

Return To Glory Part 3

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Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

[0 : 00] We are in John 17, as you know, and this is one of the high holy places in the scripture, you might say. Because we are eavesdropping on the Lord of glory as he prays.

You learn a lot about people when they pray. We learn a lot about Jesus by listening to him pray. And we see him in ways that you may not understand at first, but man, it's glorious. So we are once again looking at these first five verses. The word of the Lord is in John 17, 1 to 5. Now hear this word as it is read to you. When Jesus has spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Now, glorify your son that your son may glorify you. Since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

[1 : 09] And this is eternal life. That they may know you. The only true God. And Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth.

Having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence. With the glory that I had with you. Before the world existed. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. That is the word of the Lord. Thank you. God. Please be seated. Did you ever think that what it must have been like for the Son of God to live among us away from his rightful glory? In this prayer, our Lord yearns for the glory. How his righteous soul must have been vexed day after day.

He who knew no sin ever was wading deep in it among us. How his holy heart was broken day after day as he saw how sin firsthand, saw how sin touched, how sin had caused so much pain and suffering in his world.

[2 : 51] How he had to endure attacks from evil men against his righteousness. Now, I want you to keep in mind, he's not merely uncomfortable.

He also knows that what the world needs is to see his glory. That any hope for humanity is found in people beholding him as he truly is in matchless heavenly splendor.

With all heaven, all the angels of all types bowing down before him. That's what we need.

That's our salvation to behold that glory. And so he's yearning for that for us. He even crowed out once. In the face of our lack of faith, oh, faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you?

How long am I to bear with you? That's Matthew 17, 17. He cries out. He feels the angst.

[4 : 09] But before the glory, he must endure the most egregious affront to his holiness and person, and that is the cross. But so be it.

For the cross, for our salvation, is the path to his return to glory. The cross, that demonic instrument of torture, death, shame, and curse, will actually display the glory of Christ's righteousness and love.

Wow. Glory is the heart of our Lord's mission. Glory is the heart of this prayer.

But what we must understand is that Christ's glory is also our life. Glory is for us too.

His glory. Our life. We began looking at the means of glory in his mission. That is, how does he accomplish glory in this mission?

[5 : 30] How does he do it? First of all, he is, he is, um, he talks about how he talks to prayer how God is glorified in that mission, and he uses now his, Christ uses his sovereign authority over all humanity to give eternal life to those the Father has given him.

This is one way, and a primary way, he accomplishes the glory. He defined it, eternal life for us, remember? He defined it as a relationship with the one true God, the Father, and himself.

Now let's continue with this theme of knowing God, because that's what he's praying, that we would understand and walk in, as we live this life, that we would know him and the Father.

I mentioned this briefly last week, that to have this eternal life is to know that there's only one true God. That's what he said.

He prayed for us that we would know, he could have just said, I pray that they would know you, Father. But he didn't do that. He prayed that we would know him, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent.

[6 : 53] Christianity is monotheistic. That is, we believe there's only one God. The Trinity is not three gods in one. The Trinity is three persons in the one God.

Don't ask me to explain that fully. If I could, I'd be God. And you wouldn't want that. Woo-hoo! Anyway.

I love what I... Oh, y'all laughing too hard on that one. I love what Isaiah says in Isaiah chapter 43, talking about this God, this one true God.

This is God speaking through the prophet. You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no God was formed, nor shall there be anyone after me. I am the Lord, and besides me there is no Savior.

[8 : 02] I declared and saved and proclaimed, where there was no strange God among you, and you are my witnesses, declares the Lord, that I am God.

Plain, end of story. I am God. There is no other. I know that that's hard, because today there are many things called gods, just as in the ancient world, and there are many things worshipped as gods without calling them such.

There are deities that we have created with our hands and our minds.

We don't bow down to statues in general, though there are places where this is done. Sandy and I were in Bali some years ago, and I'll never forget, seeing the statues of the gods, and many of them were hideous, scary looking.

