

Marked (Part 2) – The Glory of God

Matt Chandler – August 20, 2017

Good morning! It's good to see you. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Psalm 24. In fact, we'll camp out there for the entirety of the sermon. Last week we started our fall series we just entitled *Marked*. We wanted to talk about how God marked his people because he does it differently than how the world categorizes things.

What makes us distinct as the people of God is not our ethnicity. It's not our socioeconomic status. It's not our history. It's not our intellect. It's not our education. What makes us distinct, what marks us as different from the world around us, is God has named us. He has given us a name, and it's a name that feels like it doesn't fit. Then he grows us into more of what he has called us over a period of time.

We looked last week at Matthew 5 that Jesus says, "**You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world.**" He doesn't say you *will be*. He says you *are*. He gives us this name that doesn't feel like it fits. We don't *feel* like we're being salt. We don't *feel* like we're being light. But Jesus says, "You are, and you are because I am. You're not because you're awesome, but *I'm* awesome. I'm saying you are salt. You are light. I'm going to immerse you in this community of faith. Over a period of time, you will become saltier. You will become brighter lights."

I argued last week that it is in the confidence of believing that what God has called us, we actually are, all real spiritual growth actually occurs. It's in that place. I said this is going to be difficult for us because we live in an achievement-based culture. What that means is the measure of our worth is found in what we can produce.

We looked a little bit at Brené Brown's research last week. Brené is spot-on brilliant, and she is saying this. Women in an achievement culture feel completely crushed because the demand is perfection without effort. Perfect moms. Perfect wives. Perfectly sexy. Perfectly beautiful. Perfectly

talented. Able to juggle everything without ever stressing. Never freaks out. That's what you have to be.

Men bear the weight in an achievement-based culture of, "Don't ever be weak. Don't ever look fragile. Always have the answers. Don't be questioned. Get it done." The pressure on us all is do, do, do, do, do. More, more, more, more, more. Everything around us is a constant reminder that we don't measure up, right?

I mean, everything we see on TV, everything we see in our neighborhood, everything certainly you're scrolling through before you go to sleep at night is a reminder that you have not measured up to the standard of our day: perfection or ultimate strength. You need only go to your Instagram feed, ladies, to figure out you are not a great mom. That's all you have to do.

You don't have to read a new book. You don't have to even trust your internal feelings. Just open up your Instagram. Organic goldfish. Took their kids swimming. Seven kids all in a different activity, and they manage it without sweating. Look at her body. Apparently, she got that working out for seven minutes a day and eating M&Ms.

Men, we can kind of drink in and see we're not allowed to be weak. We'd better have all the answers. We have to carry the burdens of our family, and we have to succeed at work. All we have to do is look around and see *that* family went on a different vacation, or *that* family has nicer clothes. *They* have a better car.

We were in the same neighborhood at one point, and they've moved on to multiple other neighborhoods. We're still in what they call a "start-up" neighborhood (whatever that is). Growing up, there wasn't a start-up neighborhood. There was, "Praise God we have a house!" All right? It wasn't until I moved here that it was like, "Oh, it's a start-up neighborhood."

"What is a start-up neighborhood?"

"Well, it's where you *start*." I thought it's where you *finished*. When you had a house, you were finished. You had shelter. That's one of the ways we survive over time.

This is the culture in which we live. I said it's really important (in fact, it's *imperative*) for us to understand God sees us differently than we see ourselves. God's economy is not an achievement-

based economy. It's not how he works. His demand is not do, do, do, do, do. His demand is that we rest in Jesus' *done*. We rest in Jesus' finished work!

Really I'm just going to keep arguing that the way spiritual, ethical, moral transformation actually occurs is not via your *striving* but rather your *being*. More than it is you doing, doing, doing, it's you learning to rest in what God has called you in Christ. I'm not making this up. If you think I'm a liberal, let me read the Bible to you.

Second Corinthians 3:18 says this: "**And we all, with unveiled face...**" So we all (Christians), with unveiled face (seeing clearly) are "**...beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**"

Let's talk about this completely counterintuitive text. Here's what he just said. We all (Christians), with unveiled faces, are beholding the glory of the Lord and are being transformed from one degree of glory to the next into the image (into Jesus' image) by beholding the glory. How does spiritual transformation occur?

