

Text: John 1:14

Title: Beholding His glory

Time: 4/23/2023 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: You may remember reading *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by Washington Irving, a tale about a schoolteacher who was chased out of town by a headless horseman. The schoolteacher is an inglorious character. Irving points out the failings of his teaching career, the failings of his courtship efforts, and even the failings of his appearance. Here is what he said about the schoolteacher's appearance:

"He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weathercock, perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew. To see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him, one might have mistaken him for the genius of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow eloped from a corn-field."

Irving explains, "The cognomen of Crane was not inapplicable to his person." Our cognomen is our family name, and Irving is telling us that this schoolteacher looked like a crane. The name his parents gave him at birth, of course, was *Ichabod*. Ichabod Crane is the inglorious schoolteacher of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

Irving names him *Ichabod* in part because he knew his Bible. *Ichabod* is the name first given to the newborn of Eli's son Phineas in 1 Samuel 4, and he was given that name by his mother, who did so saying, "The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken." *Ichabod* means *the glory has departed*. That was the day the Philistines defeated Israel and took possession of the ark of God, which Israel had recklessly taken with them into battle as a good-luck charm.

Whereas 1 Samuel 4 tells the story of *Ichabod*, the departure of the glory of the Israel, the Gospel of John tells the story of God's glory returning among men. Our text explains, "The Word [the eternal Son of God (vv. 1-2), the Creator of all things (v. 3), the Giver of light and life (vv. 4-5), and the Lord of John the Baptist (v. 6-7)] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (1:14).

The word *dwelt* in our text literally means *tabernacled*. What John is describing here is the opposite of what happened in 1 Samuel 4. There the glory was stripped out of the God-designed tabernacle when the ark was lost. Here the glory is tabernacled once again among men through a better design of God – the God-man Jesus Christ.

Glory is a major theme of the Gospel of John because John wants us to know about the glory of Jesus Christ.

His glory is a glory He shares with the Father (17:5, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was"). And remarkably, it is a glory He gives to those who follow Him by faith (17:22, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one"). The glory of Christ makes us one in Him.

Everything Jesus did was done for the glory of His Father (17:4, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do"). And as the recipients of His grace and truth, all we do must bring Him glory (17:10, "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them"). He saved us to the praise of His glory.

Notice with me three other things John teaches us about the glory of Jesus.

I. The glory of Jesus is the glory of the unique Son of God (1:14, "glory as of the only-begotten of the Father").

Illustration: We live in a world that was made by our glorious God, but which has been marred by man's inglorious fall into sin and its curse. In spite of our fall, however, we can catch glimpses of our Creator's glory in the handiwork of His creation. The psalmist sang about the way "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). A great way to experience the truth of that song is to take a walk up Hooper Hill at twilight and look westward at the setting sun over the distant hills. The sky explodes with color as far as the eye can see.

I was in a hotel van Wednesday morning on my way back to the Cedar Rapids airport with some fellow passengers, one of whom was headed to San Francisco and looking forward to seeing the Redwood Forest of Northern California. These gigantic trees are a glorious sight. It makes sense to fly hundreds of miles to go see glory like that.

Application: John wants us to catch sight of the glory of the Maker of these other glories. The glory of Jesus is the glory of the unique Son of God. *Only-begotten* does not refer to

Jesus's birth, for He was in the beginning in the same sense that God the Father was (vv. 1-2). Instead, the phrase means *only happening* or *unique*. He alone possesses the glory of the Son of God.

John says he saw that glory as a disciple of Jesus when Jesus walked this earth. But his view was glory tabernacled in humanity. There is a sense in which what John saw was the Son of God's glory behind the veil. In chapter 12 of his Gospel, however, he tells us that Isaiah saw the unveiled glory of the unique Son of God (12:37-41). In this passage, John is referring to Isaiah 6, where the prophet sees Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, high and lifted up on His temple throne, with His royal train filling the temple, and with the Seraphim crying out day and night, "Holy, holy, holy!"

Isaiah falls down as a man undone and unclean before the glory of the unique Son of God. We must fall down before Jesus in this same way, for His glory is the glory of the unique Son of God. Peter did so after a great catch of fish (Luke 5:8-9, "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken"). It was when Peter learned to do that, that Jesus promised him, "From henceforth you shall catch men." Can we see the glory of the unique Son of God the way Isaiah and John and Peter did? If not, we must open our eyes wider.