And the people were making shrines to them. We were walking down the street. We were shopping, and you have a shop, a shop, and then a little shrine to a god. Then next, shop, shop, and it was all the way down the street.

[9 : 20] We got in a taxi, and we were riding around, and he had a little statue on his dashboard. He even said to us, I don't really believe in it, but just in case. But see, that's easy.

See, that's easy to call that an idol. But the idols that we worship, especially in this country, are not so obvious. Tim Kellen's definition of idolatry is always helpful to me.

An idol is anything more important than God to your heart, imagination, or life. Whatever controls your heart dictates your behavior, or is the master slash lord of your life and happiness.

Anything so central and essential to your life that should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living. An idol can be good things in your life that become ultimate things.

Ultimate meaning the total source of your happiness. So idols can be all kinds of things, and all kinds of people.

[10 : 32] Forget American idol, you know. But how many times we are preoccupied with Taylor Swift and Beyonce. We create all kinds of idols of people that we admire, people that have what we want to have, people who are living the life that we want to live, or wish we could live.

You know, we create idols of them. We create idols of ambition, wanting to get ahead, wanting to get that promotion, wanting to have enough money for.

For. Wanting to have enough, wanting to have that place, or that person. And we will do anything to get that person.

And without that person, we are full of jealousy and anger, and we do things and say things we should never do and say, because we must have that person.

Huh. You see, what happens is, we begin, we are, an idol is somewhere where we find our identity. An idol is where we say, this is who I am.

[11 : 51] And without this, who am I? What am I? Knowing God, in a growing way, defeats idols.

Jeremiah 9, 23 and 24, thus says the Lord, let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him boast, boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these things I delight, declares the Lord. You see, idols are things we boast in, we brag about, something that is that important to you, that you find your life in, believe me, you talk about it. And you guard it, like Gollum guarding the ring. my precious. We all got a precious. And to be honest, we got more than one.

And the Christian life, as you walk with Jesus, as you are knowing God, God is pulling back the layers of your idolatries. To set you free.

[13 : 17] Because idols will kill you. They always demand more, than you really, down deep, want to give. Oh, you'll give, you'll give to your idols, you'll worship your idols, you'll give, you'll sacrifice, but at some point, you want to say, hold it, and the idol won't let you go.

Idolatry is slavery. Thank you, pastor. Now, here's the thing about idols, though. They can't be confessed away. In other words, you can't just say, I have an idol.

My idol is my girlfriend. My idol is ambition. You just can't confess it. That's a good place to start, though. Don't get me wrong.

But it's got, it's more than that. You can't will away an idol. I will not do this again. I will not give myself that.

I will not see myself that way. I will not trust in it. I mean, the will is important, don't get me wrong, but you can't, it can't be willed away. Because your will is not strong enough.

[14 : 26] Idols are bad boys, man. Because they're demonic. The desire, the idea is demonic, and Satan is very strong. Idols must be replaced.

They must be replaced with the grace, love, and mercy of God revealed in Jesus. The only way to replace an idol, the only way to get rid of an idol is to replace it with the one true God.

Your continual vision of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ will overwhelm your desire for the lesser gods.

That's why Jesus wants us to know him and the Father. That's what eternal life is. Eternal life is walking with God in greater freedom. Freedom.

freedom. Well, you're not controlled by outside forces, but you're controlled by the living God. His love constrains you. His love compels you.

[15 : 27] His love controls you. Not these things that we have made that enslave all of humanity. You must know the one true God and continue growing and knowing and being open to him.

Now here's the thing. This relational nature of eternal life comes out in this deep knowledge of God, listen, that moves your intellect, your emotions, and your will.

Knowing God is a thing of the heart. It consumes you. The heart is the center of our being. And Jesus wants our hearts, not merely our lips.

He said, these people honor me with their lips, yet their hearts are far from me. You see, and we have to beware of that.

It's easy to sit in church and we love to sing and people love to sing. Listen, in singing, we enter into the presence of God.

