

Always Christmas:
Always Glorify
Luke 2:20, John 1:14, 1 Peter 4:11

Dr. Steve Horn

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Introduction to Text: Always Christmas! That's the theme we have used this Christmas season. We have talked about "Always Prepare." We noted how Simeon and Anna's expectation for the coming of Messiah the first time parallels our preparing for the second coming of Christ. Then we began to look at the shepherds. We find our parallel in the scene of the shepherds out in the field. They teach us to "Always Proclaim" and "Always Rejoice." Today, we continue with one last action we see in the shepherds. They were glorifying.

Charlie Brown was trying to get Lucy to see that Christmas is always to be celebrated. In one particular strip, Lucy goes to Charlie Brown and says, "MERRY CHRISTMAS! Since it's this time of the season, I think we ought to bury past differences and try to be kind."

Charlie Brown said, "Why does it just have to be this time of the season? What can't it be all year long?"

Lucy backs away from him ... and with a big frown on her face... says, "What are you, some kind of fanatic?!"

(Truth is: We need more fanatics like this!)

We need to be always about Christmas—always glorifying.

Text: (Luke 2:20) ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard, just as they had been told.

Let's add to that **(John 1:14)** The Word became flesh and took up residence among us.

We observed His glory,
the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth.

Introduction: John is strangely different from the other three Gospels. Material that was in the other Gospels is absent. On the other hand, John includes other stories and sayings that are absent in the other three. We should understand at least several reasons for these differences. First, John's purpose is more theological than chronological. The stories and sayings that John includes have a specific theological purpose. Specifically, John's aim is to point people toward belief in Jesus Christ (John 20:31). Second, John tells us himself that containing all that Jesus did and said is impossible (John 21:25).

Biblical students usually refer to the first eighteen verses of John as the Prologue. These verses serve as an introduction to the whole gospel. John did not begin with the birth account as does Matthew and Luke or the preaching of John the Baptist as does Mark, he began with Jesus' pre-existence with God,

the Father. In these first eighteen verses, John got right to the point about the true identification of Jesus—which is the heart of the Christmas story.

John 1:14 says that “He took up residence among us.” This is an important idea. The idea literally is that Jesus “tabernacled” among us. The Old Testament revealed that God’s presence dwelt in the tabernacle. Now, God is revealing that His presence is upon us. Just as Jesus took up residence in the earth through a baby, He takes up residence in our lives through the Holy Spirit. So, here is the Christmas question: Has Jesus taken up residence in you? And so, is His glory revealed through you?

If we are going to talk about “Always Glorifying” we have to understand what the glory of God is.

Theological Tracing of God’s Glory through the Scriptures

In the Holman Christian Standard Bible version of the English text, the word glory appears 295 times. Not all of these occasions speak of God’s glory but the vast many do. Here is a sampling of what Scripture reveals about the glory of God.

- Genesis 45:13 *Tell my father all about my glory in Egypt and about all you have seen. And bring my father here quickly.*"

The first time the word “glory” is used in the Bible is in Genesis 45 and it is in reference to Joseph. Even this reference helps us with an understanding of what glory means. What do we learn? Glory refers to His Position.

- Exodus 14:4 *I will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will pursue them. Then I will receive glory by means of Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD."*

This is the first time that the word “glory” appears in reference to God. Many of the other occasions we read about in Exodus will speak to God’s glory relative to His authority. This use of the word “glory” reveals the purpose of His glory being revealed—That all might know Him.

- 1 Samuel 4:21, and Isaiah 6:3, and 2 Chronicles 5:14 and several other texts in the Old Testament point to His glory filling space.

1 Samuel 4:21 *She named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," referring to the capture of the ark of God and to [the deaths of] her father-in-law and her husband.*

Isaiah 6:3 *And one called to another:
Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts;
His glory fills the whole earth.*

2 Chronicles 5:14 ¹⁴ *And because of the cloud, the priests were not able to continue ministering, for the glory of the LORD filled God's temple.*

This use of glory reveals His Presence.

- Psalm 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims the work of His hands.*

In this text glory is synonymous with His Power.

- Matthew 9:8 *When the crowds saw this, they were awestruck and gave glory to God who had given such authority to men.*

This reveals that His glory is synonymous with Praise. Actually most New Testament texts points to the idea of praise. (See also for example, Mark 2:12, Luke 17 {Leper}, Acts 4:21, 1 Peter, Jude, and Revelation doxologies.)

Theological Tension of God's Glory

Now, I hope we don't miss something here this morning. In one manner of our speaking about God's glory, we must understand that we are commanded to "give Him glory." In fact, there is one instance in the Bible where Herod became afflicted with worms and died because he did not give glory to God. (Acts 12:23) On the other hand, there is a sense in which God's glory is not ours to give. It is similar to Lordship. You might hear someone say, "I made Jesus Lord over my life," but in reality He is always Lord. The question is whether we will not acknowledge Him as Lord. The same is true with God's glory. Will we be a conduit for which the glory of God can radiate to the ends of the earth? Will we reflect God's glory? The opposite of reflecting God's glory is that we will take the glory.

Theological Truth of God's Glory

- 1. God's glory speaks to His character so indeed it speaks to His Praiseworthiness!**

But, God's glory is more than just praise!

- 2. God's glory speaks to His Pre-eminence!**

More than the fact that God is to be praised, we must understand that His praise is not to be shared. Isaiah 42:8 and 48:11 says, "I will not give My glory to another."

- 3. God's glory is Personified in Jesus!**

This is what John meant when he said, "We beheld His glory."

So what? Since Jesus is the personification of God's glory, does Jesus have pre-eminence in my life?

1 Peter 4:11 is our Guide.

¹¹ If anyone speaks, it should be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, it should be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To Him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Glorifying God should be the goal and the gauge of all our words and ways.