By looking at ourselves and going, "Well, I don't measure up. I don't have enough of the Bible memorized. I'm still struggling with *this*. I have *this* issue. *This* is really a wrestle for me. I have anxiety still. I'm still frustrated. I have a hard time trusting God. I want to punch that guy. I'm a terrible driver. I freak out when people are in the left lane going 30." All of that.

Or does the Bible say, "No, no, no. We all, with unveiled faces, by beholding the glory of God, are transformed from one degree of glory to the next into the image of the Son"? How do we become more like Jesus? By striving? No! By *being*. Not by mechanical steps but by organic growth resting in what God has called us and his promise to make us more of what we already are. The key to victorious Christian living is found in this truth.

Here's the deal. How can we believe that's true? I mean, how counterintuitive is that? When I read in the Bible that God says I'm holy, blameless, spotless, that I'm a son, that I'm a worshiper, that I'm a servant, that I'm a community, how am I supposed to believe that when everything else in my world...*everything* else in my world...demands I produce, demands I climb the ladder, that I do more, that I am more? How am I supposed to believe that?

Well, I said this fall what we're going to do is walk through our mission vision statement again, but we were going to come at it via the lens of *identity* rather than the lens of *doing*. Here is our vision mission statement again. "We exist to bring glory to God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service, and gospel-centered multiplication."

The way we're going to approach this this fall is to walk through this again, except walk through it with the lenses of *this isn't what we do; it's actually who we are!* We are worshipers. We are a community. We are servants. We are multipliers. God uses us to duplicate the good work he has done in us in the lives of others. We're going to attack it that way this fall (at least for the next six weeks).

Really the way and the place we get confidence that all of this is true is by (according to the Bible) looking at, beholding, the glory of God. Now "glory of God" is kind of religious language, isn't it? It's kind of this ethereal thing. What exactly is the glory of God? I'm glad you're asking that, because I have about 35-40 minutes on that. I'm glad you did.

Now let me just define it quickly, and then we're going to dive in. The glory of God is the singular splendor of God and its consequences for humankind. We'll dig into that a little bit more, but there's our definition. It's the singular splendor of God and its consequences for humankind. If you have your Bible, let's look at Psalm 24. This is where we'll be camping out as we look at the singular splendor of God and its consequences for humankind.

"The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah"

Selah means, "Stop." *Selah* means, "Don't check it off your reading list and move on to the next song." *Selah* means, "Stop. Dwell. Think. Consider." What we see in this text is the glory of God, the singular splendor of God, and its consequences for humankind. Let's look at what we can see as the singular splendor of God. The glory of God is an attribute of God that only God possesses. Humanity might have some form of glory, but it is a poor reflection of a greater reality.

I think the primary way you and I get insight into the glory of God (Christian or non-Christian) is via the common grace of creation. In fact, that's how the psalm begins. Look back at verse 1. **"The earth is the LORD'S and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers."** The glory of God is seen in a common grace way available to all men and women in the beauty of creation.

Now I think that's lost on many of us because we live in Dallas. I want to show you some pictures, but I don't want to frighten you. Let me show you this. There are places like *this* in the world. Those things in the background are mountains. Then this right here is not a reservoir. Man didn't backhoe this mug and fill it with water for clean water and showers. God put that there. It's called a lake. He just put it there. It's not a reservoir; it's a lake. If you've ever been to a place like this, it kind of makes the soul ache.

I'll show you another picture. This is stunning. This exists nowhere around here, but it exists. It's out there right now existing. The human soul is drawn to physical beauty all over the world. We want to go check out the Grand Canyon. We want to go see mountain ranges. We're drawn to the beach. We're drawn to the ocean. We would never articulate this. We love things that remind us we're small.

I mean, you don't vacation to Dallas (I don't think, unless you're watching a football game or something). You vacation at *these* places. There's no kind of scrolling Instagram account that's just pictures of mesquite trees and the suburbs. That doesn't exist (or it *shouldn't*). Yet, there are all sorts of places we can go to see *this* kind of imagery, and the human soul is drawn to it.

C.S. Lewis said nature creates a longing in the soul of man that it cannot fulfill. Isn't that a great idea? We go to Everest, and we feel small. We're like, "Surely there's something bigger than me. There's something mightier than me. There's something transcendent about the universe." Then the mountain doesn't solve the longing; it just helps us sense it.

