

Series: The Story	Reference: <i>Various Scriptures</i>	Title: His Glory, Our Joy	Date: 2.28.2021
Website Writeup:			
We think through two questions today as we continue to look at the complete Story of the Bible. Firstly, what reveals God's greatest glory? And secondly, what brings about our greatest joy? The answer may surprise you!			

(This material is largely derived from UnveilingGLORY's YouTeach series.)

This is the 2nd sermon of a four-part series titled, *The Story*. Today we're talking about God's greatest glory for our greatest joy! The Mission of God & our joy & even happiness are inextricably linked. **Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice!"**

It would seem God wants us joyous...even commands it. Specifically, it tells us to rejoice *in the Lord!* Happiness, or joy is intrinsically found in Him, not that we can't enjoy the people, places & things of creation, but ultimately joy's rooted in the Lord as Creator of all things - all good comes from Him. For instance, Kim & I were canoeing in the Everglades at 4:30a, it was dark & suddenly the water lit up with bioluminescence! I thanked God for that moment! Psalm 16:11 tells us how much God desires our joy & pleasure when it says...*"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore..." (ESV)*

God wants our joy to be full & complete in Him which has everything to do with His presence. Jesus speaks of this in John 17:24 where **He prays...***"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me ..."* The key to joy is being in God's presence, witnessing His glory - the only thing which completely satisfies our souls! Form that neural connection! God's glory is the only thing which brings deep soul satisfaction.

But let's change 'fullness' to 'greatest'. When we see God's greatest glory, we have greatest joy. God's glory is God's glory. It cannot be greater or lessor than it is. But we don't see it completely all the time. 1 Corinthians 13:12 says we see [God & His glory] in a mirror dimly. But later, we shall see [God & His glory] face to face! God wants us to see how glorious He actually is - His greatest glory! **This is the connection we need to get, when we see His greatest glory, we have greatest joy!**

If He desires us to be full of joy, then He'd endeavor to show us His greatest glory. **There's one simple strange biblical principle to understand how...God reveals greater glory when He unifies that which is diverse or divided.** Think about how you feel when you see those videos of a soldier coming home surprising his family, or even his dog! When we see reunification of people long-divided, or better yet, true repentance, forgiveness & reconciliation, there's an overwhelming sense of joy in us!

A couple on the verge of divorce, hating each other, filled with anger & bitterness. We open the Scriptures with them. God opens their eyes, then love & forgiveness reign

again. When those things happen, God gets more glory in our eyes. Not that He's any more glorious than He was beforehand, but we see His glory more clearly through such experiences.

You work with Hezbollah & Israeli soldiers filled with decades of hatred & bitterness for each other. You share the Word of God with them, God opens their hearts to see Him! They find healing & forgiveness, and lay down their guns. They gather with the couple who were going to be divorced...all worship the Lord in harmony revealing God's glory even more! More diversity unified through His power.

Add to those a Hindu from the highest cast & one from the lowest untouchable class. They come to know the Lord, joining arm in arm with the other four, we see God's glory in even greater ways!

An angry black youth & angry white skinhead, are drawn to salvation in Jesus, forgive one another & worship side-by-side in your church! When more diversity is united, we see more of God's glory! The more of God's glory we see...the greater our joy! This is the linked principle. It's why He wants to show us His *greatest* glory & when we see it, we'll experience our greatest joy!

I'm talking joy, but this sermon's still about God's mission. In Matthew 28:18-20, God said He wants people from every tongue, tribe & nation. He could've said 70%, 80%, or 90% of peoples. But He said *every*, since any 'out' we're given, we take!

We naturally don't share with other people groups because of language & cultural differences, we typically stay to our own. When we think only of our own, or in percentages, entire groups of people are left out of God's kingdom & we won't see the greatest expression of God's glory. When we're there with people from EVERY tongue, tribe & nation...we'll not simply see some of God's glory, as if He'd reached only the Jews. We'll not only see God's *greater* glory, had He reached the Jews & a few local Gentile groups. With people from *every* tongue, tribe & nation, when all diversity is united together under the blood of Jesus, all worshiping Him, then & only then, will we see God's greatest glory & have our greatest joy!

Your greatest joy will only be realized when you see the awesome power of God in redeeming people from every tongue, tribe & nation, all diversity united under the blood of the Lamb! Diversity united, not erased - this is where your imagination brings you into a greater appreciation of God's glory! Imagine all the ethnic groups of the world standing before the throne singing praise in their own language!

Remember, we're viewing our Bible as one book, with one introduction, story & conclusion - but our reading glasses have two lenses, God's greatest glory, our greatest joy!

In the introduction, God created diversity at the tower of Babel. Then we see God using one man & his descendants to unify that diversity - not to erase, but unify it. Then, upon

Christ's return we'll witness His greatest glory in the fulfilled promise to unify all peoples, bringing our greatest joy! God's mission including our role to reach the nations. Global & greater than anything we've planned & the end result of our greatest joy!

