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*Sharpening Our Vision Series*

## “For the Glory of God” Exodus 40:34-38; Ephesians 1

### Introduction

As we embark on this month of vision renewal, I want to take a few moments and explain to you what we want to accomplish and why. By God's grace there have been many changes in this congregation over the last 5-10 years. At the end of this year we will have been in this building for a decade (and if the Lord wills, we hope to be debt free). In those years the congregation has more than doubled in size. The student ministry has gone from 2 or 3 undergraduates to over 30. More and more parents are electing to send their sons and daughters to Purdue because of the ministry of Purdue CORPS. We know of at least 12 freshman coming next fall and we are only losing one senior this year. The Jail Ministry expands every year. And the fruitfulness as well of the challenges grow with it. The mere numbers are growing (3 babies in a week and 6 in a month is a new record). As soon as one Newcomers Class has ended another begins. God is increasing our opportunities to serve. The Australian RP Church has asked if Graeme Hart, a young man preparing for the ministry could come and spend a year interning and learning among us. Things are nearly in place for Graeme and his family to come in August. We are ready this fall to begin serious work toward daughtering a new congregation.

All of these things are exciting. But they also present great challenges. How do we stay connected as a body of Christ? How do we insure that each person and each family is growing in grace and having their needs met? What is the vision that drives our approach to ministry? Why daughter a new work when we could keep growing all together? What is the reason God has called us into existence?

When we were a smaller church, it was much easier to keep a unified vision. It was easier to keep track of the individual needs of those with us. We did a better job of communicating our vision for ministry to new members. With size and time can come an erosion of priorities and a dilution of vision.

Last fall the elders decided that it would be a good thing to hold a few practical seminars to teach and train in some of the basic areas of the Christian life. Things like family and personal worship, evangelism and basic discipleship are areas that we realize must be constantly taught and reinforced. Then in January, Jared and I attended a PCA Church Planter's seminar in which we were challenged to fortify our vision. If we are going to continue to raise up laborers for the ministry, if we are going to continue to grow in holiness as well as numbers, if we are going to embark on the costly and difficult road of church planting, we had better make sure that the whole church is moving together, unite in spirit, intent on one purpose. (Phil 2:1,2). And so the idea of this Vision Renewal Month was born. Each of the next 4 weeks we intend to preach on different aspects of what God has called us as a particular congregation to be involved in. And coupled with that we want to bring practical teaching and training in some of the basic aspects of the Christian life. So we encourage you to participate in

these next four weeks as we ask God to prepare us for the exciting months and years ahead.

So where do we begin? Where do we begin a series on vision? We begin with the big picture. We begin, not with us, but with God. A vision for ministry begins with a vision for the glory of God.

### [Exodus 40:34-38; Ephesians 1]

We have all been taught that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. God's overarching purpose for creating the world is so that all the nations would worship Him. *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Hab. 2:14).*

John Piper wrote in his book *Let the Nations be Glad* that "missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate not man. When this age is over, and countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. . . Worship is the goal and the fuel of missions."

If this is true, then our greatest motivation for ministry is to lead people to a deep, joyful worship of God. At the heart of that is a zeal for the glory of God.

What is the glory of God? The glory of God is not a single attribute of God. The glory of God is a way of describing His essence. The Hebrew word for *glory* is *kabod*. Literally it means heavy, but it is seldom used in a literal sense. The idea is that it describes something or someone who is weighty or noteworthy or impressive. It is ascribed to one who is deserving of much honor and attention and

respect. In a social application, the person with much stature and wealth would be considered one to be honored.

And so it is that this word is used to describe the essence of God's being and character. For who is like Him? Who can share His weightiness? Who is more impressive or worthy of honor and praise? Throughout the Old and New Testaments the glory of God represents the beauty and majesty and holiness and magnificence of God. There are several ways that the glory of God is displayed. Consider these three:

I. We see His glory in His creation.

The reason God made the universe is to show His glory. How do we know and see God's glory? We look in part at what He has made and how He governs His creation. Think of these familiar verses in light of his glory.

Psalm 19:1 THE heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

Psalm 57:5 Be exalted above the heavens, O God; *Let Your glory be* above all the earth.

Romans 11:36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

God created the heavens and the earth to display His glory. And the promise is that one day the complete manifestation of His glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

II. We see His glory in the Work of Redemption.

This is what the theme of Exodus is all about and what Ephesians 1 is all about. It's here that we see God taking a fallen rebellious world and working to redeem it and in so doing he displays His glory. So much of the Scripture focuses attention here.