There's something about standing in front of the Pacific Ocean and hearing the roar of the waves that makes you feel small, makes you believe maybe there's something bigger, makes you feel safe but a little bit scared for a moment. We're drawn to it, stirred up by it. Moses in Deuteronomy would go, "Hey, man, you think the Grand Canyon and Everest are a big deal? Let me lay this on you."

In Deuteronomy, chapter 10, starting in verse 14, Moses writes, "**Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.**" Moses wants to up the game. He is like, "Okay, you've seen the sunset over the Red Sea. You've seen Mount Sinai. You've seen all of it. Keep this in mind, brothers and sisters. Not just our heaven but the heavens of the heavens of the heavens belong to the Lord also!"

On top of the physical beauty of the creative order on earth, Moses rolls that out to the expanse of the universe. Here is a picture of a nebula that was sent back to earth from the Hubble Telescope. Now this gives us insight into the expanse of the universe. Our solar system is like this little baby solar system in the immensity of the expanse of infinite space. Are you tracking with me? Maybe this would help.

Our sun is considered a *tiny* sun in the scope of the universe. This nebula is like a trillion times the size of our solar system. One point three million earths can fill into the mass of our sun, and it's a baby sun. Isn't it like the God of the universe to use the small and insignificant to show his glory? It just really is! On repeat, he is not picking the team we would pick. "This little speck of dust will be *there* that I let my magnificence be seen."

I'll show you another picture of a nebula. These things exist. They're not paintings or portraits. Right now as we're spinning like a million-something miles an hour, held on to this little speck of dust via gravity, all of this is roaring and raging out there. Job wants to weigh in, and here's what Job says. "**Behold, these** [the universe, all of the creative order] **are but the outskirts** [or fringes] **of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?"**

I love what Job is getting at. Job is getting at, "Hey, man, you think the expanse of the universe is a big deal? Do you know how easy that was for God? Do you know how easy that was for the Creator?" If you read the narrative, God just said, "Do it," and it happened. Everything obeyed him,

and the force of that, "Let there be..." has been so significant and so powerful that to this very day, it is expanding in every direction imaginable.

It's all telling...what? The glory of God. It is important to note once again that all of this glory we're talking about right now, this singular thing we're seeing in the creation itself is all in the category of *common grace*. What do I mean by that? I mean, you don't have to be a Christian to see it and think it's awesome. You just know this, right? You don't have to be a Christian to take a picture and use your filter on Instagram of the sun setting over a body of water. You can *not* love Jesus, you can be a different religion, you can do all of that with no concern for the things of God at all.

You can even have that ache and longing in your heart these kind of beautiful things create and know nothing of the God of the Bible, the creator God of the Bible. It's called common grace. It's good things given to all mankind, humankind, regardless of their belief. It's one of the marks of the kindness of God on humankind.

This is one of the places we see it, but that's not the only way the glory of God is seen. The second one is a little bit more difficult for people to understand or at least to celebrate. But I just want to be really honest with you because the God who created all that will one day judge me for how well I've served you. I'm just going to preach the full counsel here and trust him with the results.

Not only does God's glory refer to the majestic beauty and splendor of creation, but also God's glory tied to his holiness is the ethical, moral plumb line by which all humankind will be judged. All right? The glory of God is not just seen in the common grace, beauty, of the creative order, but the glory of God is also seen in his holiness. The glory of God is the moral, ethical standard by which all humankind will be judged.

This is why the Bible says sin is falling short of the glory of God. Again, the psalmist is tying us into that. Look at his question. **"Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?"** In this glory in the sight of this glorious, this powerful, this mighty, this ferocious God, who can stand in his presence? Who can hang out with him on his holy hill? Who could be in the presence of this God?

He answers it like this: **"He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully."** That should discourage you because that just disqualified everyone in the room, pastor included. Who can dwell? This text might as well have

read, "Who can dwell in the presence of that glory?" Next line. "No one reading this!" If I could paraphrase it, that's what I would say. Not us!

