

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. kjv

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"I will miss him, for a short while" John Piper on R. C. Sproul

The evangelical community lost a titan this past week. R. C. Sproul was 78 and had been suffering from COPD for several years. He preached to the last. He had a winsome quality. He could teach about something that was so deep only 3 other people on earth could understand it and then crack a one liner right in the middle.

He was a champion of the Bible. He fought for Sola Scriptura for 60 years. He and a group of men drafted the original Chicago Statement on Biblical inerrancy that became the benchmark in the battle for the Bible. He along with John MacArthur and other good men have been at the battle front of Satan's different attacks on scripture for over 40 years.

When MacArthur alone took up the controversy on Lordship Salvation, R.C. likened John to Boris Yeltzin who walked out and met a coup of

tanks coming against the russian government and climbed up on one of the tanks and gave a speech that singlehandedly disarmed the coup. R. C.'s nickname for John was 'Boris'.

And he fought for Sola fide, faith alone with no merit from any of our works is what saves us. Sola Christos, Christ alone is the object of our faith. Faith in the finished work of Christ is our only hope for salvation and glory. And Sola Gratia. Salvation is by faith alone, in Christ alone, and that comes by grace, alone. No meritorious work of ours can add to what God supplied in His Son.

He was like a resurrected dinosaur from the reformation era, and he simply never stopped teaching the book for 60 years. He was a powerhouse for God's glory. What a welcome he must have received in glory.

He left a huge legacy for those of us who want to plow deeper in this book. While he loved to be at the battlefront, he quietly lived a life of Sola Deo Gloria. For the glory of God alone. He burned brightly and it was impossible not to notice him, but it was never about him, it was always about the Glory of God.

Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace and good will towards men. Luke 2:14

We usually take a break from our verse by verse book studies at Christmas and Easter and do something in keeping with the season.

And as I read that verse earlier in my study and mused about what to speak on during this years Christmas season, my mind could not escape one word, and after a time I was settled that the Holy Spirit of God would have me to teach this Christmas on the Glory of God.

What IS the Glory of God? The glory of God is a truth that needs to be

studied and then lived each day of our lives. It is a consuming topic and not one that will be exhausted or even well defined in one morning's thoughts. But perhaps we can add to your foundation moorings just a little.

The Glory of God is the topic of this book. It is the theme of the entire book. There is no ultimately weightier topic in eternity past to eternity future. Everything revolves around this one concept.

The very word itself struggles to define the indefinable. Words fall short, but they're all we have; temporarily. If you look up word number 1391 in Strong's exhaustive greek dictionary, (doxa), you will find words like; honor, renown, splendor.

Glory is the word that imparts to our imagination that there is one being, one person, one God who is beyond every other thing created, most worthy of honor, most renowned, and who shines with more splendor than any thing or any one.

In the creation account, God speaks the universes and this world and all that is in it into being with the breath of His mouth. He spoke it, and it was. And in each case, as the creation unfolds, we here the words . . . and it was good. And it was good.

And when He created man, we hear, *it was very good*. Man alone was created in the image of God. Everything God created reflected His glory, back to Him. It was good. And man especially, created in His image to have a meaningful relationship with Him, He said was very good.

That's why murder in all of it's forms is a particular punch in the gut to God. In our current culture of death, we slaughter each other all day every day, in wars, in abortion, in euthanasia, in drugs, and that is a direct affront and reproach to God. No little wonder that is ground zero in Satan's war with God.

So how did we get here? What happened to the glory of creation that reflected praise and glory back to the creator. What happened to the

place that God said, it is good. Very good. How did we wake up this morning in a world that is raging against it's creator.

That question itself has at the root of the problem; glory. In Isaiah 14 we read some lines of poetry that are foundational to understand how we got from good and very good, to rage and fury and rebellion.

*12“How you have fallen from heaven,
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!
You have been cut down to the earth,
You who have weakened the nations!*

*13“But you said in your heart,
‘I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,
And I will sit on the mount of assembly
In the recesses of the north.*

*14‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.’*

Satan said, I won't reflect the glory of God back to Him, I will be equal, and the glory will be mine. Satan devised in his heart to steal the glory of God. To have it for himself. To displace God. To be a god.

It was a miscalculation at best. A miscalculation of the renown of God who will neither share His glory or be bested. What happened? We read on;

*15“Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,
To the recesses of the pit.*

*16“Those who see you will gaze at you,
They will ponder over you, saying,
‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble,
Who shook kingdoms,*

17Who made the world like a wilderness

*And overthrew its cities,
Who did not allow his prisoners to go home?'*

But Satan is a poor loser. And in his evil heart he purposed to rob God of the glory due Him in His creation. He persuaded Adam, the man created to give glory to God, to reject giving God glory by obeying His words.

