glory' in the New Testament, in the Greek scriptures. The Old Testament word is *kavod* and it tells us that the glory of God is of supreme importance. The New Testament word is *doxa* - from which we get our word "doxology", by the way - and it tells us that the glory of God is His absolute ultimate beauty. So, The glory of God is His supreme importance and His ultimate beauty. Let's take a moment with each of these; first of all, supreme importance.

Well, the word *kavod* literally means "weight". The Hebrew word for 'glory' means "weight, heaviness, importance." And what's interesting is we actually have an English word that operates in a similar way, we have the word "matter". So when you talk about "matter", matter can mean something solid, something substantial or something weighty, but matter can also mean what? Importance. "This matters."

And when the Bible says God is weighty, God is glorious when it talks about His *kavod*, it means He is more important than anything else in the world, and He *should* be more important than anything in your life. He *matters* the most. You see, most people who believe in God, for them God is of *some* importance. So they believe in God, and if they have trouble, they may start going to church or they may pray, but if things go well, then they don't pray so much anymore. For most people, God is of *some* importance, He's an add-on, He's a vitamin supplement, He's a spare tire.

But when you understand the glory of God, to treat God as glorious is to treat Him as of *supreme* importance. It means if you believe in the glory of God, and if you're treating Him as glorious, it means His will, His work *and* your relationship with Him are the most important things.

So let me just put it to you bluntly; Is your relationship with God the most important thing in your life? Is it the only non-negotiable? So that you would do nothing to jeopardize or weaken it? Does your life *center* on God? See? He's not an add-on. He's not out in the suburbs of your life. He's downtown in your life. Is He the center? Do you do your work, do you conduct your relationships - your marriage, your dating, your parenting - is God always central? Is God, and your relationship with God, *the* most important thing in your life? Everything else is negotiable.

See, then and only then, if you answer "yes" to those questions - or if you even say, "Oh, I *wish* it were that way" - then you've got some grasp on the glory of God. So "God is glorious" means He's of supreme importance. Secondly though, as we said, there's another word in the Bible that's used for for glory. It's the Greek word *doxa*. And whereas the Old Testament word of *kavod* means "weight or importance", the New Testament word *doxa* means "praise and wonder, luminosity, brilliance, or beauty".

And Jonathan Edwards gets at this when he says, "God is glorified not only by His glory being *seen*, but by its being *rejoiced in*." Now do you hear that? You have not grasped God's glory if you *only* see it, you also have to rejoice in it. You don't *just* see God as supremely important, but you see God as beautiful, desirable, that He attracts you. Put it this way, Edwards is saying, if you obey God, because you '*have to*' that's not really grasping

the glory of God as much as if you obey God because you *want to*.

See, if you obey God because you *have to*, you're actually not giving Him your whole self, you're giving Him your *will* - and you're basically being selfish. If you obey God because you *have to* - you say, "Well, I got to do this if I'm going to get all the blessings I want." - then you're *using* God; God's not beautiful to you, He's useful. God is not an end in itself, God is a means to an end. You're using God to get the things that you *really* rejoice in.

But to see the beauty of God is to be so attracted to Him, to obey Him *for Himself*, you love Him *for Himself*. That is, you don't say, "Well, I want to please God so I can *get* this thing or that thing", to simply *know* that you please God because He is that beautiful and you are that in love with Him, is the greatest happiness you could know.

And Edwards is right in saying that just to kind of *acknowledge* the glory of God say, "well, yep; He's the most important thing, I'm gonna have to deal with Him", and not *love* Him. In other words, to obey Him because you *have to*, not because you *want to* - to *see* the glory of God but not *rejoice* in that glory of God - is not to really glorify God. So now what does that mean? I mean, really, what does it come down to? And the answer is glad surrender and unconditional obedience.

Not just begrudging surrender – like a surly teenager, although it may start there – but glad surrender. Unconditional obedience that is *joyful*. Eric Liddell, some of you know who he was, there was a movie that told his story, called *Chariots of Fire*. He won the gold medal in the 400-yard dash in the 1924 Paris Olympics. But he went on to become a Presbyterian missionary - he was Scottish - and he went to China. And when he knew that the Japanese were going to overrun China -this in late 30s and 40s - he sent his family home to Canada, but he stayed there in order to do what God called him to do - to love people and to talk to them about Christ. And eventually he *died* in an internment camp.

Now, Liddell wrote a little book called “*Disciplines of the Christian Life*”. When people became Christians and they wanted to grow in their faith, he would ask them a set of questions. Here’s an excerpt from the book: “Here are some questions to ask yourself. If I know something to be true, am I prepared to follow it even though it is contrary to what I want, to what I have previously said or held to be true? Will I follow it even if it means loss of face, owning that I was wrong? Will I follow if it means being laughed at by friend or foe, if it means personal financial loss or some kind of hardship?”

