
God of Glory

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 17 March 2024

Jeremiah 31:31-34 • Hebrews 5:5-10 • John 12:20-33



May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

Today is Passion Sunday, to be followed next Sunday by Palm Sunday, when Jesus enters Jerusalem, and then of course Easter, the day of resurrection. The term “passion” refers to the trials Jesus undertook at the hands of the Roman authorities, particularly the suffering he endured on the way to the cross. At its root, passion is akin to passivity — being passive, that is, letting things happen to you, as opposed to being active and making things happen. One may say that most of the events of the Gospels were the result of Jesus’ actions, until the very end. Then things began to happen to him: he was whipped, a crown of thorns was put on his head, he was forced to carry his own cross, and he was then nailed to that cross to die a miserable and excruciating death.

Yet even in his “passion”, Jesus still, in many ways, directed events. If we look at the trial before the high priests Annas and Caiphas, and then before the

Roman governor Pontius Pilate, we see that Jesus controls the dialogue. He does not answer questions the way his judges want him to, and he asks them questions. He forces them to face up to their own deeds. Remember that Pilate asks him

“Are you the king of the Jews?”

Jesus answered, “Are you asking this on your own or did someone tell you about me?”

“You know I'm not a Jew!” Pilate said. “Your own people and the chief priests brought you to me. What have you done?”

Jesus answered, “My kingdom doesn't belong to this world. If it did, my followers would have fought to keep me from being handed over to our leaders. No, my kingdom [is from another place].”

“So you are a king,” Pilate replied. (John 18:33-37)

See how Jesus directs the conversation! The truth is brought out, even if Pilate doesn't really understand it. In the face of Pilate's rising anger and frustration, Jesus maintains his calm poise, maintains his identity, and gives away nothing but the truth; and what he says furthers the events which must take place in order to complete his mission and to accomplish his Father's will.

From this point he becomes more passive, as the soldiers force him to carry his cross, and then nail him to it. But even as he hangs by his hands in great agony, he blesses the thief who hangs beside him; and directs John (the beloved disciple) to care for Mary, his mother. To the very end, Jesus shows his love.

What Jesus accomplished that day so long ago resulted in his glorification and that of his Father, our God. Jesus spoke of this glory in our Gospel passage today:

“So Father, bring glory to yourself,” [said Jesus].

A voice from heaven then said, “I have already brought glory to myself, and I will do it again!” (John 12:28)

That God did indeed “do it again” is clear from what happened: Jesus gave himself to death and rose again in glory. Jesus accomplished something no one else could have done, defeating death, taking away our sins and opening the doors of heaven, that we might rise in glory ourselves on the last day and join God and Jesus and the Spirit in eternal communion. But why does God say, “I have already brought glory to myself?”

If we look back in John's Gospel, there are a many significant events when he caused miracles to occur, performed healings, etc. These were signs of Jesus' authority and power, and a few stand out. First, when Jesus attended the

wedding in Cana with his mother, he turned ordinary water into wonderful wine. As John reports:

This was Jesus' first miracle, and he did it in the village of Cana in Galilee. There Jesus showed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. (John 2:11)

“Jesus showed his glory” — that is, he showed the other guests that he was not just the carpenter from Nazareth, but something more, much more than that. And as with everything he did, he did it in his Father’s name, and to his Father’s glory.

And again, when Jesus heals the eyes of the man born blind:

His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.” (John 9:2-3)

And so, when Jesus gives the man back his sight, it is to God’s glory, who sent Jesus into the world. It is the same again when Jesus brings Lazarus back to life. When Jesus hears of Lazarus’ illness, he says, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s son may be glorified through it” (John 11:4).

So we see these events, these miracles, all show the power and the love of God and Jesus. They do great deeds which bring them glory, as the feats of a soldier in war might bring glory to the soldier. All of these miracles work to show us the truth of the Good News — that we may indeed have faith in our Lord.

What should be our reaction to all this? Love, gratitude, thanksgiving, as well as faith and obedience: faith, because these miracles show God’s power; and obedience, because the God who sent his only Son to save us is worthy to be followed. In our prayers, in our hymns and worship songs, we too give glory to our God, through his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.