When that happened, this world, along with Satan, was removed from the presence of God. Death entered. Spiritual death, separation from God, disobedience of God and a refusal to give Him the glory due Him, reigned.

In fact we find out later, that the rule of this world, originally given to Adam, defaulted to Satan. He became the ruler of this place, and the world was populated with men who are disconnected from and have no way, because of the sin they are born into, to be friends with God or give glory to God. In our unregenerated state it is impossible to glorify God. He tells us, all of our good works are like a soiled garment.

Glory to God was abrogated at the fall. Collectively, the fallen human race, born in sin says; We will not give you glory. We will rebel against you and your glory. We will have glory for ourselves. Confusion and wickedness are the result. Chaos instead of order. Death instead of life.

Now at that point, God could have judged the whole mess and been done with it. But that would have sort of been a "win" for Satan it seems to me. God created this world and the people in it to reflect His glory and ultimately, He will have that glory.

And God planned, in eternity past, how He would redeem mankind and restore men to Himself. He would purchase them, one at a time, at His pleasure, and to do that, it would cost Him the blood of His son. The death of the Son of God.

Someone must take the penalty of death that each of us deserves for our sin and rebellion against God's glory. Jesus came into the world, God in

human flesh, He left His glory in heaven and came to earth, but in His incarnation, He was the very glory of God in human form.

That's why the angels said what they said to the shepherds in the fields when Jesus was born. The Glory of God in the form of a baby. God in a manger. Glory restored to earth in a tiny baby.

8 In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*14 "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."*

That glory that lit up the night and made those fields look like daylight, the visible glory of God, the brightness of His glory is what this book is about.

Glory breaks through in the Old Testament. The patriarchs are separated from a Godless civilization. Set apart for glory.

A nation is chosen by God to give Him glory.

A messiah is born who is the reflection of the very glory of God. Jesus said, "in the scroll of the book, it is written of me". Those words span the old testament and the new. Written in the Psalms and repeated in Hebrews.

Heb. 10:7 "THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'" Doing the will of God is what gives God glory.

The writer of Hebrews in his opening statements says; *And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,* Heb 1:3 Jesus is the exact representation of God's glory.

John 1:14 says;

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

And God has made that glory that is necessary to stand in His presence and fellowship with Him, available to us! *12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

The reason Glory has been on my mind and in my thoughts is because of what Peter said that we studied last week. It's been rattling around inside my mostly empty head and I couldn't let it go. Peter mentions the concept of glory 2 times in those 4 short verses:

1 Peter 5: 1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

In verse one, Peter says that he is a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed.

And we taught correctly, last week that most folks interpret this to mean Peter is unique in having seen an earthly preview of that glory on the mount of transfiguration.

But I couldn't get another aspect of what Peter said out of my mind. We are partakers of the glory. We neither see now or really have a clue what our future glory with Him will look like.

John says 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

When we see Him, we will be transformed, in the twinkling of an eye, into His glory. A glory that is beyond our words and thoughts. How then are we partakers of glory.

For those of us who have believed, God has sent His Holy Spirit to dwell inside of us. He is our downpayment for future Glory. We are partakers of the glory when Jesus lives within us, and we within Him, by the indwelling Holy Spirit of God.

The Spirit is Glory promised. That future day, when we see Jesus, face to face, is glory realized.

Paul says to the Corinthians, and to us; 6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

7But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; 2Cor4

The very glory of God dwells in these earthen vessels, but not for long.

No wonder that the message the angels brought to the shepherds on that first Christmas day was all about Glory. Everything revolves around the glory of God, and Jesus brought the possibility of that glory to earth, to lost men. Listen again to the angel chorus;

Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace and good will towards men.

That little newborn life, lying helpless in a manger in Bethlehem brought to earth the possibility of peace and good will. Men who were at war with God, whose rebellion had severed them from both God and His glory, through this infant Jesus, have the possibility offered to them of peace with God, and good will from God.

God, offers the olive branch of peace, the forgiveness of sin and the restoration of the glory we abandoned when we sinned. And all of that revolves around this glorious child that the angels announce. Unfathomable glory offered to us at no cost, in His son, Jesus.

Think about where we're at in 2017. In my 65 years, I've never seen a world so dark, so chaotic, so lost as now.

Every christmas card I get is carefully void of anything that might have any jog in the direction of the biblical Jesus. We want to keep christmas, and the financial boost to the mega economy that "The Holidays" bring, but we can't flush Jesus out of that equation fast enough. The world can't seem to get enough distance from any thought of Him.

I've certainly never seen anything like it in my lifetime. Never this level of darkness. Never this kind of chaos amongst the nations. I check Bing several times a day to see if the whole thing has blown sky high yet. It looks as though perhaps, Satan is winning.

But, I've read the end of the book. Jesus wins, and trust me, you want to be on His side of that battle. Ultimate glory is coming. But when that day comes, the peace and good will with men is off the table.