And if you say, “Wow, that’s hard to answer!” You’re darn tootin’ it is. But Eric Liddell - who, by the way, *lived* this out - basically said, ‘If you grasp the glory

of God, then you obey Him no matter *what* it costs, no matter *how* you feel, no matter *what* the consequences, and you do it *gladly*.” Why? Because what else could be more important than pleasing Him? And what else could be more *enjoyable* than pleasing Him? And until you are able to answer those questions “yes”, you haven’t grasped the glory of God. Pretty powerful, I know.

I’ll tell you about a movie that didn’t quite get the Oscar attention that *Chariots of Fire* did. Disney came out with a movie a few years ago called *The Finest Hours*. Probably the greatest Coast Guard movie ever made – although the Kevin Costner fans are ready to fight me over *The Guardian*. But this is a true story. In the winter of 1952 off the coast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts a powerful nor’easter rises up – for us southerners, that’s essentially a hurricane in the wintertime.

And an oil tanker is sheered in half in the storm and it is sinking with its crew aboard. And the only one available in that area is a young Coast Guard sailor, played by Chris Pine. And he’s only got this little boat that holds 8 people – and there are 32 crewmen on the sinking tanker. And he’s got to get some townsfolk to agree to go out with him – and for all the world it looks like a suicide mission.

But...I think I mentioned it's a *Disney* movie? You know how those work. Miraculously they saved everyone, and the town folk all lined their cars up on the shore and shown their headlines out to sea to guide the little ship back home. Very inspiring story. But there's a moment when Chris Pine is trying to rally volunteers – and everyone is like, “there's no way” – and in his inspiring speech he says, ‘In the Coast Guard, they say you gotta go out. But they don't say you gotta come back.’

And what he meant is it's our job to go out there and rescue, it's *not* our job to survive, that's not in the job description. That's not our concern whether you survive or not, our job is to go out and rescue. See, that's what Eric Liddell was saying, ‘When you understand the glory of God, your job is to *obey*, it's not your job to survive.’ And you do it *gladly*?

How are you doing with the glory of God? You might say, “Wow! Ok, I didn't realize it was Martyrdom Sunday, today. That wasn't in the newsletter.” Now look, it's not all bad news. This is actually the key to the kind of world that we all want. It's revolutionary. We know that. St. Augustine, in his *City of God*, basically says, that the things that make for a good civilization, things like justice and fairness and mercy – these revolutionary things – only come if God is the thing that matters most to us. Because we are living for our foundations.

See, if self-fulfillment matters the most to you, you get a society of individualists and it's fragmented and divided. If *your* people matter the most to you, it tends toward racism and nationalism. If your *family* matters the most to you, it pushes you toward paternalism and patriarchy. Augustine says *only* if God matters to you more than anything else will you be able to love *all* individuals, *all* families and *all* races equally!

And it's not just culturally revolutionary, but to put God first is *personally* revolutionary. If your *work* matters to you more than anything else, you'll *crush* your family - or you will never be able to *build* a family - because work matters too much to you. But if *family* matters to you more than anything else, then you'll crush your family with your expectations because they're going to have to give you all your happiness. But Augustine says, “If God matters to you more than your family and your work, it will rightly order all your commitments and you will love them all well.”

So you say “Well, alright, I guess I should glorify God. Okay, I guess I should, you know, live for the glory of God. I want to be a hero like in the Disney movies. But what do I *do*? I mean if it's true, the grasp of the glory of God is to grasp His importance and His beauty. What do I *do*? Do I go home and just sort of wait for God to hit me with a lightning bolt? ‘Okay, Lord, I don't know, just zap me, you know, right now I don't feel like You're real enough to me, for me to live a life like that.’ It's all abstract.”

Ok, second point, **Where do you find the glory of God?** It tells you right here, two places, look. Jesus Christ says at the beginning, **v.27**, ‘*Now my soul is troubled.*’ *What should I say, ‘Father save me from **this hour**?’* What’s the “hour”? In the book of John, whenever Jesus talks about “his hour”, he’s always talking about the hour of his death. And that’s the reason why He talks about being “lifted up”, **v.32**, “*And I, when **I am lifted up** from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*” What does he mean “lifted up”? Lifted up, hoisted up, on a cross.

So Jesus says, “Father, I’m *dreading*, I’m filled with fear before my hour, before going to the cross”, *but* He says, “glorify Your name.” And the Father says, “that’s what I’m doing.” The Bible says the place to find the glory of God pre-eminently is on the Cross. Yeah, go ahead, go to the Grand Canyon, I’ve been, it’s tremendous. And when you stand there and it takes your breath away, are you sensing the glory of God? Yes you are. Because the Bible says nature can do that. **Psalms 19:1**, “*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*”

Yes, we can see the glory of God in nature and creation. But it’s *indirect*. It’s like looking at the moon – did you witness the Super Blue Moon a couple of weeks ago? Wasn’t that spectacular? So bright. But you know that the moon didn’t generate any of that light. Any light the moon puts off is just a reflection of the sun. The sun is where all the light originates.