God hints at the creation of diversity in the introduction of the Bible. It's found in the very first command in Genesis 1:28... *"And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.'"* The words 'fill the earth' are important given how long that would take. God knew we'd be around for a great length of time. Language changes over time, beginning with accents, new words develop & over thousands of years, new languages form. We know Latin's a dead language. No one speaks it any more. But from Latin, multiple languages were birthed...French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian & Catalan. And with all of those different languages... diversity's created!

Diversity & revealing His greatest glory through unifying us were always God's original intention. Let's look further at how God creates diversity. After the flood, mankind grew & multiplied. God then directs our attention to Genesis 11:1, which says... *"Now the whole world had one language & a common speech."* Simple fact, with profound implications. Everyone up to this point spoke the same language. No Us/Them mentality. Only us, one group, one people, one nation, one culture. If they held the Olympics, there'd be no 'them' to play. At that moment, there was potential for God to reveal His glory, but not His greatest glory, because there was only one people. It'd be like Michelangelo only doing one painting, you'd not enjoy the whole body of his work! Or maybe the illustration should be, it'd be like only having one artist in the world, instead of the incredibly diverse work of thousands.

Being sinful, mankind wanted equality with the only other *them* out there, which was God. They began to build a tower reaching upwards in defiance to Him... Looking at Genesis 11:3-4, it says... *"They said to each other, 'Come, let's make bricks & bake them thoroughly.' They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.'"*

God saw two problems with this. Firstly, just look at all the personal pronouns representing their increasing pride, and we know, pride destroys our relationship with God. Their pride could've gotten to a point where God would have to judge them again.

The second problem was outright disobedience in their saying, let us *not be scattered over the face of the whole earth*. Somehow, they knew, united together, they could do more than separated into various groups. Yet, in staying together their pride would grow so much, God would have to judge them again.

Seeing these two things & out of love, God protected them by swiftly bringing about what should have taken centuries. He kept them from being judged & in one moment created diversity! Taking one language breaking it up into many varied languages at the

Tower of Babel. No longer was it one mankind against God. Now it was group against group against group.

There were approximately 70 different linguistic groups created at the Tower of Babel if you count them up in Genesis chapter 10. Genesis 10 & 11 are two accounts explaining family lines, languages & the results of the tower of Babel. (Hebrew writers commonly wrote about the same event twice. This is why there are two accounts of creation in Genesis 1 & 2, and repetition also in 10 & 11.) **What happened at the Tower of Babel was not an act of judgment, rather an act of mercy. God didn't judge them due to their pride, He allowed them to live. It was His plan from the very beginning to create diversity. Mankind was His masterpiece. God paints in diversity of color, not monochromatically!**

So ends the introduction, but realize the significance of what's happened. God's created diversity & now has the potential to reveal His Greatest Glory & through that, we can have our greatest joy! Remember, in God's promise to Abraham, he said two basic things. First, he wanted to bless Abraham & through Abraham God will bless all the ethnic groups on the face of the earth - the top & bottom line of the covenant. The top line - God's desire to bless. He wants to, it's who He is & how He reveals His character & glory. God loves to bless you with time, gifts, talents, money, basically all your needs, but most of all, with Himself. He's where our greatest joy comes from!

With blessing comes bottom-line responsibilities to bless all nations! Somehow, it's God's will for our lives, to bring the Gospel to the nations! **But it's not in our thinking & you hear it in Christian phrases like, 'To know Jesus & to make Him known'. Or, 'Your vertical relationship to God, your horizontal relationship to others'. Phrases, correct, but incomplete. We need to modify them to be scripturally accurate...to know him & make him known to all nations. Your vertical relationship to God your horizontal relationship to others of all nations! We do the same with Scripture. Often people will have a little calligraphy plaque in their homes of Isaiah 56:7 which says..."for my house will be called a house of prayer..." But they never include the last phrase of the verse..."for all nations."**

Until we add that phrase 'to/among/for all nations' our ministry has some purpose, it's not incorrect, but it is incomplete. Your role on this planet is to somehow touch nations with God's glory, because He's pursuing the goal of giving us the greatest joy by reaching them! The Abrahamic Covenant forms the foundation for a story which runs through the Scriptures like a set of railroad tracks. One rail, the top line - God's desire to bless us. And the other rail, the bottom line - our responsibility to share His blessings. If one track's missing, the train derails. Many churches try to run on only one track...God's desire to bless them, without understanding their responsibility to be a blessing. As a result, they're not pursuing their fullest joy. They go together, always!

