

Introduction: All sorts of words are associated with Christmas. What words do you think of? Hopefully in the midst of all those words, one of them is **glory**.

“Glory” is a word we use a lot this time of year. It appears on Christmas cards and we hear it or sing it in Christmas songs like we sang this morning. When the word “glory” is used in our Christmas songs, and even in the Bible, it usually describes events surrounding the birth of Jesus. Or it describes the response of people like the shepherds or the angels. A third way “glory” is used is to describe a person, like the Baby Jesus.

It is this third way glory is used – the attribute of glory belonging to the Lord, His glory as a person, and how that relates to Christmas, that will be our focus today.

First, let’s admit that the word “glory” is a word we don’t use very much in our everyday conversation. Yet the significance of glory in every day life to those who have put their faith in the person of Jesus both individually as well as corporately is supremely significant.

To understand this significance, we must go back to the beginning. When God created the heavens and the earth, He filled them with His glory.¹

All living things worked together in harmony. There was beauty, trust, joy, and freedom. God’s glory & splendor flooded everything with its brilliance. No suspicion, no fear, no status, no competition, no guilt . . . only the deep awareness of the infinite value of God’s creation because it manifested the glory of God.² And in the beginning, man did not question the King of Glory.

¹ Isaiah 6:3

² cf. Psalm 24

But man chose to exchange his freedom for bondage, trading wisdom for knowledge, forfeiting fulfillment for indulgence, selling contentment for cheap thrills, and the Glory departed.

Life lost its joy, work became a chore, parenting came to know pain, there was no more singing about the glory of God. Man had challenged the King of Glory - and now the glory was removed.³

But the King of Glory did not abandon His creation. Instead, He made a promise, a promise that one day, He would restore the glory that had been removed.

For several thousand years God kept that promise alive in the hearts of those who believed.

And then, in the fulness of time, the Glory returned. But instead of a great, fiery, celestial display, the glory returned as an infant, in a stable. He Who is the hope of glory, the source of joy and peace, the living Word made flesh, the Promised Glory had come!

Listen to Simeon, an older man, who is described in Scripture as “waiting for the consolation of Israel.” When he saw the infant Jesus, Simeon proclaimed in affirmation of God’s provision, . . .

*. . . my eyes have seen Your salvation
which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles
And **the glory** of Your people Israel.* Luke 2:30-32

In Jesus, God made a way to restore the relationship which disobedience had broken. God gave man the privilege once again of personally experiencing His glory.⁴

³ Genesis 3

⁴ The preceding passage beginning with “When God created . . .”, was adapted from the Christmas musical, *He Started the Whole World Singing*, by Bill & Gloria Gaither, Word Music.

Perhaps that is why the theme of glory is so prevalent in our Christmas music. We add our voices to those of the angels who announced to the shepherds in Bethlehem and sing, *Glory to God in the highest ...*

Definition:

If you look up the word “glory” in a dictionary you will see words like majestic beauty, splendor, magnificence, renown, brilliance and similar terms used to define “glory”.⁵

All these ways glory is defined, according to the Bible, find their source in God Who is the King of Glory. Glory is an attribute belonging to God and is recognized by man in his response to God. Glory is part of the very nature of God related to His holiness. One writer described God’s glory as the outward manifestation of His holiness.⁶

Here are a few ways the Bible describes God’s glory.

Creation reveals the nature of God as being glorious. The Psalmist writes, *The heavens declare the **glory of God***. Psalm 19:1

Isaiah, the prophet, describes the activity of a group of angels called seraphim he saw in a vision. These angels flew around God’s heavenly throne . . .

*And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of **His glory!**"*
Isaiah 6:3

⁵ See Dictionary.com or Merriam-Webster.com

⁶ John Piper, *What is God’s Glory?*
desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-gods-glory-2

Jeremiah, another prophet wrote how God’s activity among men reveals His glory in contrast to man’s ideas of glory.

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.
Jeremiah 9:23-24

Yet our worship and ascribing glory to God is not just because of what we see in creation or God’s activity among men. God is to receive glory simply because He is glorious!

David, the Psalmist, writes,

*Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones,
Give unto the LORD **glory** and strength.
Give unto the LORD **the glory due to His name**;
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*
Psalm 29:1-2

There’s that connection between God’s holiness and His glory again. God is glorious because He is holy, holy, holy . . . deserving of our praise and our worship – simply because of Who He is.

We also know that one of the characteristics of God’s glory is it’s brilliance. It is so bright, that we are told that in eternity future the New Jerusalem, described in Revelation 21, has

*. . . no need of the sun, or of the moon to shine in it for the **glory of God** illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.* Revelation 21:23

One final characteristic of the glory of God for today: God’s glory is unapproachable. Illustration after illustration in the Old Testament depicts the unapproachableness of God’s glory. (Exodus 33)

Only one time do we find mankind able to dwell in the very presence of God's glory without any safeguards - the Garden of Eden.

But Adam and Eve exchanged this amazing privilege for the opportunity to know experientially what God intended for them to discern spiritually.

As a result, the glory departed. They could no longer approach God's glory. And from that point on, sin entered the world.

And how is it that Paul describes the consequence of sin in terms of man's relationship to God. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* Romans 3:23

God's glory is a part of His very essence, it is wonderfully bright, yet it is fearfully unapproachable because sin has separated us from His glory.

If God's glory is unapproachable, and it is, how does man get to God? The simple, stark answer is, man, left to himself, cannot get back to God.