2 Cor. 6:2 For He says: "In the time of favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." Behold, now is the time of favor; now is the day of salvation!

God has put the Glory due His name on hold for 2000 years. This age of grace, an olive branch offer of peace and good will to men, by the forgiveness of sins available in the death of His Son is open to all nations.

But a day is coming quickly when that offer of grace to all the nations will be over, and then judgement will follow. It sure looks to me like we are at the very far end of that window of grace. *Behold, now is the time of favor; now is the day of salvation!*

The theme of the book is the Glory of God. Stolen on this earth in a rebellion. Jesus takes captivity captive. God will save His elect. Whosoever will may come. Then judgement and the Glory of God restored to this earth by fiery ordeal. It's all about the Glory of God.

Paul tells the Corinthians; *Therefore whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God.* 1Cor. 10:31

If some roving reporter stops you on the street and asks you what the real meaning of Christmas is, here's your answer. The Glory of God came to earth, born of a virgin, the Son of God. He died for our sins. He took our punishment. He is calling out of this rebellious earth a people for His name who will reign on this earth, with Him in Glory.

That offer is good today. It may not be tomorrow.

We've been talking about the glory of God, and I want to finish up our thoughts with what that looks like on a very practical level for us foot soldiers out on the ground.

I want to come full circle back to RC Sproul. I listened to a message he preached in 2005 at the Ligonier conference about stewardship.

Stewardship has everything to do with what we individually do with the glory of God. Where is it in the Bible that God welcomes his slaves into paradise and says; Well done, good and faithful slave. Enter into the joy of your master.

I sent one friend an email that said, I wish I could trade my fruitfulness for the kingdom of God for 1% of R.C.'s. I'm painfully aware that 1/100th of that treasure would eclipse mine. At 65 I'm wishing I had been more fruitful as a christian.

So, turn with me to Matthew 25 and I just want to read to you Jesus words about stewardship with very minimal comments. How is it that we are to glorify God? How do we individually reflect God's glory back to Him?

14 "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 "To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

OK, just to help you get this picture Jesus is painting, He's not talking about talents, like a talented musician, or builder. A talent was a weight in gold equal to about what a lifetime of working every day could produce. So 30 - 50 years of labor. That amount of money.

So the 5 talent guy, God says, here's 8 million dollars of my money for you to invest for me, while I'm away. But ability does play in. He gave them different amounts according to their natural ability to do something with it.

Do you get some idea from that of the value of God's glory. Slaves can't produce it. If the cost to get into heaven is 80 pounds of gold, I won't be going. So the parable isn't about us producing the treasure from within. God supplies the treasure to invest.

I'll give you another clue. The treasure is the good news of rescue. The gospel. And what that good news can mean for priceless souls of men. This treasure that He gives to invest is an impossible value to gain. It's a priceless treasure. Freeing souls from sin and escaping Satan's grip is priceless. Slaves can't get there. The treasure is always and forever, the Master's.

16 "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17 "In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18 "But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 “Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 “The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ 21 “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

22 “Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ 23 “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

24 “And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 ‘And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’

26 “But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27 ‘Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28 ‘Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’

29 “For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 “Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So you have 2 slaves who take what the master entrusts to them, and they invest the treasure and it multiplies. Treasure reproduces itself. Economics 101.

But one slave says, why would I work to make money for you. That's unreasonable. I work for me. This is all about me, not you.

See how the glory of God plays into this. This slave says, your priceless treasure can sit in a hole in the ground while I go see what I can do for me. Your whole premise of investing your priceless glory to give it back to you is unreasonable. Who does that.

So, then, to wind this morning up, speaking about the glory of God that the angels announced, it's pretty clear in the parable that a day comes when the owner of the treasure will settle accounts. That day was December 14th 2017 for R.C. Sproul.

And if ever there was a good and faithful slave, he would be someone to model your life after.

But that other possibility in the story, that on the day of settling accounts the master says those awful words; *worthless*. *You worthless slave*. Those words should send a chill up your spine. I don't know about you, but to me those are terrifying words.

So, what are we doing that's making Satan mad. What are we doing that's cutting into his interests. Are souls being moved from the kingdom of darkness into the safety and joy of the kingdom of God, because of what we are doing.

We're like enemy combatants in a war. Are we gaining territory for the Kingdom of God. Because when that happens, God is glorified.

The multitude of angels shouted Glory to God in the highest on the morning of Jesus birth, because He is the treasure that takes souls away from Satan and moves them into the kingdom of God. Priceless value.

The possibility of peace and good will from God to men of every nation was all wrapped up in those swaddling cloths. And someday, He will return in glory, with 10,000's of His saints, and He will depose Satan and crush evil on this earth and reign forever in righteousness on David's throne. There will be ultimate peace and good will. Our God

reigns.