That's kind of disappointing, right? So let's pray. I'm just kidding. We're just getting started. Now let's look. **He** [the person who *can* dwell, who *has* clean hands, who *has* a pure heart, who does *not* lift up his soul to what is false and does *not* swear deceitfully] **will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.**"

Sin is falling short of the glory of God. Everyone has fallen short of the glory of God. No one in this room is outside that verdict. We (all of us) have what theologians call the *sin of imputation*, which means we are sinners because we are in the line of Adam. When Adam sinned, death entered in to humankind. Therefore, death reigns in us all.

If you're a parent, you see this all the time. You are not born with a bent toward righteousness. You are born with a bent toward iniquity. You don't have to teach children to be disobedient. All my parents said, "Amen!" You don't have to teach that; it's just there. You see here that we all have this sin of imputation. We are born broken. King David said it like this: **"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."**

Then if it's not that sin of imputation (which everyone has), there are the personal sins of *omission* and *commission*. Sin can be, "I know this is right, and I'm not going to do it." But sin can also be, "I know this is wrong, and I choose to do it." All of us are guilty of that. There is no one in this room who is not guilty of both of those.

If I had more time, we would do the Ten Commandments test we've been doing for 15 years. Liars? Anybody a liar in here? I mean, come on. Okay. Does anybody lie? I know you're not a liar. You would never admit to that, but does anybody lie? Okay. So we lie. We're not liars. You covet, and covet doesn't feel like a big deal until you stop for a second and think what it is. When you covet, you make an accusation against God that he is not good and he doesn't know what he is doing.

You covet what your neighbor has. Your accusation is, "You don't know what's good. You have not done right by me. You are ruling and reigning in a way that's unfair, inconsistent, and I'm calling you out on it." Now coveting feels like a bigger deal, huh? Yeah, you're not pushing over fainting goats. You're slapping the Lion of Judah. That's different. It's different!

Hear me on this. God hates sin: imputed, personal, omission, commission. The type of white-hot wrath he has against sin is so significant it cannot be overstated. He is not indifferent. Any version of God that has him fluttering about like a fairy never bothered by what is explicitly sinful is inconsistent with the Bible and would be inconsistent with multiple other philosophies.

To love greatly is to have the possibility of wrath. Again, I could appeal to my parents. You know this. You love your children, which is why if anyone were to ever try to harm them, you would feel wrath flare up in you. Would you not? Why? Because you love them. In fact, the absence of wrath reveals the absence of love.

God, who is infinite in his love, abounding in steadfast love, according to the Bible, sees the damage of sin both imputed and personal, omission and commission. He sees the carnage it wreaks on his creative order, which is all there to bring glory to his name and joy to his people. He hates it, will judge it, and will ultimately destroy all of it.

If you need to know how serious he is, you need only to look to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and the reality of hell. Both are public realities that help reverberate through our minds and souls just how much God hates sin and just how serious he is about eradicating it and destroying it forever.

God's glory becomes the moral, ethical plumb line by which all humankind will be judged. We have been judged, and here's the pronouncement. Here's the verdict on us all: we have fallen short. At this point, you're probably thinking, "This is a *terrible* sermon! Literally, I'm sitting here, and you're just telling me I've fallen short of the glory of God. I have hell and the cross. I'm just so confused. I don't know what you're talking about."

Just hang in there. There's good news coming. Now we need to move to... If we've talked about kind of the singular splendor of the glory of God, now we need to move to its human consequences or its consequences for humankind. The question I want to answer is, "How has God revealed his glory to his people?"

We saw in the first section of this sermon that the way God has revealed that glory to all humankind via common grace is through creation. But theologians would also talk not just about common grace

to all mankind and humankind but rather a *special* grace he reveals to his people, his presence, his power, his glory for his people alone to see, to reflect, and to be beacons of reconciling light.

How does he do that? Well, throughout the Scriptures, we read of this glory that the Hebrews would call the *shekinah* glory. In the *shekinah* glory, the presence and power of God among his people would show up as fire, as thunder, or as a flame. There would be a visible manifestation of the presence of God. They knew he was there, not in kind of his omnipresence. Are you tracking with that?

Omnipresence is a doctrine that says God is everywhere always in his totality, which means God is all here in the same way he is all at the outskirts of the universe right now. He is everywhere at once in his fullness. That's his omnipresence. When we're talking about *shekinah* glory, that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about manifest presence, visible presence. It's different than omnipresence. It's, "The Lord is here!"

