

GLORY IN HEAVEN

In heaven, they get what glory looks like. Of course they do, heaven is nicknamed “Eternal Glory.” And in heaven, the way the Bible illustrates it, here’s what glory looks like. There are 4 creatures gathered in a circle. And just behind them are 24 leaders sitting down. a circle of creatures, a circle of leaders, and behind them is a crowd of about 100 Million angels—so picture every American who lives West of the Mississippi in one crowd. And all of them, the angels, the leaders, the creatures, are screaming. And if that were not loud enough, then every person ever created joins in with the shouting. So billions of people, then 100 million angels, then 24 leaders, and 4 otherworldly creatures all screaming at one point. I think the most people I’ve ever heard scream is about 90,000 at a sports game and that’s loud. Can you imagine what it sounds like in the center of that circle? That’s glory-- all eyes, all attention, all the volume pointed at one point, a throne. Standing at the center of the throne is a Lamb looking as though it had been slain. He was killed, a victim. But in heaven, a sacrifice receives all the glory. **“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13)**

On earth, we generally cheer for undefeated teams. We point spotlights at winners. But in heaven they understand what glory looks like—

GLORY COMES THROUGH SACRIFICE

JESUS KNEW GLORY

Jesus knows that. He taught that throughout his ministry. **“The last shall be first,” (Matthew 20:16)** he said. **“Whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.” (Mark 8:35)** Glory comes through sacrifice.

WE KNOW GLORY

And we understand that too. **“unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” (John 12:24)**

We learn this as little toddlers helping out in the garden. A seed looks dead and we bury it under the dirt. And then comes the beautiful act of God engineered into every spring—new life comes from the dead seed. I’ve never felt so bad for all the seeds sitting in the bag in the garage—they don’t get to be part of the harvest. All eyes are on the seed that was buried. The one that dies and ceases to be a seed, that’s the one that’s productive. That’s what glory looks like.

So when some Greeks asked to see Jesus, he thinks of his glory, when all eyes will be on him. And he knows what that will look like. Glory comes from sacrifice. Jesus will not be a seed hiding in the bag in the garage. He’s the Seed that will be buried. He’s the Lamb that will be slain. He’s going to sacrifice everything because that’s what glory looks like. And we understand that about Jesus, that his glory comes from sacrifice.

GLORY THROUGH SACRIFICE GETS PERSONAL

But it gets a lot harder when it’s personal. And Jesus makes it personal. **“Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” (John 12:25)** Now let’s not misunderstand Jesus, he’s not promoting self-harm or suicide. He doesn’t want you to be hopeless. But he does want you to think about what you value. Do you still believe that a Mercedes holds some benefit for you? Do I still think that the right phone in my pocket can fulfill my dreams? Do you still believe that the goal is to get more people to like you or listen to you? Jesus knows that we think that way—all of us from time to time. But the glory of the Son of Man is not like being the most popular girl in school. Glory in Jesus’ book is not like lifting a championship trophy. No, you know how glory works. It’s like a kernel of wheat, and unless it falls to the ground and dies it remains only a single

seed. You can fall in love with this life and all its delicious blessings. But then that's all you'll ever have.

On the other hand, Jesus has won for you, with his death on the cross, a full life that begins on earth and extends into eternity. And when you hold these eternal pleasures side-by-side with earthly ones, you'd hate to make your life all about this world. You'd hate to be a seed in the bag in the garage—un-sacrificing, unproductive and un-glorious.

No, you, dear Christian, want to be with Jesus—wherever that takes you. Jesus says, **“Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.” (John 12:26)** You are with Jesus. He suffered. You will suffer. He died. You will die. He sacrificed. You will sacrifice. Not to pay for your sins, but to celebrate how he paid for your sins. Sacrifice is inconvenient. Serving Jesus may cost you some really fun things. But while you're apart from blessings, you're side by side with Jesus. That's glorious.