The Book of Exodus provides a beautiful picture of the glory of God as it's displayed in His saving a people for Himself. Throughout the ups and downs of the book what's at stake is the presence of God's glory. Will God go with the people or not? What will God do with this rebellious people? The answer is found in the covenant of grace. There are really three crucial elements in the unfolding story.

1. God's standard of perfection and holiness.

While Moses was on the mountain, God gave Him the Law. This Law, which was summarized in the 10 commandments, communicated to the people of God something of God's standard of holiness. When Moses came off the mountain and saw the people's idolatry (ch. 32), he shattered the stone tablets. That represented the breaking of the covenant and their inability to be holy. But shortly thereafter, God gave them two more tablets like the former ones, to represent the fact that His covenant is based upon unchanging standards of His law. Just because they couldn't keep it and wouldn't keep it, didn't mean they were not responsible and accountable to Him to keep it. He didn't lighten up the standards because of their failure. Holiness was not negotiable. Standing before God was and is based on the righteous requirements of the law. We see it in Exodus and we see it in Ephesians, *we are to be holy and blameless*.

2. The Character of God. We have to ask ourselves why would God save these obstinate people? They were clearly unable to keep the standards of holiness. Why did He not destroy them? The answer is because of the glory of His character. God's covenant of grace is determined by God's character not ours. He initiates with us

because He is glorified as He saves. Remember, this is why He refrained from destroying them after the golden calf. Moses appeal was based upon the grace of God, the glory of God and the Covenant of God. Through that incident we get a glimpse of God's character that holds all of this together. (compassion, grace, patience, lovingkindness, truth, faithfulness, mercy, justice.) These things are a summary of the glory of God.)

3. Atonement. God is clear that sin will be paid for. The guilty will be punished. It has to be. Sin has a price. In the covenant made before the golden calf, the blood of the sacrifices had been sprinkled upon the people. Since that time, the peoples own blood had been spilled because of their sin. It's was not an accident that immediately following the chapter telling about the golden calf, God gave the details of the construction of the tabernacle. The purpose of the tabernacle was to teach the people of their need for atonement. Something had to bring together a holy, glorious God and a rebellious people. And that something was and is the atonement of blood. The sacrifices in the temple were simply a foreshadowing of the cross of Jesus Christ.

One of the remarkable things about the Book of Exodus is how it ends. After all of the sin committed by the Israelites, after God's removal of His presence from among them, the Book ends with the return of the glory of God into the midst of the people with such force, that not even Moses can enter into the midst of it. And what was the event that marked the return of His glory? It was the completion of the tabernacle and the commencement of the sacrifices. You see, God's glory is displayed in redemption. When God saves a lost sinner, His glory is seen.

### III. The Glory of God is seen in the changed lives of His Redeemed People.

In other words, to what end do we do good things? The answer is God's glory. We are to live in such a way that our actions acknowledge and draw attention to the glory of God.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

John 15:8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and *so* prove to be My disciples.

Romans 4:20 Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,

When you live your life for God, you bring Glory to His name. Therefore we must understand that when we say that our chief end in life is to glorify God, we do not give glory to God in terms of changing or adding to His glory. He *is* glory. We don't exalt God. He is exalted. We may acknowledge His glory. We may proclaim it. We may bow down before it. We may live according to it. But only in this sense do we glorify God.

So what is our purpose, what is our vision as a congregation? First and foremost, it is to live for His glory. And we strive to do this by placing a high priority on three things.

1. Worship. God is glorified when we praise Him. Psalm 29 says, *Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in holy array. ; And in His temple everything says, "Glory!"*

Revelation 5:12-14 shows us picture of worship. Many people are crowded around Christ "saying with a loud voice, *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”* And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, *“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”* And the four living creatures kept saying, *“Amen.”* And the elders fell down and worshiped."

We will not fulfill our purpose as a congregation is we do not place the utmost priority on the worship of God. Public, private and family worship needs to be a consuming passion of the people of God. As a church we want this to foremost.

2. Obedience – God is glorified when we follow Him and obey Him. As your faith increases, it will translate into greater obedience and the result of that obedience will be the God's glory. I Peter 1:6-9 says, *In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*

When we sin, we fall short of the glory of God. When we obey, He is exalted. So together, as a congregation, we want to purpose to live for Christ. And to that end we will strive to continue the practical preaching of God's Word and the personal application of it to our lives.

3. Mission. It worship is the fuel of missions, then our desire to worship God and our desire for others to worship Him will lead us solidly forward into evangelism and discipleship and expansion. Listen to Psalm 96. *Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts.*

In the coming weeks we will talk more about mission. But today, let's see that our starting point for anything we do is the glory of God.

And so we begin this series with great hope and expectation – that God will renew us and mold us and ground us in His glory, so that as we do whatever He calls us to do, He may be the One who receives all the praise and glory.