

Jesus' Glorious Glory John 17:1-5

If I asked you to share your most glorious moment, what would it be?

If I had to ask about that one time in life, more than any other, that you felt like you reached the top of who you are made to be, fashioned your greatest achievement, your brightest, most bright-shining few seconds of standing in the sun—what would you name?

That's a hard question to answer. It's easier to pick out our most inglorious moments. Here's one of mine. 14 years ago tomorrow I was teaching a Wednesday evening class at church and I came back try office to pack up and go home. I noticed there were some missed calls on my phone. No big deal I thought. I got into my car, casually found the Kansas City Royals game on the radio and listened to the messages as I drove. The first was from my pregnant wife Jen.

"Hey," she said, "Something happened during aerobics that I want to talk with you about. Its probably no big deal."

I deleted it and listened to the next one. It was 30 minutes later and also from Jen.

"Hey, it's me again. I called my doctor friend and she said I should call our labor and delivery doctor just to be sure."

Hmmm. I thought. Then the Royals scored a run and my mind went there for a minute or two.

As I sat at the stoplight, I listened to the last message which was also Jen—about 45 minutes after the last message.

"I don't know where you are. BI drove myself to the hospital. I'm in a bed on the 3rd floor wearing a gown. And you have a child coming any minute!"

Jen wasn't due until the middle of May...but that didn't matter. I drove 80 through town and still got beat to the hospital by mother-in-law and father-in-law, the doctor, friends, neighbors, other people from Church—I did beat Calvin—but just barely.

That was inglorious moment that gave way to a glorious one. He was bor

What makes something glorious?

Why is Jesus' resurrection so glorious that we celebrate it 2,000 years later half a world away?

John's Gospel teaches after Jesus ate the Passover Meal, what we now call the Last Supper, with His disciples and taught them one last time, that He began to pray. Jesus called upon His Heavenly Father to make Him glorious.

Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you...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.

John 17

What is the real glory that Jesus sought? And why do we celebrate that glory today?

Resurrection itself is certainly miraculous but is it always glorious? We celebrate Jesus' resurrection today but there are actually stories of resurrection from all over the globe.

In 2014 in Alexandria Egypt a 32-year-old teacher on vacation, Ali Abdel-Rahim Mohammad, collapsed while he was swimming at the beach. He had no breath or no pulse and was pronounced dead at the scene and carried off to the mortuary and put in a cold room with a bunch of bodies. He woke up but was so cold that he could barely move and could not speak. The only thing he could do was grab the hand of a mortuary worker who walked by. The mortuary worker ran out of the refrigerated room screaming "Help me," and then out of the building altogether followed by a family who came to identify the body of a loved one. Ali Mohammad slowly got up and walked to a phone where he called his family immediately after they had just spoken with the police who told them he was dead.

In 2012 in China, a 95-year-old woman in China named Liu fell and hit her head. For about two weeks she struggled to recover until a neighbor found her not breathing and unresponsive. The custom there is for the body to lay in a coffin for several days so that family and neighbors can come by to pay their respects—which many did. On the day before the funeral, they nailed a lid on the coffin as they prepared to put Ms. Liu in the ground the following morning. When her family returned to her house they found the coffin lid laying on the ground and her body gone. Terrified they called the neighbors asking for their help finding her corpse. Instead, they found her sitting on a stool in the kitchen cooking something to eat.

In the Bible there are resurrection stories that are aren't exactly glorious either. My favorite is in Acts where we hear about a man named Paul preaching in the city of Troas. Paul began preaching after midnight and kept going on and on in a room with some oil-burning lamps and a young man named Eutychus fell asleep during Paul's sermon and fell out a third story window and landed on the ground dead! Let that be a lesson to all of us tempted to catch a nap during the sermon. They all rushed out of the house down to the ground where Paul raised him from the dead. Then they went back upstairs together and had a meal.

So...here are some resurrection stories and the overarching theme really isn't glory. They are stunning, miraculous, amazing, even humorous. But glory-filled?

But Jesus' resurrection is different. It is permeated with glory. Jesus' prayer was answered.

His resurrection is so glorious that two and a half billion people celebrate it today and rest their eternal future in its historical truth.

What makes Jesus' resurrection so glorious?

First, **Jesus' resurrection is born of the cross.**

In Jerusalem is one of the oldest Churches of the world. It's called the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Sepulcher is a French word which means burial chamber. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher is built around a burial chamber—a burial chamber that billions of people

consider holy. And most might think it's pretty strange to consider anything containing a dead body to be holy.

