



Glory

Ephesians 1: 6 NIV

...to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

What Stirs Your Heart?

I've only come across celebrities a couple of times and not once was my life improved as far as I can tell by the encounter. Now, with the internet and the promotion of celebrity stories on dominant websites such as TMZ and Yahoo, they are always in front of us, coming to us on our phones far more often than our friends or family members. We know more about Kanye West than we do our cousins. People we will never meet are a major part of our consciousness and it is strange to think how pulled into their lives we are. Someone I barely had any idea who she was captivated my thoughts the past two weeks and it is because of the tragic ending of her life. I have never watched a single show where she starred, haven't heard any of her songs and never read a line from her autobiography but, she was on my mind often for that brief span. Naya Rivera was out boating with her four-year old son on a lake in southern California and the two of them jumped in the water to swim a while. For some reason, Ms. Rivera was barely able to get her son back up onto the boat before she sunk below the surface and drowned. All I really know about Naya Rivera and perhaps that is the best there is, is her self-less act of love in mustering the last bit of strength she had to hoist her son up to safety. You could make the point that the love of Naya Rivera was glorious. As Jesus stated without equivocation, "**Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends**". (John 15: 13)

Our key verse points out the glorious grace of God in saving us. The text says it is praised or applauded. Stand up and cheer is the sense of this. A standing ovation! Literally, we are to celebrate "the glory of his grace". Glory has a rich literary history in the Bible. In the Old Testament, it is usually the translation of the Hebrew word "cavode", a term that means weighty, overwhelming, heavy. Mostly, cavode or glory describes God and what He has done. To give you a sense of the flavor of the term, glory is found in Exodus 24: 17 when Moses recounts what it was like to go up on Mt. Sinai to meet with the Lord. A great, dense cloud covered the peak and it states that the glory of the Lord settled there. Verse 17 reads, **To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.** (NIV) In Leviticus 9:23, fire is again associated with the glory of the Lord. **Moses and Aaron then went into the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.** (Leviticus 9:23-24 NIV) Several hundred years later, a similar experience with the glory of God took place when King Solomon offered sacrifices on the altar of the newly opened Temple of the Lord. **When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."** (2 Chronicles 7:3 NIV)

There was associated with the glory of the Lord a magnificence, a wild and dangerous side to it that brought both fear and reverence to the people experiencing Him. Each of these encounters that revealed God's glory underscored the difference between the Lord and the people. He was God and they weren't. We see something like this in the New Testament but at a different scale. The Greek term translated glory in the New Testament is "doxa" When Paul met Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, he reported that the glory of the light that blinded him made it impossible for him to see. Glory in the New Testament had to do with the greatness and majesty of God and often it was connected to grace as in our key verse. Let me share two examples of how the term glory is used to speak of Christ and what He does.

In John 11, Jesus was confronted by the death of His friend Lazarus. Both of Lazarus's sisters were certain that if Jesus had showed up on time when they first sent word of his condition, their brother would have survived. Christ came too late though, and it was heart-wrenching for them. The two were ready to grieve, but they weren't prepared to celebrate. Jesus had come to Bethany, not to join them for a funeral service; He was at their home to raise the dead. When Jesus approached the tomb and shouted out into the cave, "Lazarus, come forth", He did so with an end goal in mind. He was proving to the world that death had no hold on Him and could not imprison His people. It was foolish to worry about death, crazy to fret over it because Jesus is in complete control over its impact. We live in dread of dying and Christ just laughs at it as a lion would laugh at a mouse. Like the Apostle Paul, Jesus mocks, **"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"** (1 Corinthians 15:55 NIV) Jesus' response to Martha who had no idea why Jesus demanded that the tomb where Lazarus lay dead be opened when his body would be stinking in rot shows us what glory really is. **Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"** (John 11:40 NIV) The glory of God is seen when our death becomes life!

Another account in John accentuates just how profound the glory of God is. We typically think of God's glory as something about how spooky powerful and majestic He is. In John 2 though, it defines how marvelous His work in us is. This is where the famous account of Jesus turning the water into wine occurs. Jesus, along with His mother and Jesus' disciples were invited to a wedding feast and the groom ran out of wine. It was disastrous because in a small village, generations would recall the time the groom didn't have enough money to provide for his guests. Mary, who may have been related to the bridal party, told Jesus that there wasn't any wine. How terrible! What a tragedy! Jesus though wasn't moved much by the seeming disaster. His reply is almost funny. "What to you and to me?" In other words, "What does that have to do with us?" He adds, "My hour has not yet come", meaning, my time to save the world hasn't arrived.

Jesus then told the servants of the groom to fill the six large empty jars standing nearby with water. Consider the number six and its meaning. Six is the number of incompleteness; the number of falling short, of rebellion against God and the number of Sin. Six, six, six in Revelation is the number of Satan and the followers of the devil. This is an important detail in understanding what this miracle meant. Christ told the servants to fill the stone jars to the very top; the Greek text providing the detail that they were to be filled so much that there would not be room for another drop. Then of course the miracle happened. When Jesus ordered the servants to draw out of the stone jars whatever they found in them, the water had been transformed into wine. The Bible calls this a sign, the head of them, the first sign which revealed Christ's glory. **This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.** (John 2:11 NIV)

There are two parts to this that must be explored. First, this was a sign, it showed something important, something critical for believing. Second, it made it clear the glory found in Christ. What was the sign? Those six water jars were in the home because they were used for purification. You took water from them to make yourself ceremonially clean, clean for those at the party and clean before God. There were six of them. They could never live up to that great responsibility. Not one drop from the jars could make a single person clean...or right with God. Transformation is what is needed and only Jesus can do that. When the

water turned to wine, it was a picture of death coming to life, of sin removed and salvation arriving, of you being born again.

The glory of God is this. Jesus makes you completely new. He transforms you so that you are perfect, holy, and good. No one else can do this but Jesus. He is the resurrection and the life. As different as water is from wine is you and who you are becoming in Christ. The glory of grace is the amazing work God does in you through Christ crucified. Not an ounce of sin left in you, not an inch of emptiness and wasted life to be found. All of you will be filled with God and His power and joy of life within. Get ready. The glory of God is coming, and you will have it all. Nothing can stand in His way as Christ makes you perfect!