Whenever we think of the Promised Land, we think of a land flowing with milk & honey, an image of blessing which references the top line of the Covenant. But wherever there's a top line, there's a bottom line. We tend to think God said to the Israelites, "I want to bless you with prime real estate over in the Middle East. Go settle in, and I'll be your

God & bless you more!” But let’s also understand God’s bottom line intentions of the Promised Land.

If you were to look at a map at that time, you’d find a majority of major trading routes went right through the Promised Land! If anyone from what’s now Turkey wanted to trade with Egypt, they’d pass through the Promised Land. If anyone from the ‘Stans’ (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, etc) wanted to trade with Egypt...right through the Promised Land.

In passing through, these Gentile nations may’ve noticed Jews praying for them at the Temple due to Genesis 12 & Isaiah 56:7. They may’ve inquired about God & asked for a blessing. Maybe sat over coffee talking about the names of God which reveal His character. The Jewish guy might tell them the name, Jehovah-Jireh, meaning God provides. The Gentile might ask, “Does your God really provide?” And the Jewish guy may say, “Yes! Last year was our year of Jubilee. We took the entire year off & didn’t plant any crops & still have grain to trade with you today!” They’d be sharing with Gentile after Gentile about the one true God of the universe.

This is why it says in Ezekiel 5:5... *“This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations, with countries all around her.”* The Promised Land was strategically located in the center of the nations, because God’s using people to reveal His greatest glory for our greatest joy! (This why Jesus was so upset in Mark 11 overturning tables in the Temple, it wasn’t just about greed, it was because Israel wasn’t blessing the nations - she was exploiting & robbing them!) A land flowing with milk & honey - top line. Strategically located in the center of the nations so Israel could bless them - bottom line.

Let’s look at Psalm 67:1-2. Verse 1 has become a common benediction for many churches... *“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us...”* We grow up wanting God to be gracious, bless & have His face shine upon us. But that’s it, because the benediction always ends there. Correct, but incomplete without verse 2. Verse one is top line, God wants to bless us & where there’s a top line, there’s a bottom. Verse two represents the bottom line as a purpose clause as to why we’re blessed. We’re blessed to be a blessing. It says, *“...That your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among the nations.”* Blessing always come with the responsibility to share it with others. What’s behind it is God’s desire to give us our greatest joy by seeing His glory in unifying all diversity!

He’s blessed us with homes, cars, education, time, gifts, talents & Himself. He desires us to use all that, not only to reach people like us, but also other people groups! Maybe it’ll mean having an international student over for a holiday. When things open up again, I’d love to send some short term trips to our missionaries in Morocco, Lebanon, and maybe Indonesia - possibly God may call someone from here to full time cross-cultural missions. Maybe you have space to take in international boarders, or foster international kids (I know Bethany Christian Services is looking for more people to do this). Maybe it means finally inviting your neighbor over for dinner, especially that Indian or Pakistani couple who’re so different than you. I know refugees need help with acclimation,

laptops, cell phones, furniture, jobs & clothing, and I'm discussing those opportunities with some folks right now. We'll also be participating in Second Chance Month this coming April with Prison Fellowship Ministries for those reentering society after incarceration.

Six:Eight's exploring various ways to be a practical blessing & to share Jesus with others, including our desire to host an Alpha Course this coming fall! I'm currently talking with someone about doing some training on evangelism & disciple-making to prepare ourselves well. We're involved in a *Kinship Partnership* with many other churches to support two organizations with great work in the Middle East. Last year the partnership gave over \$339,000, and a healthy chunk was from our church! Money makes a difference! And they just sent a list of projects we can consider being involved in as well! The Pastoral Council has a goal that our giving as a church to cross-cultural missions would be at least 10%. We've been blessed to be a blessing & want to carry that mantle well.

This central theme to the Biblical Story is extremely important & applicable to everyday life! Now maybe we can understand the words of Jesus a little bit better when He said in Matthew 24:14...*"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations...and then the end will come."*

There are two reasons God wants all nations reached before the end comes. First, if God doesn't reach all nations, He'd have broken a promise to Abraham & be called a liar, or maybe worse, a failure for all eternity. But He won't let that happen, and His greatest glory won't shine until all nations are reached.

Which leads to the second reason God wants all nations reached before the end comes... if His greatest glory doesn't shine, our greatest joy won't be reached. Because God loves us so much, He's committed to this since His glory & our joy are inseparable!

Our Bibles are meant to be read, as one book, with an underlying theme of God revealing His greatest glory, giving us our greatest joy! It has one introduction, where God creates diversity. One story, where God unifies diversity. One conclusion, where God's greatest glory shines & our greatest joy's fulfilled!

Each time we go to the Scriptures, we should see God's heart for the world & the big picture of how God wants to ultimately use our lives! You've been blessed with purpose. Contemplate & pray how you can use your blessing to be a blessing to someone from another nation & ultimately experience more joy!