We see that throughout the Bible. In fact, the first place we actually see *shekinah* glory is in Genesis 1 where the Bible says, "**And the Spirit of God [the *shekinah* glory] was hovering over the face of the waters [before creation begins].**" I have to cover the Old Testament in about three minutes, so hang in there.

The smoking fire and flaming torch scene by Abraham as he walks through the sacrifice as he is called to be the father of many nations... Remember? He didn't have any kids, and he had to wait 25 years. He had to wait from 1992 to 2017, if you were here last week. That was the *shekinah* glory. The burning bush as seen by Moses is the *shekinah* glory.

The presence and power of God as seen in the cloud and pillar of fire in the book of Exodus is the *shekinah* glory. The people of God camped around the tabernacle in Exodus communicated the concept of Immanuel, God with us. If you were here, we studied Exodus for nine months. If you were here in that, what happened? The tabernacle was erected, and what happened? A cloud fell. The glory settled on the tabernacle, and the people of God knew the presence of God was there. They fell on their faces, and they worshiped.

That cloud and that pillar of fire stayed with the people of Israel. It kept them from rebellion. It provided manna. It provided water out of rocks. The presence of God was there in such a way that it humbled the people of God. Later in the book of 1 Samuel in an ill-witted battle God had not called

the people of God into... The people of God are constantly taking on causes that aren't the causes of God. It happened in the Bible. It happens to this day.

They're in this tiff with the Philistines, and the ark is actually taken from the Israelites. The cloud departs. During that time, there was a son named Ichabod, which means, "The glory has departed." The cloud no longer settled on the temple, and the pillar of fire was gone. Then when they got the ark back after the building of the new temple by Solomon, the cloud descended once again. Fire fell from the sky and burned up the sacrifices on the altar.

Now from there, Israel begins... Even with the presence of God visibly there, they begin to rebel. I want you to try to get your mind around this. You have the presence of God physically manifest in this cloud nestled over the temple. The people of God continue now to rebel against God, worship other gods, give themselves over to perversion, begin to behave as though they are smarter than God, and begin to break the law of God in the presence of God.

I don't know about you. I know my kids do shady things. They don't do shady things in front of me. I can tell you that. I mean, there are certainly repercussions if you try to be shady in front of me. You might try to go behind my back, and then I've already prayed the Lord would give me a word or just bust you outright. But ultimately, they're just doing it right in the face of the presence of God. The cloud is there, and they're worshipping other gods. They're giving themselves over to perversions.

What God does is he just takes away the presence and sends his people into exile. Literally, the cloud goes away. The physical manifestation of the presence of God vanishes, and the people of God are sent into captivity for the purification, for the glory, to once again return. Something really cool happens in Ezekiel 1. I know I probably don't need to read that. I think Ezekiel is many people's favorite book, but let me read this to you. Ezekiel 1:27 and 28. Something really significant is happening here.

"And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking."

Let me tell you what's significant about Ezekiel 1. Up until this moment, the manifest presence of God is cloud. It's gleaming light. It's flashes of lightning. It's thunder and rumbling. What does Ezekiel see? All of that embodied in a human. Did you hear? He said, "From his waist, I saw metal that was flashing like fire. I saw a brilliant, illuminated cloud from his waist, from his body."

We begin to see in Ezekiel the glory of God, when it comes again, will not come as a cloud and rest on the tabernacle. In fact, from that moment, the people are sent into exile. Even when Nehemiah comes back, builds the wall, and reestablishes the temple, the cloud never falls on it again. What we get is Ezekiel saying, "The glory of God, next time it shows up, will come as a man."

Then John the Baptist shows up declaring the kingdom of God is at hand, and the glory of the Lord is in our midst. The book of Hebrews would say this about Jesus. Hebrews 1, starting in verse 3 says, **"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..."**

Let's walk through this really quickly. The first thing to note about Jesus as the glory of God is this text says he is the radiance of the glory of God. Here's the good news. As Christians, we no longer need clouds to settle. We no longer need thunder in the distance. We don't need flashes of lightning. Christ has come. He has saved us. He has filled us with his Holy Spirit so the cloud of God's manifest power dwells inside us as the people of God.

