

THE GLORY OF GOD...ALONE

Isaiah 43:1-13

We are in week 5 and the last of our series on the 5 Solas – and this last one kind of brings it all home for us. This is kind of the “meaning of it all” sola. We’ve talked about what we receive from God (GRACE), how it works in our lives (FAITH ALONE), where we find truth concerning salvation (SCRIPTURE), how it was given unto us by Christ and now...we get to the “why.” Why are we here, why does God do what he does – and those are only a few of the questions we will try to tackle. One author writes that the, “*other four solas provide necessary and life-changing answers, but soli Deo gloria puts them in proper perspective: the highest purpose is God’s own glory.*” (David Vandrunen) And we’re going to attempt all of this by using some of the prophetic the words from Isaiah. A man who prophesied to Judah around 740 BC and really challenged the people to respond appropriately to God – because God challenges THEM to understand who they are and live into that reality.

And our text today begins with a conjunction – which means chapter 43 ties into the previous chapter in context, meaning, and breath. So when we read our verses we need to unpack it WITH the previous words. Isaiah, in chapter 42 verses 18-25, speaks of the deafness of the people of God. They have continuously failed to live as people of God, to understand what that means and what God has done for them, and to even give him praise and thanks. We read in 42:15-16 that God has done so many things to lead and guide his people...even while they have acted the way they have. So even though you ignore me, even though you live for self, even though you fail to come to me and give me praise and honor and glory...even though my anger will be poured out...even though violence will surround you and the flames will lick at your face because of what you continuously do...you may feel like you are being utterly destroyed...

BUT... **READ TEXT**: Isaiah 43:1-13

This topic of “to the glory of God alone” that we are trying to tackle is going to be nearly impossible in one sermon – so we’re almost approaching it with a broad stroke of a paint brush. So let me ask you, to get you thinking about it, what is the “glory of God” to you? What does that mean? What does that look like? Is it honor? Presence? God’s work? Is it a response, confession, or is it the meaning of life? And I ask because it’s not *only* his honor, it’s not *only* doing life TO HIM and him alone, but it’s his name, his work and his being. It’s his physical attributes, his caring nature, his purpose in our lives and our purpose and meaning in our lives. It’s what we do for him, each other, and how everything relates to God.

When we say “the glory of God” we need to understand that it’s all about God himself...but that is just one side of it because it’s about you too. You and I are wrapped up in the glory of God not only because we are children of God, not only because we are created, redeemed, and ransomed

by God, not only because it is he who redeemed and ransomed and set us free...but because all of our work, all of our being, is to be done to God's glory. But even that...doesn't cover it all.

You could say that the glory of God is like fire, and you'd be absolutely right because God's glory was a ball of orange and red fire as he led his people out of Egypt – that was his presence, his radiating glory. You could say that God's glory is the sound of a chorus of angels – and you'd be right because all angels work to the glory of God and sing of his glorious love and work. But what becomes complicated is that we cannot define the glory of God to simply one thing because it's *all* things. Glory is in God's creating work, loving hands, pillar of presence, soaring goodness, and simply his word as well. "Glory" is God himself and yet it's outside of him and yet even that outside of him-ness is still *in him* so it still is his glory – because you and I ... are wrapped up (thankfully) in the glory of God too. Not because we are God but because we are his people – so the glory of God also is what you and I do and why we do it.

It's in our love, service, work, worship, praise, prayer, everything! It's why we exist, how we exist, and what it means to exist. And I say that because it's simply all...about...God! God's glory, and to God's glory alone – means it's all about him.

What is the meaning of life? Is it you? Are you the meaning of life?

We live in a very narcissistic society and so OUR society and culture would probably say that the meaning of life is the pursuit of happiness – happiness being something I feel, something that I can do that makes me feel good. It's the pursuit of me. It's about my identity, my feelings, my ways of doing things, how I can become whom I want how I want when I want. Me, me, me. And this isn't just something we Americans live by...it's been prominent since Adam and Eve fell – and it was prominent in Israel and is the reason Isaiah prophesies during this time – and all throughout history God has declared it's not about you and your glory or what you want or don't want – it's about me and mine. "It's not about you, you, you...it's about me, me, me." And God actually backs it up.

And we can use Isaiah's words, challenges, and images even today:

Who created you? Who formed you in the womb? How did your redemption happen and who actually did it? Who calls you by name and claims you as theirs? Is that you? Are you the one who is capable and has done all those things time and time again?"

