

A sermon by John Piper, where he takes a stab (his term) at defining God's Glory

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A Sermon by John Piper, taken from

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-gods-glory--2>

{This note is from Larry Callander at This Is The Day! Radio.

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This text in this pdf is taken from the above DesiringGod link and the work is John Piper.

I went to this for my own study of the topic and found it so helpful that I offer it to our radio audience, free, of course. I have added some of my own comments, and definitions, etc. All my comments are clearly marked by being displayed in italics within [square brackets].

I've also added newlines and tabs within his text for my own clearer reading, and put some of his text in boxes for highlighting. But you can read it through and easily follow Piper's fine work.]

God's glory is a big deal in Scripture. And that makes it a big deal to us here at Desiring God. Over the years here are just a few ways Pastor John has described the importance of God's glory. He's said things like this: "The vindication of God's glory is the ground of our salvation, and the exaltation of God's glory is the goal of our salvation." In another place: "God's glory is the goal of all things." In another place: "God's glory is the unifying goal of history." In another place he said: "God's glory is the source and sum of all full and lasting joy." And on and on. These are strong words. But what exactly is God's glory,

what do we mean by that? It's a question Pastor John sought to answer in his sermon, "To Him Be Glory Forevermore," preached on December 17, 2006. Here's a clip of what he said:

Defining the glory of God is impossible, I say, because it is more like the word beauty than the word basketball. So if somebody says they have never heard of a basketball, they don't know what a basketball is and they say: Define a basketball. That would not be hard for you to do.

You would use your hands and you would say: Well, it is like a round thing made out of leather or rubber and about ten or nine inches in diameter and you blow it up. You inflate it so it is pretty hard. And then you can bounce it like this and you can throw it to people and you can run while you are bouncing it. And then there is this hoop at the end. It used to be a basket. And you try to throw the ball through the hoop, and that is why it is called a basketball. They would have a really good idea of what it is. They would be able to spot one, and tell it from a soccer ball or a football.

You can't do that with the word beauty. There are some words in our vocabulary which we can communicate with not because we can say them, but because we see them. We can point. If we point at enough things and see enough things together and say, "That's it, that's it, that's it," we might be able to have a common sense of beauty. But you try to put the word beauty into words, it would be very, very difficult.

Pointing at Glory

The same thing with the word glory. So how shall I do it? You have got to try because we can't just leave it for people to fill up on their own. So here is the way I am going to try to do it. I am going to take it and contrast it biblically with the word holy and ask, "What is the difference between the

holiness of God and the glory of God." In doing that, I think we get a little handle on the nature of this term, the glory of God. So that is the way I am going to try to do it.

The holiness of God is, I think,
[H]is being in a class by himself
in his
perfection and
greatness and
worth.

The holiness of God is, I think,
His being in a class by Himself
In His
perfection
and greatness
and worth.

His
perfection
and his greatness
and his worth
are of such a distinct and separated
category
—we have been taught that holy
means separate—
that he is in a class by himself.

*He has
infinite perfections,
infinite greatness, and
infinite worth.*

He is in a class by Himself.

*He has
infinite perfections,
infinite greatness, and
infinite worth.*

His holiness

is what he is as God that nobody else is.
It is his quality of perfection*

[* *perfection: the quality of being free or as free as possible from all flaws or defects.*

synonyms: flawlessness, excellence, superbness, exquisiteness]

that can't be improved upon,
that can't be imitated,
that is incomparable,
that

determines all that he is
and is determined by nothing
from outside him.

It signifies

his infinite worth,
his intrinsic*, infinite worth,
his intrinsic, infinite value.

[* *intrinsic: belonging naturally;*

synonyms: inherent, innate, built-in, inseparable, permanent, indelible, basic]

Now when Isaiah 6:3 says
that angels are crying
“Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God almighty” —
the next thing they say is this —
“The whole earth is full of his”
— and you might have expected him to say
holiness.

And he doesn't say holiness.

He says glory.

Intrinsically holy,
intrinsically holy, and
the whole earth is full of his
glory

from which I stab at a definition by saying

the glory of God

is the manifest* beauty of his holiness.

It is the going public of his holiness.

It is the way he puts his holiness on display

for people to apprehend*.

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is the manifest* beauty of His holiness.
It is the going public of His holiness.
It is the way He puts His holiness on display
for people to apprehend*.

So the glory of God

is the holiness of God
made manifest*.

[* manifest: clear or obvious to
the eye or mind.

Synonyms: plain, apparent,
evident, blatant,
undisguised

* apprehend: understand or
perceive.

synonyms: comprehend,
realize, recognize,
appreciate, grasp, take in,
catch the drift of]

Listen to this word from Leviticus 10:3.

God says

he will be shown

to be holy

among those who are near
him

and

before all the people
he will be glorified.

"I will be shown to be holy," he says.
"And among all the people"

— say it another way —

"I will be glorified."

So

to see,
to apprehend and
to reckon with his holiness
and in some sense perceive it
is to see glory
and, thus, to glorify him.

Defining the Impossible

So here is an attempt at a definition. The glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of God's manifold perfections. The infinite beauty—and I am focusing on the manifestation of his character and his worth and his attributes — all of his perfections and greatness are beautiful as they are seen, and there are many of them. That is why I use the word manifold.

So here it is in another sentence.

The glory of God is the infinite beauty
and greatness of his manifold
perfections.

In the same sermon, Pastor John went on to conclude like this:

The heavens are telling the glory of God (Psalm 19:1). What does that mean? It means he is shouting at us. He shouts with clouds. He shouts with blue expanse. He shouts with gold on the horizons. He shouts with galaxies and stars. He is shouting. I am glorious. Open your eyes. It is like this, only better if you know me.

And, the Bible says, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isaiah 6:3). If you had eyes to see in this room, you would see the glory of God everywhere. We need eyes. We need eyes more than we need anything. The God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the knowledge of the glory of Christ in the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4-6).

So I ask, “Do you see it? Do you love it?” You were made for this. Deep down in your heart if you are a totally disinterested person sitting there tonight just eager for the service to be over, there will come a day, I hope tonight, when enough of the crust is scraped off that you will say, “I am made for this. This is why I exist to see that. Everything is pointing to that. All the glory that I thought was so attractive is going there. This is all husks and ashes. He was right. The Bible was right. Jesus was right.”

I hope it will not be too late when that happens for you.

That clip was taken from John Piper’s sermon, “To Him Be Glory Forevermore,” preached on December 17, 2006. You can find that entire sermon at desiringgod.org.