It's not an *outside* manifestation; it is manifested *inside* of us. Here's what I think is important to know. I think a lot of us would just kind of maybe rather have the cloud. "Yeah, I mean, that's kind of cool, but how cool would it be...? I mean, just think for a second, Pastor, if you just got up in the morning, and there was a cloud there. You just followed the cloud around. You just knew God was present."

I mean, that didn't go well for Israel. I don't know why you think that's going to go well for you. I mean, that cloud being there certainly did not stop Israel from worshiping Baal, from worshiping other gods, even as the cloud was present. Because we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus dwelling inside of us frees us up to do two things.

First, I am Baptistical. You just have to know that, all right? I believe the sufficiency of Scripture. We're going to preach the Word of God, but I have a little "-costal" in me too, all right? I want to see

the power of the Holy Spirit do miraculous and beautiful things. I want to see people healed of diseases. I want fire to fall. I want all of that. I'm hungry for it, and I pray and plead. I can leave disappointed. I can leave having wanted God to do more than he did because I know he is an inexhaustible well. I just want him to work.

I also want to hold that in tension because I know I've been here for like a second, and he is eternal. I want to walk in a great deal of humility, but I want it. This frees me up to see the ordinary days of my life as being supernatural and divine. Let me try to walk you through that because I think in an achievement-based culture, everything is measured by how big it is, how flashy it is, how excellent it is.

We talked about this in Exodus. Some of God's most significant works take place over a long period of time in just everyday, faithful presence. Let me give some examples: some that will look and feel spiritual, and some that don't. It just looks like play.

It is a supernatural thing for me to climb into bed with my 8-year-old daughter and say prayers at night. Now I've never done that and had an angel of the Lord show up. I've never just prayed with Norah, "How can I pray for you? What's going on? Okay, let's pray," and in the middle of our prayer, a glowing angel shows up that made us both fall on our faces for fear of death.

That's never happened. I've never been praying with Norah and had her give me a prophetic utterance. I'm just climbing in bed and praying with my 8-year-old. I just have to believe that in the years to come, that will produce a kind of harvest that's transcending the five minutes that takes in the evening.

Earlier this week, I was at the kitchen island, and I was muscling through... Where I am in my Bible reading plan right now is 1 Chronicles. It's an awesome book. It's just muscling through those first couple of chapters where I don't know... This is my personality type. I need to know who this guy is. So I'll go back to Genesis.

I'm like, "Oh my gosh! He is not even named anywhere else. Why would God just put this one random name here when we don't know anything about this guy?" I need answers, and there aren't any. It's like, "Okay, it's the inerrant Word of God. I know it's in here for some reason. I'm just going to let it go, move on."

I'm muscling through that, journal and Bible open, and my son walks in. I've been honest. I'm not in 1 Chronicles 1 and 2 going, "Oh the glories of God! Don't bother me right now. The *shekinah* glory is descending on to the..." No, no, no. It's just my son got to see his daddy in the Word. It's just my son got to see it.

Then if we want to take it out of the world of spiritual and just highlight some things that are spiritual that you might not think of as spiritual realities, Friday night about (my guess is around) 9:15-9:30, my youngest, Norah, came in and just said, "Hey, Dad, I invented a game. Do you want to play it?" I was like, "Okay, yeah." "You have to play it in the pool." Now again, I don't know how you're wired, what you're doing Friday night at 9:30. I'm working my way toward bed. I am certainly not working my way toward pool party with an 8-year-old.

I mean, just to be clear, 90 percent of the time I'm saying no to that. Ninety percent! But for whatever reason, I said, "Do you know what? Let's do it." I went and dove in the pool with Norah. The game made no sense. I still don't understand it. I lost every time. The rules changed every time. I was saying stuff like, "Well, last game these were the rules." Listen to how shady this little girl is. Pray for us! She said, "Well, the rules change as the game progresses." Shady! Shady! I already covered depravity. That's an example.

Here's what we did. I went out, and I played this ridiculous game for about 45 minutes. Then we got out. We dried off. She went to bed. I went to bed. All we did was play. Surely something in my 8-year-old's little soul got a glimpse of God's grace, got a glimpse of God's playfulness, got a glimpse of God's love by knowing her old man doesn't like to get in the pool at 9:30 at night but did this one time.