"When you go through trials and temptations...when you pass through tumultuous waters, when fire licks at your face and singes your eyebrows and you smell burning hair...when the waters rise and stop just below your nose and mouth and as you breath you actually see the water gurgling because it's right at the cusp of overtaking your nostrils...who allows you to pass

through those waters and keeps you from succumbing to them and dying? Who causes the water to relent, the fire to die down, and gives you a place of rest by green pastures and living waters (**Psalm 23**)? Was that YOU who was able to do that for yourself?”

“Who proclaims that you...YOU...are precious in their sight? Who loves you more than life itself? Who gathers you in when you are lost and confused? Who created you to be an honor and glory? Who created you to be THEIR WITNESS to the ends of the earth? Who has done everything for you and says that you will NEVER be taken from their hand? That you will never be cast from their sight? That you will never be utterly destroyed for the hate, self-love, and greed that swells up inside you? Is that something you are capable of doing – and have you actually done it?”

The people of Israel were created to glorify God. The covenant God cut with Israel was *to* and *for* his glory and yet they weren't doing it and living into it. But because of God's glory he did not abandon nor forsake them. Because of sin they were not living as children of God and doing all things to declare God's glory – but God would not allow them to be removed from his grip. He would show just how glorious he was by saving them because God was, and is the only one who saves – and he did. He saved them, protected them, watched over them, cared for them, and righted their wrongs time and time again. And he did so for his own glory – for his own namesake – the same love, patience, and work that we live into today. And his saving hands was not because they or you and I deserved it...but because it is in his nature, his love, his kindness, his work, his being, his his-ness and it's all part of his glory.

Everything that God is...is his glory. And if all of what God spoke to Isaiah was enough – and it was – God's glory was still not done working. If everything God had ever revealed had ended with Isaiah's words and God's consistent love and forgiveness for the ways and actions of his covenantal people – if that ended with that – that would be more than we ever deserved. But God's glory didn't end there. The vast depths of God's glory was still to come. The culmination of God's glory would slam together in ultimate love, sacrifice, redemption, proclamation, and protection from God by way of the Father, sending the Son, to show his glory FOR his glory.

Jesus Christ and his presence on earth and the work he did is the perfect representation of God's glory. You want to really know what the glory of God to God alone means and looks like? Jesus Christ. He not only is the perfect radiating glory of God – but he becomes the one we copy and mimic and look to in what it means to be, and know, the glory of God.

We read in **Hebrews 1:3** “The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” and Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 2:8** that Christ is the “Lord of glory.”

Christ was, and is, the glory of God. And he is the Lord of Glory not only because he is God, not only because he covers all the attributes of God in his love and sacrifice – but because all that he did was to point *back* to God. He came to show God’s glory, be God’s glory, and share God’s glory FOR GOD ALONE. By his continuous love, by his continuous service, by his continuous renouncing of self and pointing back to the Father, and by way of the cross the glory of God was, and is proclaimed.

But the glory of God doesn’t stop with Christ – because we then see the glory of God in the presence and work of the Holy Spirit as he too descended, once Christ ascended to his throne on high. So the Holy Spirit is the glorious presence and glory of God as well – and what does the Spirit choose to do? Dwell within the people of God. So that they know, love, and serve as Christ. And so the glory of God NOW is dwelling within you and me. When we act like Christ, love like Christ, serve like Christ...we are doing so because the glory of God is doing those things in us and through us and for others. And the realization of all of this is that it is for God. For his honor...for his namesake...to his glory.

You, me, all that we do is to be done to God’s glory alone. Paul writes in **1 Cor 10:31** that whatever we do, whether it be eating or drinking or anything else...do it to the glory of God.

Every breath – breathed to the glory of God.

And why? Because he created you, redeemed you, and dwells within you. Life is not about you, life is about your response to what God has done. Life is about declaring the love and sacrifice that you didn’t deserve but were given and sharing that eternal glory that awaits you with others...now. And doing so to God’s glory – so saying to people, “It’s not about me...it’s about God.” So when you work hard at your job and are honest and truthful in all your work...you are doing it not for you, but for God. You are doing it not for accolades or promotions or recognition...but to God, for God, in thanks to God. When you help your neighbor, when you love the unlovable, when you forgive as you have been forgiven you do it unto God, for God, so that you can point back to him.

What is the meaning of life? I asked it earlier...it’s to glorify God (this is what the Westminster Shorter Catechism declares). Every action, every thought, every praise, every honor, every worship, every thanks...doesn’t point to you, definitely doesn’t point to me...but points to our triune God. Our Lord, Savior, Protector, Redeemer, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our faith proclaims it, Scripture proclaims it, the grace as given to us proclaims it, Christ proclaims it...it’s simply all about God.

Amen and amen – and to God’s glory alone we cry amen.

