

John 13/14 Way, Truth, Life

How might we picture the 'glory' of God?

We might think of him as the Creator of all things and see something of His splendour in the wonders of this vast and intricate universe, the farthest galaxy, the complexity of DNA, the colour and musicality of nature, the faithfulness of the seasons, the clearly observable laws of physics. These all reflect something of the genius and character of the One responsible for the things we can see and touch and measure.

The Bible also gives glimpses of One Who sits enthroned in spectacular majesty to rule and to judge, an ultimate authority Who decides what is right and wrong, before Whom every person who's ever lived is accountable for every thought, word and action.

Jesus Christ, as recorded by eyewitness John in his Gospel, teaches that while these pictures are accurate and vitally important, God's greatest 'glory' was demonstrated about 2000 years ago when the Creator came to His creation, entered it, became part of it. God the Son, Jesus, lived here among us, divine yet in human flesh. He became one of us to rescue us from the guilt, power and penalty of our sin against our Maker.

John and the other disciples have already witnessed this carpenter from Nazareth doing some pretty 'godlike' things, walking on water and calming a storm, feeding 5000, healing the blind and disabled, even raising the dead. Some of them are thinking if they could just get Jesus crowned king in Jerusalem everything would somehow be so much better.

But He's not interested in limited, passing, earthly glory, the kind of popularity and prestige that we enjoy. He's building a kingdom that is spiritual, global and eternal, saving and transforming individuals and communities from the inside out with forgiveness, love and the power of God's Holy Spirit. And the greatest act of this divine rescue mission is about to take place the next day outside the walls of Jerusalem. God's glory at it's most profound will be seen as the Son of God *dies on a cross!*

The most glorious thing about the God we Christians worship is not His almighty power or His awesome holiness and authority to judge, but His amazing grace, giving of Himself in sacrifice to redeem undeserving human beings.

Now we're not totally undeserving. We deserve His righteous anger and punishment for, read the 10 commandments or Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and we see we have all consistently sinned, we have insulted our Maker by

perverting His creation order and breaking His clear instructions. But atonement was made for us with the sacrifice by Jesus of Himself at Calvary. Forgiveness was paid for by His being willing to suffer on our behalf. This is amazing grace.

Now many of us are familiar with these ideas but can we appreciate how difficult this must be for the disciples gathered in the upper room the night before the crucifixion? Jesus says He's leaving and they won't see Him again for a time. He has used the bread and wine as symbols of His body and blood which he says He's about to give for them. He has knelt like a servant and washed their feet saying He has come to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. He has identified Judas Iscariot as a traitor and Judas has left to summon the mob and no doubt collect his thirty pieces of silver. Upset and confused Simon Peter has piped up, don't fret Master, you can count on me, I'm ready to die for you, but He isn't really. Before dawn, Jesus says, you'll deny you even know me.

In the growing gloom it's difficult to see how anything good is going to come from all of this. On the surface of things the next day will be a disaster, a travesty of justice followed by crowd manipulation and a brutal execution of a good and innocent man.

But Jesus is not surprised by any of this, he knows ahead what is going to happen and makes it plain He is not actually a helpless victim of circumstance. He is very deliberately and lovingly laying down His life that they and we and whosoever trusts in Him can be forgiven, reconciled to God and enjoy eternal life in all its fulness. And He knows that while there will be unspeakable grief on Friday and inconsolable loss on Saturday, there will be the greatest joy and the birth of everlasting hope on Sunday as He rises victorious over death.

So, despite the horror that awaits Him later this night and tomorrow, Jesus instructs and comforts His heavy hearted followers. A little earlier he was troubled himself, distressed that Judas would betray Him, but here at the start of ch 14 the Lord tells His followers not to let trouble and sorrow overcome us. Let's keep our faith in God, let's trust Jesus Who has shown us so much of God's greatness and goodness and love in the preceding chapters. Let's listen as God's Son comforts us with some wonderful promises here.

Don't let grief and worry paralyse and defeat you, He says. This is not the end. I'm just going first. I'm going now so you can come later. Even though things will be tough in the short term and you won't see me physically for a while I won't have forgotten you. I'll be getting things ready so you can rest, happy when you arrive. You will see me again, in a few days and then again when we make all things new. There are many rooms in my Father's house, room and welcome for anyone and everyone who wants to come, who will trust in me.

And these dwellings are permanent. You'll never have to sell up, no one will ever evict you. You'll be home, forever, with the Father and with me. Grace, remember?

Jesus is the Way, the only way to approach God the Father. He is our peace, our means of reconciliation.

Jesus is the Truth, His cross, His example, His teachings the truth we need to walk in freedom. In Him we find liberation.

Jesus is the Life, by Whose Spirit we know new birth and resurrection and the promise of thriving forever in heavenly glory.

For now we must keep trusting, and practise.

Christians will one day share resurrection and eternal life in new heavens and a new earth with the Lord and with all His people.

Jesus gives us a new commandment, to love one another as He has loved us. We'll not always get this right. For now there will be some failure and no shortage of challenges. But he promises us all the help we need. As we try to practise His patience, forgiveness and lovingkindness with each other we will be identifiable as His followers, we shall know His unique comfort and begin perhaps to taste a little of His glory.