See, we don't think of things like that as holy, and yet I'm telling you those are the things God uses to shape and mold and produce a fruit that's beyond what we could dream. See, all this desire for big, bold, fast, famous, large, and silver-bullet miracles, I want you to long for those things, but never despise the ordinary, because Jesus is.

This beautiful radiance of the glory of God and the Spirit of God lives inside of us. Saying your prayers at night, hopping in the swimming pool, giving yourself over to love and to serve are means of grace God is using to shape. They're not boring. They're beautiful. Be steadfast. Be steadfast! That's not all it says about Jesus as the glory of God. He is not just the radiance of the glory of God. He is also the exact imprint of his nature.

I'll just say it. If you want to know the nature and character of God, read the Gospels. Watch the life of Jesus. If you struggle with self-condemnation, if you cannot show yourself compassion because in our achievement-based culture you will be hyper aware of where you fail... You can't help it! "This is where I don't measure up. This is where I fall short. This is what I wish I was more of."

If all of that just is choking you and it's seeped into how you understand God relates to you, you're just hyper aware of all the ways you've fallen short and all the ways God can't love you and why and *this* and *that* and *this*, just go read the Gospels. Watch what Jesus does to the woman caught in adultery.

Watch how Jesus has the conversation with the woman at the well in John, chapter 4. Pay attention to how Jesus interacts with Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus is a terrible human being. There is no moral equivalent I know of in the United States of America as to what Zacchaeus and the other tax collectors were. They were despicable, deplorable, disgusting human beings deserving of death.

What does Jesus do? "Zacchaeus! Hey, man. Can I have lunch at your house? We should eat. Let's go eat." What did the religious people do? They grumbled, for Jesus ate with the tax collectors and sinners. Right? Do you want to know what God is like? Pay attention to Jesus, because he is the exact imprint of his nature.

Then I love this. All of that common grace beauty is held together by the word of his power. This makes the incarnation stunning. Jesus, who is the active agent of all of that creation, those nebulas, those sunsets, those mountains, it's Jesus who puts all that together. Then Philippians 2 says he empties himself of power, and he puts on *this*. This physical body, fragile, weak, limited, grows weary, needs food, has to have sleep.

Jesus, coeternal with the Father, he doesn't sleep. He knows nothing of the limitations of humanity until he emptied himself of that power and put on flesh to dwell among us. Here we are again. God with us. Immanuel. The manifold presence of the glory of God among his people: Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, Son of God. Why? Why is he putting on this flesh as the one even who upholds the universe by the word of his power? Well, the next line tells us.

"After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." I love the fact that he sat down. "I'm done." He put his feet up. Here's what happens. He empties

himself of this power, and he puts on flesh and dwells among us. Here's what the book of Romans tells us about all that. "**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**" Why? Because Christ did what you and I could not do, weak as we are in the flesh in that he kept the law perfectly.

Now keep in mind where we are in the song. "Who may ascend? Who may dwell? Who may be in the presence of this glory?" He who has clean hands. He who has a pure heart. He who has not lifted his soul to idols, who has not defiled himself with lies. Again, we've already covered it. You're disqualified. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but Jesus did what we could not do, weak as we are in the flesh.

If you don't have a background in church, let me just lay this. Man, I didn't, and I was really confused at what the death of a Jewish guy 2,000 years ago had to do with *me*. "What does that have to do with *my* life? That makes zero sense. Even if he was a great teacher and a moral philosopher, what does him dying on the cross have to do with me?"

It's like saying Gandhi is going to change my life because he starved himself to death. What does that have to do with me? Well, here's what it has to do. Jesus comes, and he does what we could not do. As Adam imputed to us sinfulness, Jesus now is going to impute to us righteousness and cleanliness.

What's going to happen on the cross is, as they tear the flesh off his body, as they beat him till he is bloody and his eyes are closed up and they cram nails through his hands, a crown of thorns through his skull and spit on him, mock him, and belittle him, he is willingly absorbing all of God's wrath toward those who would believe and repent in his name.

That sacrifice was so sufficient that it paid for the sins past, present, and future (*all* of the sins past, present, and future) for all who would believe upon the name of Jesus. We're confident of this because he resurrected from the grave. What are the wages of sin? Death. Well, Jesus isn't dead. He rose again. According to the text, his work is finished.