Yet at the very core of man-made religion is man's attempt to restore the relationship once lost through sin by human effort. And those attempts end up falling short of God's glory giving nothing of eternal value except the eternal awfulness of Hell.

But the good news is that man has NOT been left to himself. While we could not, can not, approach God – God could come to us! And in coming to us, He would restore the departed glory, once and for all.

This IS the story of Christmas!

John, in his Gospel, tells us that, *the Word* (that is, Jesus) *was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.*

John 1:14

The writer of the book of Hebrews describes Jesus as, . . . *being the brightness of His [God's] glory and the express image of His person . . .* Hebrews 1:3

In relationship to God, Jesus was, and is, God - God made flesh, incarnate, Emmanuel - God with us.

But someone might ask, "Where was the brightness and the unapproachableness of glory in Jesus?" Christ voluntarily veiled His glory so He could approach man and only once did He pull that veil back for three of His disciples to see.⁷

Jesus brought God's glory back to earth, not as a symbol or sign - not as the bright cloud over Mt. Sinai or a brilliance in the Tabernacle or Temple, but as God Himself!

Now here is the exciting part! Remember, God's glory is unapproachable through our own efforts. But God came to earth, restoring to us the opportunity of not only approaching His glory, but of appropriating it through Jesus Christ by faith!

And this glory is a *forever* glory, it is permanent, it never fades away.

Jesus - He is the hope of Glory.⁸ He and He alone is our only hope of approaching the glory of God. Jesus is the Glory of Christmas and He is our hope of glory.

If you have placed your faith in Christ alone for the gift of eternal life, Jesus Christ is your glory, the glory which places you in an eternal relationship and fellowship with God and a glory that can never be and will never be taken away. It is a part of who you are in Christ. [Illustrate what it means to be "in Christ" and other standing or positions we have because of this. Not experiential but legal. It is true whether you "feel like it or not"]

⁷ Matthew 17:2

⁸ Colossians 1:27

Is Jesus your glory this morning? If not, He can be. Then the true Glory of Christmas - Christ the hope of glory – will be yours forever and more importantly, you are His forever.

But what does that mean in terms of life here and now? Great question! That's the "so what" question.

Let's take the last few minutes here to think about a few implications of Christ in us, the Hope of Glory.

For those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, just as God's glory filled the Tabernacle in Moses generation and would later fill the Temple in Solomon's generation, so God's glory is in you, right now! It is a function of you being a new creation in Jesus Christ.

Yet there is an important distinction between how God's glory resided in the Tabernacle and Temple and how it resides in you through Christ.

God's glory in both the Tabernacle and Temple was unapproachable. Yet in Christ, the glory which once repelled anyone who approached it, now warmly embraces those in need. God's glory became approachable.

God Himself, took on flesh, and He manifested His glory - not in blinding radiance but with an authoritative voice of truth and grace filled with compassion and mercy. He came to reconcile man to Himself and restore the glory which had departed.

I would suggest then that as a believer and as members of the Body of Christ, God's glory in you, through Christ, when acted upon can display His glory in at least three ways.

UNITY

Remember Jesus' prayer, as recorded in John 17. We remember He prayed for unity - a unity reflecting the unity of the Godhead. The essential element in producing that unity is . . . God's glory.

And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one. John 17:22

There is a oneness in the Body of Christ that can not be destroyed. Yet the purpose of that organic unity is to put on display the glory of Christ so that as Christ prayed, . . . *the world may believe that You sent me.* John 17:21

Unity makes possible, then, the second display of God's glory:

MINISTRY

The opportunity to minister the unsearchable riches of Christ to a lost world and to brothers and sisters in Christ is another practical outworking of God's glory in us. Paul's expresses this thought to the Colossian believers when he writes to them that God made

“. . . known what are the riches of the glory . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Colossians 1:27

Warmth, compassion, restoration: these characterized Christ's display of glory in His ministry with others.

Through His Church, through you who have trusted Him as your Savior, He continues to work in the same way. This is how we show the world around us that God sent the Son to be the Savior. Redeeming the souls of the lost and restoring hope in the lives of the redeemed.

As we grow in our understanding of who we are in Christ, Who is the Hope of Glory, we will better display God's glory a third way.

MATURITY

Paul told the Colossian believers that the purpose of preaching the riches of this glorious message is, . . . *that we may present every man perfect (mature) in Christ Jesus.* Colossians 1:28

We mature, or take next steps, as believers when we display our understanding of what it means to have Christ in us, the hope of glory. We do that as we . . .

- Promote the unity of the Body of Christ by . . .
- Assisting the lost and fellow believers to better understand “the riches of the glory of . . . Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Unity, ministry, and maturity reflect that as individual believers and as a church, we are growing in our understanding of who we are in Christ, the hope of glory . . . a glory that is approachable, compassionate, and authentic - just as it was in Christ's life.

So a measure of how your walk with God is progressing as you take "next steps" with Jesus is to evaluate just how God's glory is being displayed in your life through acts of compassion, mercy, grace and more.

Conclusion

As you rush through this Christmas season, perhaps a thought to keep in mind is "How can I best reflect the glory of Christmas?"

- Meditate on Scripture about God's glory especially as it was displayed by Jesus Christ, Who is in you, the hope of glory.
- Pursue (or continue to pursue) deeper fellowship with Jesus and with other believers so you can better reflect the glory of Christmas.

I invite you to meditate on the truth of Christ in you, the hope of Glory, as you listen to Matt Redman sing his arrangement of *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Close with John 3:16 . . .

Go and reflect the Glory of Christmas Who is Christ in you the Hope of glory so the world may believe that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.