

The Greatest Glory Flows out of Humility
Philippians 2:5-11

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

He was a skinny Virginian with a southern drawl. He worked at a shipyard in Newport News. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, he felt it his duty to enlist, and he did. There was one problem. His personal beliefs convicted him that he could not carry a gun or kill someone. His intent was that he would be assigned as a combat medic which he was, but as part of an infantry unit, it was not well-received that he refused to carry a weapon. Fellow soldiers ridiculed him. They viewed him with disdain. One man in the barracks warned him, “As soon as we get into combat, I’ll make sure you won’t come back alive.” His commanding officers saw him as a liability. Nobody believed a soldier without a weapon was worthwhile. They tried to intimidate him, scold him, assign him extra tough duties. They attempted to court-martial him for refusing to carry a gun. But they failed to find a way to toss him out. But once engaged in the war, their attitudes started to change. He proved himself a worthy medic and a calming influence on the men. Then came the day that changed everything. May 5, 1945, the battle of Okinawa. The men in Doss’s division were trying to capture an imposing rock face the soldiers called Hacksaw Ridge. After the company had secured the top of the cliff, suddenly enemy forces rushed them in a vicious counterattack. As the officers ordered a retreat, soldiers rushed to climb back down the steep cliff. All except one. Less than one-third of the men had made it back down. The rest lay wounded, scattered across enemy soil. One lone soldier charged back into the firefight to rescue as many of his men as he could, before he either collapsed or died trying. His unflagging courage resulted in at least 75 lives saved that day. Doss was one of only 43 men that received the Congressional Medal of Honor for their service in WWII. As president Harry Truman placed the medal around his neck he said, “I consider this a greater honor than being president.”

Eventually, the Americans took Hacksaw Ridge. Okinawa was captured inch by bloody inch. Several days later, during an unsuccessful night raid, Desmond was severely wounded. Hiding in a shell hole with two riflemen, a Japanese grenade landed at his feet. The explosion sent him flying. The shrapnel tore into his leg and up to his hip. He treated his own wounds as best he could. While attempting to reach safety, he was hit by a sniper’s bullet that shattered his arm. His brave actions as a combat medic were done, but not before insisting that his litter-bearers take another man first before rescuing him. For Desmond Doss, glory flowed out of humility.

Glory flows out of humility. That seems a counterintuitive slogan, yet today we commemorate an event which exemplifies this truth even more than the story of Desmond Doss. I’m talking of course about the entrance of Jesus of Nazareth into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday – and more than that, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The first thing you know is that it wasn’t what people expected. Oh, make no mistake, they were looking for a hero, they were looking for a glorious leader, a conqueror, but most were expecting a king/general in the footsteps of David to raise an army and take back the country. They were right to shout “Hosanna” which means “Save us we pray.” They were right to call him the Son of David – he did fulfil the prophecy that God’s promised one would be from the house and line of David. They were right to shout “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” He was God’s promised one, he was God’s son come from heaven to earth to save his people, but not in the way that they thought. And their dreams of driving out the Roman army were crushed when four days later he is arrested and five days later tortured and killed. But that isn’t the end of the story. The next Sunday he does the most glorious and powerful thing possible. He comes back from the dead. And the actions that looked like his defeat – the whipping, the mocking, the crown of thorns, the crucifixion – were acts that were solidifying his glory, acts of service, acts of payment that reconcile us to God, pay the debt for sin, and mean that we will share in the greatest triumph that there is, not victory in WWII, not victory over the Romans, but victory over death, a life of permanent happiness in heaven. Glory flows out of humility. That’s God’s plan. Today the account of Palm Sunday is our jumping off point for the verses before us which show that glory flowing out of humility is still the way God works today. It is the pattern he desires in our lives too. Listen to God’s words recorded in **Philippians 2:5-11**. ⁵ **In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:** ⁶ **Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;** ⁷ **rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.** ⁸ **And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross.** ⁹ **Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,** ¹⁰ **that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,** ¹¹ **and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Before I go any further, I think it’s important to point out what these verses do not say. God does tell us, your attitude should be like Jesus – you should strive to put others before yourself so that you earn what Jesus earned. He doesn’t say your attitude should be one of serving others first because that’s how you get to heaven. He’s really telling us, your attitude should be like that of Jesus because he has already earned your future glory. And that’s true! What is the

greatest glory that there is? Isn't it to live forever in perfect bliss? That's heaven. Jesus earned it and gives it to us free of charge. God doesn't say that your attitude should be like Jesus' so that you earn glory. But he does say that our attitude should be selfless like Jesus – out of gratitude. And do you know what, even here and now, glory still flows out of that kind of humility. The glory that comes with the fulfillment of helping others, the glory that comes with knowing God used us to help someone else get to know and benefit from the gifts Jesus earned.