GERALD KNEW GLORY

And that's what Gerald did. Gerald was about 60 years old, living out in the country in Texas. Normally it took Gerald about 15 minutes to drive to work in the city, but this day it took him 30 minutes because there was a nasty storm with driving rain. That same rain ruined the day of another person, a 35-year-old woman who was going past Gerald's house. You see, this woman was driving into the same city as Gerald through the same rain. She was an ambitious woman, moving up in the world, and she was taking some graduate classes at the university in town. And one of her classmates is now a WELS pastor. He would witness to her and tell her about Jesus but she just couldn't understand it. “Why would anybody sacrifice so much for me? Why would a Father give up his son? Why would the Son give up his life? That's hideous to me!” The pastor said, “Well it's beautiful to me and I'll keep praying that you can see that.” But he wasn't getting anywhere with her until one day when there was a nasty storm with driving rain. The young woman's Mustang hydroplaned right in front of Gerald's house. She skidded off into a ditch and her car and her

boots started sinking down into the mud. So she ran up and knocked on the door of the house, and Gerald's wife answered the door. The young woman explained her situation and then they called Gerald at work.

"Honey I know you've got a busy day. A young woman is stuck in the mud on our land. Would you please drive back home with your pickup and pull her out?" He thought about the 30-minute drive, the meetings he'd miss, the work he'd have to get done on the weekend or after hours. And Gerald said—well, what would you say? **"Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."** (John 12:25) Gerald got into his pickup and drove home through the rain. His wife stopped what she was doing and had coffee with the young woman. That couple lost their whole morning. They set aside their lives, and they sacrificed. And they told that woman they were Christians. They didn't accept a single penny in return. And when the young woman made it to class, she found her WELS classmate and she said, "I think I get it now. Everything God does for us is *unconditional*." That was her word—*unconditional*. That's right. Gerald and his wife are a kernel of wheat that fell to the ground and died. And that day they produced another seed. In heaven, our Father is going to grab Gerald and his wife by the hand and lift them up saying, "These ones served me!" As Jesus said, **"My Father will honor the one who serves me."** (John 12:26) That's what glory looks like.

SACRIFICE WAS HARD FOR JESUS

But it ain't easy, even for Jesus. Jesus is true God, so he knows perfectly that glory comes through sacrifice. But Jesus is true man, which means that it hurts him to sacrifice. It hurts him just as much as it hurts you or me. And Jesus when Jesus thought about going to the cross, he would sacrifice a lot. A whole lot. People who love this life say, "I just have to be comfortable." Jesus sacrificed that when he was whipped and beaten. People say, "At least you have your health." Jesus sacrificed that when he was asphyxiated on the cross. "Well the most important are your loving relationships." Jesus was betrayed, disowned, and abandoned. "But you can always count on your family." The eternal bond that Jesus had with his

Father—stronger than any other relationship in the universe, it was shattered when the Father abandoned the Son on the cross. If there was any part of Jesus that loved this world—if he wanted any earthly glory, comfort, or peace in this world—he would have run the other way.

But instead, listen to Jesus' prayer. **"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father save me from this hour?'" (John 12:27)** Isn't that so often what we pray when we are being asked to sacrifice something we love? Jesus prays, **"No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" (John 12:28)** This is the purpose of Jesus' whole existence on earth. He was doing God's glorious plan—sacrificing his life so that you and I can live in eternal glory.

JESUS SACRIFICE WAS GLORIOUS

And as it turns out, Jesus' sacrifice was a glorious thing. **"Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.'" (John 12:28)** When God created the world, that was glorious. When he parted the Red Sea, that was glorious. When Jesus did miracles, that was glorious. But when Jesus died—that was his crowning glory. Because on the cross Jesus won.

Evil in this world has always caused pain in big ways and small ways. You and I do it too. But Jesus conquered that evil. Satan has been behind that pain with his temptations and his hatred. But on the cross Jesus choke-slammed Satan. **"Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out." (John 12:31)** Jesus clashed with sin and Satan and he didn't move an inch. That's how he saved you. That is a glorious victory through sacrifice.

In heaven they get that. The whole Christian community surrounds a sacrificed Lamb and they shout "Glory!" They see Jesus dying on a cross and they think "Victory!" They see Glory Through Sacrifice. How about you? Amen.

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13)