

# Being Human - Talk 6 - Made for Glory: The meaning of life question - What are we here for?

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[ 0 : 00 ]      page 1160 of the church Bibles. And we're in 2 Corinthians, reading from chapter 3, verse 7, to chapter 4, verse 12. So that's page 1160.

Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?

If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness? For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory.

And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts? Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day, the same veil remains when the old covenant is read.

[ 1 : 15 ]      It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces, contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Therefore, since through God's mercy, we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways.

We do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

[ 2 : 26 ]      For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, he said, let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed.

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we, who are alive, are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body.

So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. Amen. Thanks, Amy.

And can I add my word of welcome? It's great to see you. If you've not met before, I'm Martin Ayres, the lead pastor here. And we're doing something a bit different to normal at the moment with our sermon series.

[ 3 : 46 ] It's the last one in this series thinking about what the whole Bible says about this topic of being human rather than just working through a book of the Bible chapter by chapter, which is our normal pattern. So just to try and help us with that, we're more dependent than normal on the handout.

You should have been given on the way in. People grab that. It's inside the notice sheet. And that has a number of Bible verses on there that we'll refer to as we navigate through this topic. But you can also, if you kept your Bibles open at 2 Corinthians 3 that Amy read for us, that will end up there a bit later on.

Great to see a good number here. If you are someone who has been coming along to St. Silas and you think, I like it. But you know what? It's quite a big group of people.

Can I commend to you the 9.30 service? So I don't want anyone to feel bad about coming at half 11. It's great that you're here. But if you're someone who's thinking, actually, I would like a more manageable crowd of people, the 9.30 service is a great time.

And it's the same, but with fewer people. So you could think, well, I'll get up a bit earlier. I'll go to the half nine. I'll try it next Sunday when I get an extra hour's sleep anyway. And maybe that could be a way of making more room at the 11.30, which has been growing wonderfully as we look to make room for guests at both services.

[ 5 : 07 ] If you don't want to do that, keep coming to this one. That's great. Fine. So let's get to God's word. Let's pray. Almighty and loving Heavenly Father, you promise us that the unfolding of your words gives light.

It gives understanding to the simple. So we come to you now as those who know we need wisdom. And we ask that as we unfold your word, your spirit will speak to each of us.

That you will give us the light of life knowing you. And we ask that your word will do more than inform our minds. Holy Spirit, would you come and inflame our hearts that we will be renewed by what we hear.

We will be reshaped by your life-giving word. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. So we're coming to the end of this sermon series looking at what it means to be human.

I was with our kids last week in a shopping mall. The biggest one in Europe. If you know where that is. And we went in one shop and there were these big mirrors up and written in big letters at the bottom of the mirror it said you are enough.

[ 6 : 27 ] At one point I was queuing up to buy something. Not for me. And the guy in front of me in the queue on the back of his t-shirt it said you are enough.

A kind message from the person in front of you. Now I'm not often in shops like that but I was in them more as a teenager and I can't remember anyone ever having to say to me as a teenager you are enough.

It was just never something that anyone would have said to me. But it is a trending phrase today you are enough. Why is that? It's partly because we're living as we've seen in recent weeks we're living in unusual times.

Times when in our modern western world what normally in history and other parts of the world if you want to work out who you are you find out who you are from the people around you and they tell you who you are and as you live that out they affirm it.

But nowadays we're told in the modern western world you have to work out who you are by finding who you are inside you and then you have to live that out and don't care what anyone else thinks of it.

[ 7 : 37 ] But the reality is that it means that once we've worked out who we feel we think we are we're fragile. We crave other people's approval affirmation acceptance.

We fear that in some way we might not measure up to what other people think of us. And there are thinkers now like Freddie DeBoer who say that deep fragility seems to be part of the human condition part of what it means to be human because of what we're experiencing now.

But from the start of this sermon series we've been in we've seen a different way that the foundation to being human and secure in being human is that we see from God he tells us that we were made lovingly by him.

He says to you and me you are royalty I made you in my image. We were made deliberately thoughtfully body and soul by a God who takes great delight in what he has made and we can rejoice in our royal status from him our innate value in who we are and it means we can even rejoice in our creaturely limits.

God made us like this wonderfully. And this morning we're asking the key question so what are we for? What are we made for? You only get one life what is it really all for?

[ 9 : 08 ] It's been said before that the one definition of failure is to be successful in things that don't matter. So if we picture our self our future self looking back over our life how can you make sure that when you look back at your life you have focused on the things that really count?

You've lived for what really matters. Well our first point this morning is we were made to glorify God. The Bible tells us that the universe is charged with the grandeur of the living God.

