

DO EVERYTHING FOR GOD'S GLORY

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:31

Read: Psalm 29

1: God's glory

What is God's glory?

Visual?

Or deeper than that?

2: Do all things 'for God's glory'

What does 'for God's glory' mean?

When / what things?

How?

How not

How

And so: *Do everything for God's glory*

1 Co 10:31

Dear Congregation

For the last few months now in g, we've been looking at the elements of our Purpose, Vision, and Mission diagram.

You might remember that we started at the centre, thinking about the character of the church. The church is the community of those made holy through faith in Jesus Christ, called to love God first in everything and others before ourselves.

And then we thought about the mission God has given us. He calls us to make disciples for him, and to work at encouraging and challenging each other toward greater unity and maturity in the faith.

And today we start thinking about the purpose behind all of this – why is God working in and through his church like this at all? And a good place to start answering that question is Luke 2:14. Jesus has just been born. The angels appear to the shepherds. And they sing, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.' God's ultimate purpose in redemptive history is to bring glory to his name. And as the angels make clear, that also involves the growing of his kingdom here on earth - peace with God.

Today we look at the first half of that. God's purpose in salvation history, and so his purpose for the church as well, is to bring glory to himself.

Point 1

And so, thinking that through a bit, *what is God's glory*? Maybe you've heard the words a lot, maybe you use them, but what do they mean?

When you try to pin down what God's glory is, *you possibly start thinking visually*. Maybe you think of God's glory revealed in the spectacular blazing fireball on the top of Mt Sinai as God met with Israel and gave them his law. Or maybe you think of the pillar of cloud and fire, or Moses' face as he came down from the mountain, reflecting God's glory, radiant, so that the people were afraid to talk to him.

Or as you step into the New Testament, maybe you think of the glory of the Lord shining around the shepherds as the angel appeared at the time of Jesus' birth. Or maybe the Mt of Transfiguration, with Jesus' face shining like the sun, and his clothes becoming white as light.

These are all visible things, and maybe the kinds of things we think of fairly quickly when we think about God's glory.

But God's glory runs deeper than that. The visible expressions of God's glory are a manifestation of even more significant things.

And so, in the New Testament, John tells us that in Jesus 'the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.'

And John is possibly thinking of when he and 2 of Jesus' other closest disciples saw him visibly manifesting God's glory at his transfiguration.

On the other hand, in chapter 12, John quotes Isaiah 53, the chapter about God's suffering servant, despised and rejected, pierced for our sakes, taking our sins upon himself – not exactly the same picture of visible splendour. But John writes there, 'Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him'. The visible manifestations of God's glory are pictures of something that runs deeper – something much more important. Even a suffering man of sorrows can reveal God's glory.

And John points us in the right direction by mentioning grace and truth. 'We have seen his glory, the glory

of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.’ The visible manifestations of God’s glory represent to us in a way that we can see the glory of God’s character – things like grace and truth. Which is why Jesus going to his death can be a manifestation of God’s glory for all to see if only they have the eyes to see it. This isn’t spectacular blazing light shining all around dazzling those who see it. But the cross is the ultimate expression of God’s grace and truth.

And other passages of the Bible bring out other aspects of God’s character that are included in his glory. Psalm 29:1&2 says: ‘Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.’ God’s strength and holiness are included in his glory. And Psalm 115 starts, ‘Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.’ God’s everlasting love and faithfulness are included in his glory.

You can also go to passages like the doxologies in the book of Revelation to find the same sort of thing. Revelation 15:3&4 says, ‘Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.’

God’s glory included attributes like justice, truth, holiness, and righteousness.

You come to realize that dazzling, brilliant, radiant light is a visible representation of God’s perfect character. God’s character and nature is his glory.

You also come to realize that ***the clearest visible representation of God’s glory then is his gracious dealings with humanity – his redemptive working in history.*** As Revelation 15 says, ‘Great and marvelous are your deeds . . . Just and true are your ways.’

Jesus’ miracles are included in that as he saved people from their physical suffering – healing the sick and the blind, casting out demons.

But his redeeming death on the cross to pay for our sin; and his resurrection from the dead to give us new life, are so much more than that. Which is why the picture of Isaiah 53 is a revelation of God's glory. It's presenting God redeeming his people through the sacrificial death of his One and Only eternally begotten Son.

And so another doxology in Revelation 5 says, 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!' "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

In fact, you come to realize that true glory is simply the manner of God's existence. God's character, and the working out of that in salvation history, is the definition of what glory is. God is the only one who has true glory. And he then also grants it to those on whom his favour rests. Anything else that we might describe as glorious is just a faint reflection of his glory, or a counterfeit. If you come to know God, you begin to understand glory. If you don't, you can never really understand it.

Point 2

And then this verse today tells us to *do all things 'for God's glory'*.

But what does that mean? What does it mean to do anything for God's glory? If God's glory involves his holiness, righteousness, justice, grace, truth, power, wisdom and all the different aspects of his perfect character, what does it mean to give him glory, or do anything to his glory?