[16 : 31] And that's why so many churches sing so many songs. We just sing, sing, sing, sing. Why? Because we're seeking to get there. Listen, you can sing one song and be right in the presence of God.

Why? Because your heart's engaged. Your heart's engaged. You've met God. You've connected to the eternal one.

Your mind is exploding. The categories are exploding. You're thinking deep thoughts about Him and your emotions are moved now.

You can't help it. You're singing louder maybe. Maybe you're crying. But whatever it is, your joy is evident in your being.

And when that happens, now your will says, I will follow you. And we make decisions. In that moment, we make decisions to deal with the idols in our life.

[17 : 35] We make decisions to go with Jesus. Even though the road may be hard. Even though the choice may make other people think, what are you doing? But you know you've heard from God because it's written and He's spoken.

People who know their God, the Bible says, do exploits. We are moved.

We can't help but go. We can't help but do because we're walking with Jesus. This intimacy is more than facts, but not less than facts.

God has revealed Himself so that we don't get to make up His attributes and purposes to suit ourselves. We don't create God. He has created us.

So what we must do is we must believe what He says about Himself. And then we enter into a relationship with Him based upon what He says about Himself.

[18:36] But that's what we do with everybody. That's natural. That's being social. That's how we get to know anybody. In order to know someone better, they have to tell you about themselves.

Ladies, you're dating a guy who won't tell you about himself. Run. Brothers, you're dating a girl who won't tell you about herself, her background, who she is. Run. We commune.

We talk. Where are you from? Who are your people? What makes you tick? That's how you get to know. And they tell you. And here's what you do. When someone tells you about themselves, here's what you do.

You always do it. You act upon it. You act upon what they tell you. You ever go, my wife and I used to go to this Italian restaurant.

We would, I think it's in Orlando. We would go to Orlando. Maggiano's? That's in Orlando? Right there. Now Maggiano's, you want primo Italian food? Maggiano's. So you're dating somebody and they say to you, I love Italian food.

[19:45] Woo, I just, man, look, I just, Italian food. You go, really? That is so great. So for their birthday, you take them to Maggiano's. It's going to cost you a few bucks, but you know, you saved up for it because you love them, you care about them, you care about them.

Take them to Maggiano's and you get there and they bring out the menu and it's very posh, you know, tablecloths and napkins and everything. And they sit there looking at the menu and they take a long time looking at the menu and then the waiter comes back and they say, I have a hamburger with fries and a Diet Coke because I'm trying to be healthy.

Now what, hold it. They told you they love Italian food and they order a hamburger and a Diet Coke? They lied. We act on what people say about themselves and that's how we get to know them better.

That's how we enter into greater intimacy with them. One of the great statements of God's self-revelation that's repeated over again in the Old Testament comes from Exodus 34.

Verse 5 and 7. This is where God, when Moses asked God, show me your glory. Oh my goodness. We'll come back to that one. But here's what God says. He descends.

[21:00] The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

But who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generations? Listen, God is revealing himself.

When God reveals himself, he's revealing his glory. To know God is to know his glory. This is who God is.

Look at what, let me, if you get us to read that again. This is who God is. The supreme being of mercy, grace, patience, faithful love, forgiveness, and justice. He wants you to experience him as such.

That's why he tells you these things. He wants you to enter into a relationship with him that allows you to experience who he is. So are you pursuing him to know him as merciful, gracious, patient, forgiving, and faithful in love?

[22:17] Here's the thing. I think it's written on our human DNA, our human spiritual DNA, this thing, this desire is written there.

It's why people who don't know God and even those who do sometimes get so upset when life throws them a wicked curveball. When tragedy strikes, when war breaks out, when poverty or illness happens, we get upset, we're angry.

Why? Because we expect God, if he exists, to keep us from such things. We expect mercy, right? We expect love.

We expect forgiveness. And when it seems like he does not behave this way, we feel like we've been catfished. That God has pretended to be something he is not and therefore then people start rejecting God.

And even Christians start doubting whether God is real or cares for them because they have not experienced all the things that I just said from Exodus chapter 34.