II. The glory of Jesus is full of grace and truth (1:14, "full of grace and truth").

Illustration: When Moses attended the top of Mount Sinai to receive the law of God, he asked to see God's glory: "Now show me your glory" (Exod. 33:18). The Lord was pleased to give Moses what he asked for: "And he said, I will make

all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.”

When we think of the heavens declaring the glory of God, we normally think of the glory of the greatness of God. And yet, the heavens declare His goodness too. They tell us He is all powerful, but they also tell us that He cares for us in love. The heavens include the atmosphere that provides air for us to breathe. It wraps us like a protective blanket, keeping us warm and shielding us from harmful solar rays and meteorite debris. Our atmosphere is the engine of the water cycle. Its weather keeps us nourished and fed.

Application: The glory of Jesus is the glory of the God who met Moses on Sinai, and the glory of the God of Sinai is especially His goodness. His glory is full of grace and truth.

This message of the goodness of the glory of Jesus was the message John the Baptist preached to a lost and dying world, full of condemnation and lies (1:15-17). Some see a contrast in that last verse, teaching that grace and truth were not a part of Moses’s law, but did you notice the word *but* is italicized, meaning it is not in the original Greek?

A better understanding here is “Because the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” This is what is meant by the previous phrase, *grace for grace*. The law of Moses told us that the grace and truth of the glory of Jesus Christ was coming. It was a revelation of grace in outline in anticipation of grace in fullness. We have seen the outlines of grace in our study of the tabernacle.

So, Jesus’s glory was full of grace and truth, and John the Baptist views himself and his listeners as greatly blessed

because they had received this grace (v. 16). Have we received this grace? Its greatest expression of goodness is our last point about the glory of Jesus this morning.

III. The glory of Jesus is the cross (1:14, “the Word became flesh [so He could die for our sins]”).

Illustration: We have a hymn in the back of our hymnals that was written by our former deacon, Bryan Henderson, titled, “Praise the Mighty King.” Bryan is a godly man of great insight, and he captures the glory of the cross of Jesus especially well in the last two verses of his hymn:

“To the cross our Lord was nailed and with each blow the darkness failed. Death has lost its sting today as Christ has giv’n to us the Way. From the darkness Satan’s zeal has bruised with death the Savior’s heel. From a cross of crimson red our Savior crushed the serpent’s head.”

Application: That is how the glory of Jesus is the glory of the cross. The eternal Son of God became a man to show us His glory through His death for our sins on Calvary. Often John tells us of Christ’s being “lifted up” while referring to the cross (12:32-33, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die”).

John is clear that it was glory for Jesus to suffer the ignominious shame of Calvary:

John 12:23, “And Jesus answered them, saying The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.”

John 13:31-32, “Therefore, when he [Judas Iscariot after receiving the sop] was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of

man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.”

And so, what the world ruled by Satan intended to be inglorious, the brutal Roman crucifixion of Jesus Christ, in reality was an event of the great glory of our Savior. No greater love for you and for me was ever felt or displayed. It is very simply the great glory of Jesus that He loves us and died for our sins.

Conclusion: As we conclude this morning, we must do so with one last truth about glory that John’s Gospel teaches us. John teaches us that the world around us offers a counterfeit glory, which has nothing to do with the glory of God.

In John 5:44 Jesus asks, “How can ye believe which receive honour [glory] one of another and seek not the honour [glory] that cometh from God only?” Our enemy tempts us with glory that comes from man rather than glory that comes from God only. John explains why people make this choice in 12:43, “For they loved the praise [glory] of men more than the praise [glory] of God.” What do we love?

To our postmodern day of media-enabled self-promotion and narcissism, Jesus warns from the Gospel of John, “He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him” (7:18).

Even the world’s false religions offer a glory that is obtainable only through the rejection of the glory of the true Christ. Speaking of the Pharisees’ interview of the man born blind, whom Jesus healed, John wrote: “Then again called they

the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise [glory]: we know that this man is a sinner" (9:24).

The man born blind knew better. He could see now, not only physically, but with the eyes of faith he could see the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Pharisees could not. How well do you and I behold His glory, "the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"? Are our eyes filled with His glory, or are they truly focused on something else? The Word was made flesh so we could see His glory. It would be truly tragic to close our eyes refusing to look.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*