We've all had experiences of awe as we look at the natural world maybe as you look at the night sky and the wonder of the stars or last week we were on the coast by Aberdeen walking along the coast and as you as you look at the look out at the immense ocean or the seas off the coast the writer of Psalm 19 puts it like this the heavens display the glory of God the skies proclaim the work of his hands and King David in Psalm 8 verse 1 says O Lord our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth you have set your glory in the heavens God's glory is on display all around us through his creation and you and I like the rest of creation have been made to display the glory of God the statement of what Christians believe that's called the Westminster Shorter Catechism so it's just a bringing together of what Christians believe from the Bible just on the sheets there I've put their answer to the question what is the chief end of man the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever so what does it mean well the glory of God is like the brilliance of God the word glorious comes from the word weighty so it's a word about God's importance his immense value the honour and adoration that he is due for all that he is if you get a book about God a theology book and it's got chapters about different attributes of God different qualities of God the nature of God the character of God sometimes you won't find a chapter on the glory of God because it's the glory of God is like the culmination of all that he is in his immense importance and greatness so that's glory brilliance supreme worth how then do we glorify God we can do it with our actions our obedient lives whenever in fact we choose to disobey God what we're actually saying as we disobey

God's commands is we glory in something else more than him we're choosing to see something else as more valuable than him whether that's ourselves or something else we're living for but when we live obedient lives our lives reflect God's good character as we live to please him and it displays that character it displays his glory for the world to see so in 1st Peter chapter 4:11 it's on your sheets there after a list of instructions for Christians on how to live to please God he says so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ to him be the glory and the power forever and ever amen we can glorify God with our actions we can glorify God with our words when we speak words of praise and adoration to him we give glory to him it's one of the key reasons that we sing together when we gather we sing to encourage each other more than that though we sing to glorify God and so it's a discipline sometimes for us that we attune our hearts to the words that we're singing in worship to God because it's a way to glorify God as we gather together and we glorify God when we speak to others about him in Psalm 96 verse 3 we hear this command for the people of God declare his glory among the nations his marvelous works among all the peoples in fact I think this is the primary biblical motive for telling friends about Jesus or for making that your job if you were to decide to give up a respectable job to be in full time gospel work speaking about Jesus making him known or if you're someone who decides to go and live in a country where not many people are Christians so that you can shine there and speak about Jesus there we tend to think of those kind of decisions whether it's just the speaking to a friend about being a Christian or about Jesus that we know here or it's a bigger decision about what we're doing with our life we tend to think about the motive as compassion for the lost recognizing that the people that we speak to about Jesus if they're not trusting him yet they're perishing without him they're facing an eternity without him and it's vital they hear of him and respond in trust of Jesus and his promises and that's true that compassion for the lost is a really good reason to speak about Jesus at the same time

I think the primary motivation in the Bible to share Jesus with others is that we have a passion for his name for his glory that somewhere along the road of life God has given us a glimpse of how glorious he is and we long that more people would glorify him that the world would be filled with a knowledge of the glory of God so we glorify God with our actions with our words and we also glorify God with our hearts with delight in God there's a Christian writer John Piper many of you will know who memorably took that first question what is the chief end of man and he just said actually the answer to that question those two things are related the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him forever so people said about John Piper before I'd ever read anything by him and he's written over 50 books John Piper and they're basically all the same it's a really good book written about 50 times and it's brilliant and basically it's this idea that he called himself a Christian hedonist and when I first heard about that

[15:52] I thought this guy's really interesting is he basically saying you can like be a Christian but you can just live for your own pleasure but what he was saying is if you live out seeking God you will find that he is the greatest pleasure we could have and that is what glorifies God most supremely as he puts it God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him that is that when God's people through affliction through difficulty through hardship have such a deep view of the goodness and the sufficiency and the majesty of God that they are able to say God is enough for me he is glorified by that and that personal delight in God is what overflows from us in a desire to live lives of obedience and to speak words about him that glorify him I think of a friend who works in

IT and he asked me to pray for him in the workplace that he would be like the moon and what he meant by that was just as the sun reflects the brilliance as the moon reflects the brilliance of the sun so he would reflect by his way of treating other people in the office at work the glory of God so this is what we are here for as humans to live for the glory of God and it is worth just pausing to ask yourself is that how you think about your life some years ago I picked up a brilliant book called The Universe Next Door by James W. Sire it's called A Worldview Catalogue and each chapter describes a different way that people around us view the world different world view naturalism nihilism post-modernism Islam and so on and when I picked up that book The Universe Next Door the first chapter is Christianity so I thought I'm on familiar ground here and he when he gets to the point of what's a Christian answer to what are we here for he says a life lived to the glory of God and as I read it