[23 : 29] because we naturally think of God, if he exists, to be merciful, kind, and loving and forgiving. We expect. You can talk to anybody about God and if they would have taught, they want the God like that.

But here's the problem. The problem is how we define his attributes. See, we define mercy as getting me out of the mess that I make. oh boy, I'm looking for you.

I'm going to find you. Keep, just stay, don't leave, don't leave. Don't turn the channel. Listen, we define love as not allowing anything hard in my life. We define forgiveness as having no negative consequences for the foolish, sinful things that I do.

You see, we want that God, but that's not the God of the Bible. God is, God is not defined by your categories. He tells you who he is and you get to what, and what, read through the Bible, the Old Testament, New Testament, and that same God of mercy, grace, forgiveness, then you'll see what, how that all plays out.

God's glory, his reality and truth is not determined by how easy your life is now. Now, his glory, his reality, his attributes are seen in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.

[25 : 10] That's where you see all these things playing out. And Jesus was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief, which makes you think you're going to get out of here without it.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. His reality and truth has determined how your life will end even into eternity.

You'll see more. Ho, ho, ho! You'll see more because, you see, when we, from the side of eternity, we will look back at our life and throughout our lives and we'll see his mercy and forgiveness and kindness all throughout our life, it'll be oh so clear as we look back and as we, and it's oh so clear as we look at Jesus.

That's why he said, you have to know the Father and me. You can't, you can't know God if you don't know the Father and the Son because the Son reveals the Father.

If you really want to know God, you have to, you got to come to Jesus or you're done. It's over.

You're not going to, no. You can't say, I want to know God, know the God of the Old Testament.

[26 : 31] I want to know God. Well, amen. I'm glad, I'm glad to hear that. But, but you got to step forward and see that the Old Testament points to Jesus.

He's the star of the story. He's the hero in every, in every scene. He's the hero. It all points to him. He told us that. He told us that the Old Testament was about him.

And so we have to go to him to know God intimately and personally. We rest in his truth.

Not merely in our experience, we rest in what he has said. Experience is important. Don't get me wrong. He wants us to experience him. But we rest in what he said more than our experience.

I think it was, I think it was Jerry Bridges. I wrote it somewhere in these notes that we, we make a mistake. Yeah, I hear this. We, we, we, we, we tend to see the, the love of God through our circumstances.

[27 : 41] Amen. So we look at the circumstances and then we, and we, there are the lens, there are the, the shades, the sunglasses we're wearing and then the other side is the love of God.

So our circumstances, we look through and circumstances controls our vision of the love of God. That's wrong. what we need to start doing is, is looking at our circumstances through the love of God.

Let the love of God be your sunglasses. Let the love of God be your lenses and you'll see, so you see everything that is happening in your life through the first and all fact that he loves you in Christ. See, when you do it the reverse way, you get distorted vision. And so your circumstances become king. Amen.

And if God isn't giving you the circumstances you want, then his love gets tainted. But if I look at my circumstances through the fact that he loves me in Christ, that he will never stop loving me in Christ, that he is loving for the foundation of the world in Christ, that his glory is seen through his love for me in Christ at the cross, if I look through life through that lens, then everything makes better sense and now I can say, hold it, I know I'm going through this, I know this is happening in my life, but I won't doubt that he loves me now because I'm looking at it through the love.

[29 : 16] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. So God reveals himself and so we need a reliable guide, right, to show us this God.

My pastor, Dr. Bois, when he preached on Psalm 19, he preached about the big book and the little book and Freeman, you mentioned it earlier, I believe, and when we pointed to the hymn we were singing, How Great They Are, you actually said it.

God reveals himself in creation and reveals himself in, that's the big book. Go back and read Psalm 19 for yourself. The heavens declare the glory of God, right?

That's the big book. The heavens, all of creation. We come to know God, he reveals himself, yes, in creation. But here's the thing, that's not enough. The creation says God exists.

The Christian says we're not alone. The Christian says something, something, there had to be a cause for this effect. The Christian, you know, we begin to philosophize and theologize that God exists, amen.