And one thing we need to understand is that we can never add to these things. God already has them perfectly. That isn't what giving God glory is all about. But what we can do is acknowledge them, and praise God for his perfect character and works. We can worship him and serve him and obey him because of the great God that he is and the gracious things he has done and is doing. And we can call others to follow our example and praise and worship him along with us. That is what giving glory to God is all about – acknowledging and praising him and encouraging others to join us in that.

And isn't that what the Psalms are doing when they call us to 'Ascribe to the LORD ... glory and strength. ... Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.'? And 'Not to us, O LORD ... but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.'?

And the book of Revelation too, 'Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.'?

These passages aren't giving God anything he doesn't already have, but they are acknowledging them, and they are calling us to praise and worship God for who he is and the things he has done.

But then when should we do this, ***when can we give glory to God***, and acknowledge him for who he is, and praise him for the things he has done?

And this verse tells us that we can do it all the time – in everything we do – or in the things we decide not to do for his sake. We can do it all for the glory of God. When you're eating, eat for God's glory. When you're drinking, drink for God's glory. When you're working – building a house, digging a drain, designing a car – work for God's glory. When you're studying - at school, at TAFE, or university - study for God's glory.

When you're playing – skipping in the playground, sport on the oval – play for God's glory. When you're at Area Fellowship, or Youth Group, reading the Bible after dinner, or attending Church – do these things for God's glory. Colossians 3:17 also says, 'Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.'

But how then do you go about that? How do you eat to God's glory, how do you drink to God's glory?

And, at least what we can learn from the wider context here in 1st Corinthians is how not to eat and drink to God's glory.

The wider context here begins at chapter 8. If you can remember back to when we worked our way through 1st Corinthians, you might remember that some of the Corinthian Christians were still sharing in the pagan festivals at the temples to the local idol gods. It was possibly the only time some of them got to eat meat.

And it was the hub of the social networks of their day. And so even though this food had been offered to the pagan idols, and the feast was in honour of the local pagan god and being used by demons for their own purposes, some of the Corinthian Christians continued to attend these feasts. But Paul's ruling in chapter 10:21 is that 'you can't drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.'

And then when you get to chapter 10:23, you reach the issue of eating meat bought in the marketplace. It had probably been offered at the pagan temple, you just never really knew. Should Christians eat it or not? It seems that some of the Corinthians had been arguing that their Christian freedom allowed them to eat this meat – it was their Christian right - even though the faith of some other Christians was being damaged by that, and even though some of the pagans believed these Christians then condoned their idolatry.

But Paul's ruling in that passage is that 'nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.' As he says earlier, 'If what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.' Christians shouldn't do anything to harm the faith of others. We shouldn't give the impression to non-Christians by our eating or drinking that we support their idolatry.

And so, the example here is that if you want to eat and drink in a way that isn't to God's glory, then share in practices that bring dishonor to God, or support - or even appear to support – idolatry. And eat and drink in a way that undermines the faith, and the Christian walk, of others.

And if you then turn that around, you start to understand *how to eat and drink and live to God's glory*. It means that you eat and drink in a way that acknowledges and praises God for the great God that he is. You thank him for the food and drink on the table – that he has provided. You ask him to bless it to you, and to use the health and energy it gives to his praise. You acknowledge that even more important than earthly food and drink is the heavenly food and drink that Jesus is – food that gives us eternal life.

And you eat and drink in a way that builds up and encourages other believers in their faith and life. If you

know that they have problems around some types of food and drink that damages their faith and Christian life, then you don't indulge in those around them. Or, from a positive angle, if you know that the faith walk of some is encouraged by your hospitality, then you show hospitality to them at every opportunity.

And you eat and drink in a way that encourages non-believers to consider Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Ask yourself, what do your non-Christian friends or acquaintances think when they see you at a party? Are they challenged to consider your Christlike way of enjoying yourself to the one Australia generally gives? Are they given an example of how to enjoy life without abusing drugs or alcohol? Or are they left thinking that Christians only get by in life the same way they do, by escaping it all in whatever way they can?

And then you also eat and drink in such a way that you don't step back into the cage of sin. The Corinthian's catchcry was that in Christ 'we are free - everything is permissible'. Paul's point throughout these verses is that that is only true if you understand what true freedom in Christ is and limit yourself accordingly. And so he writes, "'everything is permissible for me' – but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible for me' – but I will not be mastered by anything. ... 'Everything is permissible' – but not everything is constructive."

Christian freedom is freedom from sin, Satan, and condemnation by God – it's not an excuse to dive back into sin. When eating becomes gluttony, we've stepped back into the cage of sin. When drinking is to excess we've done the same. When eating or drinking something has become an addiction, when eating and drinking are given an importance they don't deserve, then we've stepped back into slavery to sin and the devil.

When we eat and drink, we should eat and drink to God's glory.

And the same applies to everything we do. If we do the things we do in a way that acknowledges God for the great God that he is, and builds up and encourages other believers in their faithwalk, and encourages non-believers to come to faith, and doesn't indulge sin in our own lives, then we are doing these things to God's glory.

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And so spend some time today thinking about how all of this works out in your life.

Do you do some things that clearly aren't done to God's glory? Are there some things that you could begin to do that would bring God increasing glory? Do you need to commit to changing these areas of your life in the week to come?

“Whether you eat and drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”