Oh but it is so easy to be blind to this reality. Let me ask you, do you think we live in a world that champions humble service? What attitude is promoted and championed? First off, would you agree that we live in a world that celebrates champions receiving glory? In other words, would you agree that we live in a society that preaches “It's good to be well-known, it's good to be admired. It's good when other people look up to you!” And that can be fine, but then look at how we are taught the glory is attained.

Isn't it true that we are taught that glory flows out of achieving equal or greater power than those around me? To attain glory I've got to win the game. To attain glory I need to get paid more than the average person. To attain glory I need to be promoted to a higher position than my peers at work; to attain glory a need to achieve grades that are higher than my rival classmate; I need to date the best looking girl or most athletic boy; my race or my sex needs a greater voice and more power; I need to own a bigger house; I need to achieve a well-toned body, I need to having more followers on social media than others do. The assumption is this: when I work hard to empower myself and climb whatever ladder I'm trying to climb and land at the top – when I achieve that kind of glory, then I will be satisfied, then I will be fulfilled. Tell me if I'm wrong!

So, how is that approach working out? Listen, by any objective criteria, we are wealthier, more powerful, more athletic, better looking, longer living, and have more leisure time and more toys to play with than any generation in history! So we should be the most fulfilled, satisfied, and happy generation in history right? Wrong. Multiple studies have found that depression, anxiety, lack of fulfillment, and suicide in those under 50 are at all-time highs in our country. I don't think you have to look at studies to see it. I see it frequently as I interact with people. I'm guessing you do too. How about you? How about me? Are we seeking glory in our achievement, in self-promotion, in seeking the acceptance and accolades of others? If someone beats you out for the position on the team, does that devastate you? When you are passed over for a promotion, do you see red for weeks, are you angry and cranky and short with others? How about when the one you asked out says “no”? When people are complementing someone else or singing the praises of someone else's child and never say anything about yours, are you bitter? Listen. Listen. **In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant.**

The approach of society isn't working because it can't. It's not God's way. If you are in this trap – listen, listen to these words. God is saying, stop looking at your navel – start looking at your neighbor. Fulfillment and satisfaction come from serving, not from being noticed and winning the advantage over your neighbor. Strive to serve your neighbor, not win the victory over your neighbor! Watch what God can do.

Start with your spouse, your family. How will you serve them today? Jesus put them first. Jesus gave his life for them. How will you put them first? Maybe it's just resolving to put the phone away for an hour and spend time talking face-to-face or going somewhere together where you're not watching other people or a game or a show, but taking an active interest in the life of your brother or sister, mom, dad, son, daughter. How about that classmate that gets on your nerves? Jesus put him first. Jesus died for him. Try kind words instead of insults. Don't always try to avoid him. How about that co-worker whose life is a mess? Go beyond, “Whew, I'm glad my life isn't like that.” Jesus died for her, Jesus put her interests first. How will you? The neighbors you never talk to. Jesus died for them. Jesus put them first, how will you serve? Maybe it's just making the effort to walk over there. How about your teachers? Jesus died for them. Jesus put them first. How will you? Maybe it's just taking the time to say “thank you” instead of finding the next thing to complain about. How about that friend who doesn't know Jesus or who is falling away? Jesus died for him. Jesus put him first. You might be the person God can use to learn that truth and enjoy the gifts he gave. I could go on, but you get the point. It's so easy to think about me – so easy to think, my achievement will result in my glory and my fulfillment. While Jesus says it's the other way around. Start with humility – put others first.

Don't worry so much about the glory. Remember, our greatest glory is already a done deal Jesus achieved it though his humility. It is epitomized in his triumphant entrance on a humble donkey. It is carried out in full in his birth in a barn, his childhood in humble Nazareth, his ministry where so often he was scorned and rejected, his trial, his suffering and death, all of this was Jesus humbling himself – putting us first, enduring what we should have so that we share in the glory of heaven. Our glory flows out of his humility. And for a time – a brief time, we are left here and Jesus says, you too – you too put others first that they can share this glory too. AMEN.