What makes this particular burial chamber "Holy" is there is no one in it.

There was.

Jesus' body was in it from late Friday afternoon through early Sunday morning, likely April 3-5, 33 AD.

And then He walked out of it. And when Jesus walked out of the tomb alive, He also walked death right out of this world. Death tried to destroy Jesus, but Jesus destroyed death.

And that's a glorious glory.

There was a story this week in the news about the Church of the Holy Sepulcher that drives this point home.

Carved all over the stone walls of this church which is nearly 1000 years old are crosses—just like this one. **(insert pic)** There are thousands of these crosses. The article says that Archaeologists now believe these crosses were carved by stone masons paid by Christian pilgrims traveling from Europe to visit Jesus' empty tomb and the Church. In this holy place, they wanted to leave a reminder of something most unholy and inglorious as an instrument of torture and death.

But that's far from the only reminder of the cross in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. You see the Church of the Holy Sepulcher contains, under the same roof, the stone hill on which Jesus was crucified. When you walk into the Church, you can go to your right and up some steep stairs that are built into a little hill of soft stone and that is the place, where most people who have studied it believe Jesus was crucified. It is the very hill of the cross, known as Golgotha.

The glory of the empty tomb and the very inglorious cross are side by side.

That's very strange isn't it? Isn't that odd?

Maybe.

But if you stop and think about it, it's really a bizarre thing that we are doing here today. If you get beyond the bright colors and the eggs, rabbits, bunnies, chocolate, flowers, baskets, dresses, hats, new ties and jackets—there is a grave at the very center of what we do.

And not just that we are celebrating the endgame of the torture and death of one man nearly 2000 years ago and half a world away. He was wrongly convicted, an absolute travesty of justice and the subject of a political ploy by desperate men trying to hold onto their power, and others who cared so little for human life that they were willing to stand aside while an innocent man died in the most horrific way possible. Still others into whom He had poured His life for three years scattered and fled, leaving Him to face death on His own.

The Old Testament even took this a step a further when it described the very inglorious nature of Jesus' death:

And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.

Deuteronomy 21:22-23

When we strip away all pastel trappings, Easter seems pretty inglorious. Yet Jesus prayed for glory because He knew the power of God can take all that suffering, shame, disgrace, humiliation and ignominy and transforms it.

I've had the opportunity to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher a few times on trips to Israel. The first time I went there in the early morning, as I stood by the empty tomb, I saw this **(insert picture)**. That building is the interior chapel inside the massive building of the Church. It is built right over the rocky tomb where Jesus' body was likely placed. A cross of light descended on the tomb—an amazing visual of

Jesus' glory is that He takes the darkness of the sham, travesty and injustice of the cross and turns it into glorious light.

And He can do the same for you. Whatever travesty you have suffered, whatever injustice, sin, shame, self-inflicted wound or humiliation—Jesus can take that inglorious event and bend it to glory. He can take whatever darkness you have chosen or whatever darkness into which you have been plunged and make it as bright as the morning sun. Jesus went down to the grave in the most savage, humbling, shameful way possible and rose up in glory to prove there no sin He will not forgive; no pain, no abuse, no wound He cannot heal; no shame He cannot make glorious.

Next, Jesus' resurrection confirms His Kingship.

Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

John 17:1-3, 5

Jesus looked anything like a King as He went to the cross **(insert painting)**. He was beaten. He was mocked and humiliated. Yet His Kingship was constantly alluded to. One of the ways the Roman soldiers mocked Jesus was by dressing Him up as a King—with a crown of thorns and a purple robe. They put some straw reeds into His hand like a mock scepter and then they grabbed it back and struck Him with it. They bowed down in front of Him in a taunt. And when Jesus was crucified the charge they placed over His head read, "He said 'The King of the Jews.'"

As Jesus was convicted to hang on the cross, carried His cross outside the city walls, and hung on it until His last breath—He looked like anything but a King—although all around Him was the jeering taunt that He considered Himself a King.

Imagine if Jesus had stayed in the grave.

The soldiers' taunts, the jeers of the crowd who gathered around the cross would have been proven correct. We would never have known His name. He would have been forgotten, His disciples scattered and His story lost to history so many others who died on a Roman cross.

That is surely why Jesus' enemies were so desperate to spread a lie about Jesus' whereabouts when they heard the reports that His tomb was empty.

While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So, they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

Matthew 28:11-15

Of course, here is the thing about a king. A true king is a king whether we say so or not. Kings aren't elected by popular vote. A king does not need our permission to rule and reign. And Jesus rising from the dead proves that He is not only King over you and me but King over everything—including sin and death. The King is King because He is the King.