I thought I have never thought of it like that before that that's what my life is for no one had ever explained it to me in those terms that my purpose in life is to live for God's glory by enjoying him forever it's the theme of so many Bible prayers at the end of Jude at the end of Romans chapter 11 Ephesians 1 Ephesians 3 that we would live lives that give God the glory and this is where the whole universe is heading God is acting in our world for his glory he is glorious and he is making that glory known so in Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 14 he promises through the prophet Habakkuk the world will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea when the apostle John sees the new creation in his revelation of that given to him by an angel from Jesus in Revelation 21 he sees the new creation as the holy city the new Jerusalem and he says that it didn't need the sun for its light anymore because the city shines with the glory of God that's where we're heading but our hearts have turned away from that royal calling to fill the earth with God's glory so that brings us to our second point

Jesus displays God's glory Jesus came because we had rejected the glory of God in Romans chapter 1 verse 21 the apostle Paul says of humanity although they knew God they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him and then you see the result of that their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened so we weren't willing to glorify God we said to ourselves well what about my glory what about my happiness and in Romans 3 the verdict on us is all have fallen short of the glory of God now why have we done that why have we rejected this call to live for God's glory a sobering part of the answer to that is that we just were not impressed enough by the glory of God so we resent him being on center stage we resent being in orbit around him and we choose instead to glory in other things or to live for our glory and the result of that in Romans 1 there verse 21 is that our hearts are darkened our hearts are meant to be lit up by the brilliance of God in his glory and instead it's like we're blinded to that glory and so Jesus came to make that glory known to us if we think about that first Christmas night as the angels announced that Jesus that the Son of God was taking flesh and becoming a man to the shepherds they sing glory to God in the highest heaven and the Apostle John writing about Jesus in John chapter 1 he calls Jesus the Word because he's the self-revelation of God and he says in John 1 14 it's on the sheets there the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us we have seen his glory the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father full of grace and truth when Jesus turns water into wine in John chapter 2 the Apostle John says this

Jesus performed the first of his miraculous signs in Cana in Galilee he thus revealed his glory and his disciples put their faith in him and we might think to ourselves if only we'd been there to see Jesus in all of his glory face to face but the truth is that left to our own devices even if we'd been there and seen his glory on display we're so blinded to it with our darkened hearts we wouldn't have put our faith in him and so the verdict on us in that human condition rejecting God is in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 you'll find it on the sheets just over the page or we had it read to us in our Bible reading 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 4 if you just have a look there the God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ who is the image of God and we see that all around us today that there's loads of people around us today who probably believe in God there's many people around us who probably have some sense that

[ 22 : 50 ] God is the God of the Bible Father, Son and Spirit why are they not in church with us today or in a church today because they don't think it really matters they don't have a sense of his glory of his worth blindness cannot see the glory of Christ who is the image of God and then something changes look at verse 5 for what we preach is not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake so what's the instrument of this great change that everybody needs if they're to be enlightened and saved it's that somebody serves them by speaking about Jesus to them so sometimes it's put like this who is the most important person that your friends who are not Christians know it's you if you know Jesus because they need someone to do verse 5 for them to speak about who Jesus is and to serve them with that news for what happens next is in verse 6 have a look for God who said let light shine out of darkness made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ so they hear the message about Jesus and the Holy Spirit opens their blind eyes when did God say let light shine out of darkness creation and the same creative power that made this whole universe

God uses to make someone a new creation when they hear about Jesus and they're enlightened in their eyes and their hearts to see the light of God's glory in Jesus' face it's a miracle of the Holy Spirit to see God's glory in Jesus and the glory of God revealed in Jesus helps us with an objection that some of you might have been thinking so far if you'll excuse the irreverence of how I put this this is how a friend of mine who I used to work with when I was a lawyer he'd grown up going to church he wasn't a Christian and he said this to me once he said the thing I've never got was why does God need us to praise him why is he so obsessed with him being glorified what is his problem so we might think of it like that we might think of God's command for us to glorify him as self-interest and we think well why should I live for his glory what about my glory and no wonder we think that when we think about what human glory is like it's like a black hole that sucks in everything around it my understanding of a black hole is that when a star stops radiating out heat and light it collapses in on itself so catastrophically it sucks in everything around it even light and that's what we think when we see someone living for their own glory if you imagine you're working in an office and you're in a team working on a project and you do a piece of work that's really good and then you're at a meeting with a client and the client praises the document you produced and your boss takes all the credit and doesn't say that you wrote it what would you think?

