

Glory

The glory of God is humanity fully alive, the glory of God is humanity fully alive.

Think how often in our worship we use the word glory in our worship services? 3, 6, 9 times. I counted 17 in the Order One for Holy Communion. 17 times!

Glory to God in the highest, we praise you for your glory, in the g of G the Father x2, glory to you O Lord, heaven and earth are full of your g, to you be glory and praise for ever, blessing and honour and g and power be yours for ever and ever, for the kingdom the power and the g are yours, To the g of g the father, To live and work to your praise and g.

For the rest of our service today please pay attention to how many times the word 'glory' appears...

What is glory?

The sun on Friday morning was glorious and its effect was to lift the spirits. When I spoke to Hayley in the café, we agreed that a cold but sunny day is always better than grey and wet one. Weather binds us together unifies us, affects us, some more than others. Little wonder mankind has worshipped the sun throughout the ages. Remarkably sun isn't mentioned in the creation account in Genesis neither is the moon

since they were worshipped as gods instead of God himself. Really, no mention of sun or moon - the words are light and dark and it was these that were separated.

The book of Romans tells us that no-one can deny God since he's written this knowledge on our hearts and revealed himself in the awesome wonder of the skies. God's glory can be seen in the sky above and in the moon and stars.

Look around you and try to explain our sense of wonder and awe. Why, as some would have us believe, if everything is merely an inevitable accident bound to happen given enough time, and enough parallel universes, do we sense hope and love and wonder and beauty. If we exist merely to keep the human race going until it all ends up going pop, what then was the point of it all?

What would you say, if asked is the point of life itself?

There's nothing in it for God from a practical point of you, in fact it must have taken a lot of thought and effort on his part – it was merely for the love of creating and enjoyment, for pleasure and existence itself. Like having children, we know that its not all plain sailing but the joy is worth the anguish. You can't have one without the other.

No the point of it all, of life itself, has been described as, *'to glorify God and to enjoy him forever'*.¹ As we worship the living God and give him glory we enjoy Him and point others to God.

God is glorified when we are gracious in our dealings with one another

God is glorified when we give thanks to God despite great suffering

God is glorified when victims forgive their perpetrators and refuse to stay bitter

God is glorified by courage in the face of adversity when people put others before themselves God is glorified

when we consider others better than ourselves, God is glorified

when we see the fruits of a spirit-filled life God is glorified

love joy peace patience kindness gentleness and self-control— the gifts of the Spirit are the hallmarks of a person and a church growing spiritually, and a church that grows spiritually glorifies God, points people to God, reveals the kingdom of outrageous grace.

¹ Westminster Catechism

Yes, we have services and meetings and gatherings in order to build up one another but the test is whether or not God is glorified by who we are becoming.

Why do we create things

and organise things just because it's rewarding? Why do we strive for better instead of simply letting nature take its course? We create and order things because we are made in the image of God and that means we are able to point people to the glory of God by imitating his abundance his generosity his grace.

We take water and grapes and transform them into wine, we take grain and transform it into bread – the very finest we can achieve and the best of it should be offered to God in gratitude. When we give our best we truly understand how generous God is and it's a mark of our trust in his provision.

Another aspect of glorifying God through our character is joyfulness. There's an old Jewish saying, 'without wine there is no joy', and joy should be evident in abundance.

Could you say of someone, 'she makes me feel as if I was bathed in sunshine' – who do you know like that? We are filled by the Spirit to be full of joy and if we know Jesus and his life we too will point beyond

ourselves and glory God. A nice quote I came across was,

'There are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar'.

God is about transformation and He takes our obedience and trust and is able to do glorious things with it. Mary trusted that Jesus would deliver, the servants were obedient and witnessed the mingling of the spiritual and the secular, the sacred and the earthly. But John wants us to look beyond the miracle to what it says about God. The chief steward realised that the bride and groom were giving out fine wine at the end of the celebrations instead of at the beginning and Jesus let the credit go to them.

We have the opportunity to point people to the kingdom of God by simple random acts of kindness. Your life can glorify God; your life glorifies God as you allow the Holy Spirit to transform you into the likeness of Jesus. You could show God's abundant grace by helping with the Big Roast Dinner this February and inviting someone to come to the feast, to party with Jesus. Just giving someone Brussel sprouts, well perhaps roast potatoes, will speak volumes of a generous God

The book of Revelation tells us that God's glory will be enough for us to be guided through eternity, I'll miss the sun and moon and the oceans, but there's something about glory that is even bigger amazing uplifting stunning filling up satisfying than anything else we will ever know.

Think for a moment of the very best aspects of your life, when you have been happiest, most fulfilled most satisfied most rewarded felt most loved – all of it pales into insignificance compared to the glory of God.

Who's the most generous person you have ever known – do they stick in your mind? What's the kindest thing ever done for you? Do you recall it, repeat it, remind yourself of it.

As a child I wanted a clarinet really badly and agreed with my uncle Jack that if I could save up half the money he would pay the rest. It took me forever to even get near the £70 I had to save and in time I started to get despondent, fearing I'd never raise the full amount. One afternoon he sat me down and said he'd noticed how hard I'd tried and that he was going to pay the whole of the outstanding amount. How do you think I felt then and still feel not just about his generosity but about him, the giver the one who was kind beyond by imagining? My Uncle Jack loved nature

and could sit contentedly in the garden listening to the birds, watching the nature all around him and humming along to the rhythm of the world around him, glorifying in the beauty resting in the moment, being in the present – you couldn't be stressed out for long, in his company there was a stillness and a peace, there was contentment. How much more is available to us if we glory in God's presence and enjoy Him forever. I hope you've known someone like that?

[The opposite of glory? Well, its shame](#)

Shame seems to dominate the news doesn't it and sadly people seem to relish it, why do we like it when people fall from grace – does it make us feel better about ourselves. At least I'm better than that and we get all self-righteous.

'He's not exactly covered himself in glory' - what we mean is that someone has really messed up. What does the opposite mean then if we say, 'He has covered himself with glory' – where do you hear that said except in relation to God?

Scoring a goal might be a glorious moment but it is fleeting. Writing music that stirs the hearts of a generation might move people to tears. Brilliant actors come and go. But, through all the changing times and seasons, there is glory that stands forever, outside of

time, regardless of the shifting sands of cultural morality and temporal fashion.

John's gospel today points us to outrageous grace, to abundance, to generosity, to compassion, to paying attention to the small detail of a humble wedding in an impoverished village.

May we bathe in the warmth and sunlight of God's generosity, compassion, patience and mercy. As we spend time with Him this year, may His spirit fill us afresh with a sense of awe and wonder.

Jesus humbly met the need of a young bride and bridegroom. His first miracle points the way for all of us to the glory of God. May we see the glorious creativity and wonder of God in this life all around us and may we reflect that glory in our words and deeds.

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Amen