And the empty tomb proves Jesus is King over everything.

Where do you need Jesus exercise His Kingship in your life?

If you have a hard time answering that question—maybe we could rephrase it a bit to ask "Where do you need resurrection? Where do you need new life? Where do you need the power of the King to reach down and restore, renew and redeem you?"

The resurrection proves there is nothing beyond His power. This King reigns even in His own death. We don't need to proclaim "Long live the King" because death has no power over King Jesus.

The 17th Century English Pastor John Owen put it like this in his book "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ" said, "**The end of death in Christ is either supreme and ultimate or intermediate and subservient to the last end.**"

In other words "Jesus is risen," is the final word. The death of death by His hand proves He King. And this King loves you deeply and will hold nothing back from you and for you.

Which leads us to say this:

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection is for us.

As Jesus prepared for the trial of the cross, His mind was on not only on serving and glorifying His Father, but He also thought of making you and me glorious:

You have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

John 17:2-3

600 years before Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, the prophet Isaiah wrote these words:

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:4-5

Jesus, as a Human Being, fully God and fully man, as a King who has defeated humanity's greatest enemy sin and death, now gives glorious eternal life, residency in heaven, a citizenship in the Kingdom of God that cannot be taken away, cut short or cancelled.

And Jesus describes this eternal life really simply—that we know the Father and we know Jesus—as really and truly God.

Simple. And glorious. Jesus does not hoard His glory. Jesus shares His glory with you and me.

We really haven't defined glory yet in this sermon.

The British apologist C.S. Lewis described glory. He said Biblical glory is to be known and approved of by others. But He also Biblical glory is to approve of ourselves, to know that we know that we know we are somebody important in the eyes of God, to become, in the greatest sense of the word, beautiful.

We are to shine as the sun, we are to be given the Morning Star. We want to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it...When human souls have become as perfect in voluntary obedience as the inanimate creation is in its lifeless obedience, then they will put on its glory, or rather that greater glory of which Nature is only the first sketch.

Glory is knowing that in the eyes of God we are the greatest beauty in all of creation. Do you doubt me on this? Do you doubt that you are God's greatest glory?

If I said to you about 2007, you know I had a son born during Holy Week, but what I really want to tell you about is the sermon I preached that Easter. Wow. That was amazing. Or if I summed 2009 talking about some really great improvements to the Church building rather than the birth of my second son. Or I said in 2011 that I was most excited about a book I wrote rather than our third son being born. Or what if told you, "In 2014 the Church I led took a bold to follow Jesus" rather than telling you about my daughter being born—you would think I was a monster or an idiot or both.

What any Father loves the most, feels most passionate about and in them finds their greatest glory is their children.

And our Heavenly Father is no different. He feels the same way about you. Don't you know that you are intended to live to be a picture of His glory—a picture more beautiful and telling of His character than the rosy-fingered dawn rolling in over the sea, a thousand

thousands blinking and swirling stars at night swaddling like a baby's blanket, the deep blue mountain heights piercing the clouds like a needle or a bed of purple flowers stretching out over a field waving in the wind as far as the eye can see—creation so beautiful that it burns the eyes and sears the soul.

As glorious and as telling of God's character as that is, you are intended to be even more glorious.

"The glory of God gives life," the Church Father Irenaeus said. And Jesus died and rose and sits on the throne of the cosmos to save you from the shame of sin and death make you fully alive.

This new life, this glory, cannot be earned. There is nothing any of us born sinners can do to achieve it. Try as we might, can never do enough to lay hold of this glory. It is a gift. It is ours for the asking. Jesus has placed it in your grasp, you only need to wrap your fingers around it.

Here's how. We are going to pray and everyone can pray with me. You may have prayed in this way once or twice or hundred times. All of you, either here in the sanctuary or worshipping on-line, are more than welcome to join me. And after we pray, if you have met Jesus in a significant way maybe for the first time or maybe for the next time, we'll have some instructions for you to make a connection.

Let's pray.

"Lord, Jesus, thank you for dying for my sin. Lord God, thank you for loving me enough to give your life to make me alive. I receive your grace and forgiveness and want to know new life. Please come into my life and take charge. I invite you to reign and rule in my life. I want to know new life. I want to receive your glory. I ask these things not because I have earned any of it but I ask in your name and by your grace. Amen."

If you are someone here who has prayed that prayer before and you are willing to have someone...