you think I did that she's stolen my glory that was my glory to have that's how we think of people acting for their glory that they want to suck in all the praise and honour for themselves why would God require us to give him glory and honour well we should remember first off in answer to that that God is the one being who is entitled to all the glory because he made all things that's clear in Revelation 4.11 it's not an eagle if you actually are the centre of the universe but there's more we can say here because when God holds out to us Jesus as the exemplary display of his glory it subverts any sense that we would have that it is selfish of God to seek his glory just look at Jesus in John chapter 12 verse 23 speaking about his glory he prays to God in John 12.23 the hour has come for the son of man to be glorified and the hour he's speaking of there is unmistakably his death on the cross when he's lifted up on the cross to die in Gethsemane the night before he dies he prays in John 17 have a look there at the verse on the sheets verse 1 father the hour has come glorify your son that your son may glorify you what does that show us the glory of God is most supremely manifested not in him receiving adoration but rather in his self giving there's nothing needy about God he is eternally glorious eternally independent self satisfied father son and spirit whether or not we acknowledge his glory he is eternally perfectly glorious but he created us to share in the delight of seeing that glory his glory is bursting out from him in overflowing generosity like an eternal spring or a fountainhead so he sends his son on a mission where by his death he may give eternal life to the people that God has given to him if you just look at verse 2 there of Jesus prayer in John 17 he describes the generosity of his father

Jesus says to his father for you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him now this is eternal life that they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent so Jesus as he goes around on a mission of grace reveals the glory of God verse 4 I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do and now father glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began in the work the father gave Jesus to do we see the generous self giving of God to us Jesus enduring shame at the cross so that we could see and savour his eternal glory and delight in that glory like we might enjoy the radiance coming from the sun and he's most supremely glorified when our hearts are full from the glimpse we've had of that glory when we find as we see it as we see Jesus here is together in one man awesome majesty and self giving humility magnificent courage and tender mercy perfect righteousness and limitless love our hearts are filled to exploding and seeing that glory doesn't leave us unchanged that's our third point so we were made to glorify God we come to Jesus and by the spirit's work we see the glory of God and our third point more briefly we can be changed with ever increasing glory we've heard from 2nd Corinthians 4 the way into the Christian life the spirit opens our blind eyes to see God's glory in Christ but in chapter 3 the previous chapter we hear that the way on in the Christian life is the same as the way in the spirit moving us to see Jesus more and more look at verse 17 of chapter 3 now the Lord is the spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom and we all who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory are being transformed into his image with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the spirit so who is glorious in these verses the Lord of course astonishingly though as well his people and I find that more astonishing as I go on in the Christian life because we've become more aware of our sin and that makes us that drives us to humility and a deeper appreciation of God's grace that he would love us and forgive us at the same time 2 Corinthians 3 says

God is transforming us into ever increasing glory how does he do that? as we see Jesus and the glory of God in him rubs off on us as we see that he valued us more than himself going through death to give us life it fills us up so that we can go out looking to be more and more like him laying down our lives to for the good of others to give them life without that we can be like black holes ourselves the old translations of the Bible use a word a couple of times when it's talking about human pride they use the word vain glory which is just a word that means empty glory a way of describing that when we've turned from God and we've got this kind of void in us we look to fill our hearts with praise from other people there's this kind of conceit this empty glory that we want to fill we become glory hunters craving praise from other people sucking in the glory we can find but then as we contemplate

[ 33 : 02 ] Jesus our hearts are filled up as we grasp his self-giving glorious grace it flows into our hearts and it overflows from us so that we can be gracious to others and the direction of our lives can change from being black holes sucking in glory to being radiant stars looking to shine out and bless others in Psalm 34 verse 5 it says of God those who look to him are radiant their faces are never covered with shame the prophet Daniel promises those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever some of us will be able to think of older Christians like that people who have been Christians longer than us and whose lives are radiant with the fruit of the spirit with love and joy and peace and other person centered love how do we become like that ourselves we contemplate Jesus prayerfully dependent on the spirit that we might see more and more the glory of God it means that the command behold your God in the Bible is the most gracious command and the greatest gift of the gospel when we see

God's glory in Jesus we don't need a mirror telling us you are enough or a t-shirt telling us you are enough we don't have a void inside us we have to fill with affirmation instead we see the approval and delight of our giving father who says to us you are my treasured possession and we can gladly choose to live to please him reflecting his glory to others we can say with the words of a modern hymn I will glory in my redeemer my life he bought my love he owns I have no longings for another I'm satisfied in him alone I will glory in my redeemer who waits for me at gates of gold and when he calls me it will be paradise his face forever to behold let's pray together holy spirit giver of life and truth we thank you that you have opened our eyes to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ heavenly father we worship you we give you thanks we praise you for your glory and we ask that by your spirit you will move us to contemplate Jesus and to be changed by what we see that we might live lives that display your glory for Jesus name's sake amen we're going to take time to receive any chance for your parting and we rise to bring you to God and we across our increasing with or our and we am going to

Jesus and we are going to receive this and we will celebrate