Not only does Jesus say on the cross (last words), "**It is finished.**" What is he talking about? He is talking about this. This text is like he is just sitting down next to the right hand of the Father and Majesty. Done. Now watch this, because our culture is like do, do, do. Achieve, achieve, achieve. Grow, grow, grow, grow, grow. Jesus is like sitting down, feet up. Done. Finished. Complete.

Now this is where this is so hard for us. Like, really? Here's what God says. "You are holy. You are blameless. You are spotless." Achievement-based culture immediately takes my mind here. "Oh no I'm not!" I am hyper-aware of where I fall short of all of that. What should then be our response? Look back at the psalm starting in verse 7.

"Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah"

How are we to respond to Jesus being the glory of God made manifest in us via the Holy Spirit? The answer to an achievement-based culture that would have you *doing* rather than *being*, operating out of mechanical steps rather than surrendering to organic growth, the key is to lift your heads up. The key is to look up because as he says, "You're holy. You're blameless. You're spotless," you go, "I'm not. I'm really not! So let me go over here and try to be that for you, God."

Instead, God is going, "No, no. Look up at me. Look at me. *I am able. I am perfect. I am the King of Glory. I am mighty in battle. You're not mighty in battle. I am mighty in battle.* There isn't enough creatine monohydrate out there to save you from the spiritual realities you're in war with. There isn't enough achievement out there to match *my* perfect glory, so I'll do it for you.

You are mine. Lift up your heads and look at me. You fix your eyes on me. I am the author, and I am the perfecter of your faith. You will be transformed from one degree of glory to the next in the image of Jesus by beholding my glory. Get your heads up."

We talk about this all the time. This is the only right response to the glory of God. Tim Keller said the founders of every major religion said, "I'll show you how to find God." It was Jesus alone who said, "I am God who has come to save you." Do you hear the difference in that? Keller says all the prophets of all the other world religions say, "Here are the steps to find God." It is only Jesus who shows up and says, "I am God, and I've come to save you." That's wildly different. Wildly different!

Here's my question, and then we're going to pray. Are you more aware and driven by the knowledge of your shortcomings and failures than you are aware of and driven by God's mercy and grace to you in Jesus Christ? It is not a bad thing to know where you fall short of the glory of God.

Remember God hates sin. But being aware of those things, does that drive you into the grace of God, or are you so aware of those that you have minimized the grace of God and you have left orthodox Christian faith and you're out here trying to earn what you will never be able to earn?

Perfection belongs to Jesus. It doesn't belong to you. Strength belongs to Jesus. It does not belong to you. In the mercy of God, all of that has been made available via the glory of God. It's just right there for the surrendering into. I mean, you could keep doing it your way. How's that going? Just a thought. Just a thought! God is up to something in your life, Christian. I know you might have a whole list of reasons right now of why what God is saying about you cannot be true. But I am telling you, the Bible says this is how he sees you, regardless of how you see yourself.

Not only does he call you that, but he is making you more of this over time as he has immersed you into his community of faith. This is what we celebrate and rejoice in. We push past and remind ourselves of the gospel as we become more and more aware of where we have fallen short. We just trust that God is able.

I mean, we can just look out at the stars. We can look out at sunsets. We can look out at something crazy like an eclipse (I don't know; something like that) and just marvel at the fact that the God who spoke all that into being manages all of that, upholds all of that, has set the plumb line for moral and ethical judgment, has said of us, "You are my sons. You are my daughters. You are fully, freely, and forever forgiven by the blood of Jesus." Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for your glory. We want to behold it. We want it to shape us and mold us. I thank you that it is out of this understanding that true spiritual transformation takes place, not in our striving and doing but in our resting and being. This is hard. It's counterintuitive. Spirit, will you teach our souls these things? Not our minds. We don't want talking points. We want your Spirit to shape us.

For my brothers and sisters who are in this room and just exhausted, just hyper-aware of how unloved they are or how unworthy of love they feel, hyper-aware of where they've fallen short, what they've done, or they've been mastered by shame, crushed by guilt, I just pray all of this would land like warm water on the soul today, that they might leave this place convinced all the more of your goodness, all the more of your grace.

May you free my brothers and sisters from the bondage of performance and into the rest of being sons and daughters of the King of Glory, mighty in battle, strong and kind. Help us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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