And likewise, we can see God’s glory *reflected* in a number of places – nature, other people, art. But the Bible tells us - and it’s going to tell us over and over again - that when you look at Jesus Christ dying on the Cross, you’re looking directly at *the sun*, the full blaze of the Glory of God.

How so? Well, Jesus Christ says “my soul is troubled”. In some ways, this is John’s version of what we see in the other gospels in the garden in Gethsemane. Jesus is cringing - the word “trouble” there means just what you think it means, He’s scared. He’s trembling. He’s flinching before His death. Now, that’s interesting, because you know, *plenty* of people - men and women across history - there’s plenty of people who have gone on to their death *without* flinching, sometimes singing, certainly without this kind of dread that Jesus demonstrates.

But here’s the question. *What* would be so terrible that it would make the Son of God - the second person of the Trinity, the maker of heaven and earth, of all things seen and unseen – what would make *him* scared? Jesus Christ is trembling because he knows he’s going to be thrown into a darkness up there on that Cross, that is going to force him experience something more terrible than any conscious personal being has ever experienced or ever will again.

Now to get a handle on it - *why* he's so filled with dread and fear at this - I am going to be trying to be as sensitive as I possibly can. But let me just ask the question, what's the worst thing that can happen to a human being? I think it's to have love torn away from you. I mean one way, for example, is to have a spouse or a child die on you. That's as terrible I think as can of.

I suppose the only thing that could make it more terrible is to have that child or spouse scream at you, say "I don't want anything to do with you!" And walk out of your life and you never see them again. That might be worse. And the reason I'm trying to be as sensitive as I can is, I know there's people in this room who have experienced those things and so I need to say this with all due respect.

If there's a God the Father, and if there's God the Son - and there *is* - *their* love relationship, a *perfect* love relationship infinite from all eternity without beginning, the love that they would have had would have just been infinitely greater than even the greatest love relationship any of us have ever had. And for Jesus Christ to know he's going to be *forsaken*, that he's going to have that love *ripped* from him, that Jesus Christ knew when he went to the cross, he'd have *no hope, no love, no God* - he's going to be thrown into absolute darkness.

What was happening up on the cross? He *tells* you down here in **verse 31**, "*Now is the time for judgment on this world.*" Wait a minute, "judgment on this world"? Yeah. On the Cross, the judgment that we deserve, for *all* of the sin and evil of the human race...that fell on him. Jesus experienced that. What horror! But then he says, '*and so when I'm lifted up* - that is when I'm on the Cross and I'm experiencing the judgment and my soul is being torn to pieces.' - then he says, - '*I will draw all people to myself.*'

What? Yes. He is saying, "That's where you'll see the beauty. Anyone who looks at the cross and sees what I'm doing up there - anyone - will be *attracted.*" You say, "How can that be?" There is no greater beauty than the most beautiful being in the universe giving up His beauty for us - to save us, to love us. There's no greater glory than Jesus Christ - who had heaven's glory - to become killable, and crushable, and come to earth and lose it all *for us*. Losing his glory, losing his beauty for us is the *greatest* glory! It's the greatest beauty possible. Don't you see it?

The Grand Canyon might make you say, 'Yeah, I guess there's a God, He must be really great', but the Cross *shows* you His glory. The glory of His justice. He is so just and so righteous, He *had* to punish sin. But the glory of His love. He was so loving and so merciful, that He was willing to pay that penalty Himself.

Jesus Christ said - there's many places where he talks about that - but here's one, **John 6:38**, "*For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.*" Okay, let me translate that; Jesus Christ said, "It's my job to go rescue them, it's not my job to survive." And if you see what He's done, that will draw you. It will inspire you more than a Disney movie! Look at that, think about that, meditate on the cross...until the beauty breaks upon you, washes over you, and you start to see the glory.

So, we've seen the *what* and we've seen the *where*. And lastly, I want to be as practical as possible because it's so deep - this is nosebleed stuff, isn't it? You know, like glory of God - so ethereal. Let's bring it down. What does it really mean to live for the glory of God? Well, we said it's to treat Him as supremely important and it's to see His beauty, but we all know that that comes in stages - that as life goes on, we get more and more into His glory. We see it more, we live into it more, we become more revolutionized the way St. Augustine said you will be if you make Him the most important thing. Well, how does that happen?