[30 : 21] But then we have to go to the little book. And the little book is the law of the Lord. And in that book, we get a better picture of the God of creation.

And that little book ultimately brings us face to face with Jesus. And for the Christian, here's the beautiful thing for the Christian.

When we know who God is, when we're walking with God in Christ, creation blows our mind.

Creation, come on, Lord.

You know what I'm saying, Lord. You get outside in the sky, you go, wow. You see a dark, yesterday we were, we were downtown. We had just come from this restaurant. And I said, Sandy, it's gonna rain.

The thunderclouds, it looked awesome. All inspiring. I mean, the class, you were like, ooh. You go to the Grand Canyon, you go up on, lookout mountain.

[31 : 26] I had trouble calling that a mountain. Okay, up in the Pikes Peak, okay. 14,000 feet above ski level. I can't, I just, that's a mountain. But okay, let's go with it. I go to lookout mountain.

I look down into the valley and it is quite awe-inspiring. And what do I say? Boy, creation can cook. See, the atheist says, look at all that happened by accident.

But the Christian says, behold the glory of God. He said, man, God can cook. I'm not gonna finish this today.

Goodness. He is our rock. He is our redeemer. According to Psalm 19. Jesus is saying, eternal life is knowing the Father in him.

And this points to the fact that God is best known through his Son. The greatest revelation of God is Jesus.

[32 : 30] But we must go to the little book to know about Jesus. History is not enough. This is specific. This history, this record is infallible.

This record reveals Jesus to us so that we can then begin to walk with him and experience him and see his matchless glory, glory of him and the Father and all of life.

And in doing that, we're drawn closer to him to know him. And the more we see his glory now, the more we will know him and the more we will be transformed by him.

I'm gonna stop there. And we'll pick up next time right there. So just so you know, picking up right there. So mark that in your notes. I don't know about it.

We live for glory. Don't you understand? We all do. We all live for glory. The question is, whose glory? We all want to be thought of as wonderful and not nice and kind and sweet.

[33 : 45] Who wants to be disliked? Let's raise your hands so we know who to call the psychologist for you. No one wants to be disliked. You want to be thought, people think you're smart. You don't want to be thought, people think you're dumb.

Right, man. I like this guy. You know, you want to be thought as good looking. We want to be thought as successful. Margaret, it's good to see you, precious. Amen.

We want to, we want glory. That's why you're on social media all the time. Talking about yourself.

Telling people about you and what you're doing, what you're eating, who you're with, where you're going because you want people to say, wow, what a life.

That person's rocking and the people you like on social media, listen, you know it's true, the people you like and listen to and watch are the people you say, wow, I wish I, I want to.

Don't lie to me. We all want glory. The problem is we're glory hounds. we want it more than anything else.

[34 : 55] But when you meet Jesus, when you meet Jesus, you meet a glory that is so much greater than yours.

When you meet Jesus at the cross, you see the magnificent and the splendor of God and your glory goes out the window. You go, it's like, what?

I mean, why would I want an Android when I have an iPhone? You know, that kind of thing. You know. I mean, you want the best. You realize, if you got any sense, you recognize, I mean, if we wake up and we see things clearly, you know, that's what I mean.

I'm not putting you down. You recognize that what I have here is not as good as what I have over here. I recognize that, hey, I got five dollars and over there's a million.

Don't take much. You don't have to be a genius. A five-year-old can tell you I'll take the million.

When you see the glory of Jesus, that's what matters most.

[35 : 57] Today we come to the table and at the table we see the glory of Christ. At the table we see Jesus reigning from the cross. You see, as Paul put it, we see the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus at the cross.

At this table which is portrayed for us, which shows us the cross, Jesus suffering and dying for the righteous, justice of the Father. The Father may be exalted in his love because the Father has sent the Son.

So this is love. God loves us. And then we recognize that our sins, which are higher than our head, are placed upon him that we might bear them no more, that my soul might be free, and I might walk with God now and for all eternity.

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