Third point, How do we get the Glory of God? I would just give you two practical tips from the text; 'Don't waste your sorrows' and 'Get excited about what He could make you'.

First, Don't waste your sorrows. Look, think about this, remember verse 27, '*Now my soul is troubled.*' Okay, by the way, has anyone here got a troubled soul. You know, there's only two kinds of people in the world; there's the people whose souls are troubled *now* and people whose souls are troubled *later*, that's it. There's nobody else, all-right? So what are you supposed to do with that troubled soul?

Why don't we look at the Master? What did Jesus do with his soul? "My soul is troubled" and what does he say? "Get me out of here?" You know, "God, if you don't get me out of here, you know, I've had it; you know, we have a conditional relationship, you and me, Father, and if you let the worst to happen to me - that's what it looks like is going to happen to me - I'm walking." That's not what Jesus says. 'Now my soul is troubled and what shall I say? Father, you got to get me out of here.' That's laying down a condition. No! He says "*Father, glorify Your name.*"

If when your soul is troubled, and you want to bolt and you do not know what in the world is going on, to say "Father, I don't know why this is happening, but glorify Your name in my life. Show me more of your glory through this, show other people more of your glory through this. I don't know how." That's how you make the most of your sorrow.

And actually, by the way, this is a longer sermon but we kind of talked about it last week in the Abraham and Isaac message. Generally speaking, when your soul is troubled, it's usually because *something* that you've made too important to you - something that matters too much to you - is being threatened, and it's an opportunity for you to actually rest more in who God is and in His love, see? We get things in our lives that control us, and God wants to free us from that.

I was reading some of JRR Tolkien's correspondence recently. He exchanged letters with CS Lewis and WH Auden and all kinds of famous people. But he would also reply to regular fans who would write to ask him questions about *The Lord of The Rings* – he lived until 1973. And so there was a woman named Rhona Beare who wrote a letter to Tolkien saying, 'Hey, you know when the Ring of Power gets thrown into Mount Doom and melts, Sauron explodes? What's up with that? Why, does Sauron explode when the ring is destroyed?'

And here is Tolkien's answer, "The Ring of Sauron is only one of the various mythical treatments of the placing of one's life, or power, in some external object, which is thus exposed to capture or destruction with disastrous results to oneself." [*The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, #121). Do you get what he's saying? The ring symbolizes putting our life's essence into something external.

Here's what I think St. Augustine would say, "It's one thing to love a person, but if you make them the *most* important thing in your life, if anything goes wrong with them, you explode. Because you see God's love is not as important as that person's love. God is not as important to you as that person. And because that person is *too* important to you, it's like you created a ring. And to destroy the ring, is to destroy the maker."

Same thing happens with a career, same thing happens with your physical health, same thing happens with *anything*. Anything more important than God in your life, you are really, really, really vulnerable, because if anything goes wrong with the thing that you love the most in the world – the thing that matters the most - you'll explode. And therefore, when your soul is troubled, it's a flashing red dash light. It's an opportunity to give yourself more to God. And not to love the people around you *less*, or love your career less, but love God *more!* And so don't waste your sorrows. If your soul is troubled, say, 'Father, show me Your glory'. Get glory.'

The second thing is, Get excited about what God can make you. Realize that He's turning you into children of light. **V.36**, "*Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light*".

It's not just, by the way, that God in the end is going to *show* us His glory, He's going to *make* us glorious. (2 **Corinthians 4:17**) "*For our light and momentary troubles...*" - Paul says - "*...are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*" We don't even know what that means! But those of you here who have, in your troubled times, said "Father, glorify Your name", I can see God making you something beautiful *even here* - I see you getting deeper, I see you getting wiser, I see you getting more loving, I see you getting more humble. Who knows what it'll be like a billion years from now?

Even here you are being made "children of light." The more you build your life around God's glory, the more God is going to turn you into something glorious. Who knows what He can do? In one of her devotional books, Elizabeth Elliot, tells a story about a beggar and a king. The beggar was sitting along the road with a bowl outstretched asking for money. And then he noticed the king approaching with his whole entourage.

What a lucky day! Surely the king – who was known to be generous and kind – would fill his little bowl. But when the king looked down on the beggar, instead of giving him something, the king said, "You give *me* something." And the beggar was shocked, but it was the king and all, so he took three small grains of rice out of his bowl and gave them to the king, who smiled and went on his way.

At the end of the day, the beggar looked to see what he had received, and to his astonishment, he found in the bottom of his bowl, three grains of pure gold. And at that moment he realized what must have happened. When he gave the King the three grains of rice, the King had mysteriously replaced them with a greater gift. And he looked up and he said, "If only I had given him everything!"

You and I are the beggar...Jesus is the King. Give him everything – glad surrender, unconditional obedience - that'll turn you to pure gold.

Let's pray...