

## GLORY BE TO JESUS!

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

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*John 17:1-5*

*When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*

The Medal of Honor is the highest military award that a member of the U.S. armed forces can receive. Some medals are awarded posthumously because the service member dies in the field during their acts of courage. Those awarded the glory of such a distinction went above and beyond the call of duty to save their comrades and advance the military objective for their units. Their stories are often preserved as an inspiration for others, including future generations. Such honor, such glory!

Today we enter this house of worship to hear a story of unbelievable courage on a different kind of battlefield. Jesus suffered, died, and rose again in order to rescue all of us and all of humanity. The story of His cross brings us comfort and encouragement in the midst of our own battles with sin, death, and the devil. **See his cross! See His Glory! There's our victory!**

### **I. HE (†) COMPLETED HIS FATHER'S WORK.**

Jesus was sent to earth with a mission. Even from the beginning it was clear. When the angel appeared to Joseph and explained Mary's pregnancy, the angel said, **"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins"** (Matthew 1:21). Then at the birth of Jesus, the glory of the Lord broke into the Bethlehem night and the angel left no doubt about what had just happened. Speaking to the shepherds of the field they said: **"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."** (Luke 2:11).

Of course, even before Jesus came, the mission of this baby was clear to anyone who read the Scriptures. God said in Isaiah 61 that a virgin would give birth to a son and his name would be Immanuel, which means "God with us." His purpose was to preach the good news, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim freedom, and comfort those who mourned (Isaiah 61:1-2). All those bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament law pointed not only to His coming but also to the bloody end of His mission. He would be sacrificed as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, just as John the Baptist would announce. **"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!"**

All of that is precisely what Jesus did. He spent His ministry proclaiming the gospel, healing the sick, and raising the dead. But the final chapter of His mission, the pinnacle moment and action would be in Jerusalem. He had told His disciples of these events before they happened. And even if they did not fully understand, Jesus understood His mission clearly. When He prayed to His heavenly Father, **"Glorify your Son,"** He was ready to embrace His cross and all that it meant—the suffering, the abuse, the ridicule, and the death. While on the cross just before His death, Jesus announced, **"It is finished"** (John 19:30). All that God had planned for His Son to suffer and endure was completed. His resurrection three days later was a glorious confirmation of His successful mission. Glory be to Jesus! He has completed His mission for us.

No medal could adequately honor Jesus for what He has done. He has rescued us by His (†) cross. We were born into sin and death and by nature were captives. It is as Jesus said, **"Everyone who sins is a slave to sin"** (John 8:34). Our lives are broken by the oppression of guilt and sorrow. We are saddened by life's tragedies and become brokenhearted at what we must endure. The world

might offer us some pleasures, and we might even grab at those pleasures: sexual immorality, selfish ambition, drunkenness, and a host of other vices. But our pleasure changes nothing. We cannot change our situation. We might make life a little more comfortable, but the guilt and death remain.

Jesus has set us free. He suffered for our sins; we are forgiven because of His cross. That was God's plan from the beginning. Glory be to Jesus! What we could not do, He did! We do not deserve any blessings. They were given to us by grace through the cross of Christ. Jesus has completed His mission. He came to preach the good news, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim freedom, and comfort those who mourn. He has finished that task. Praise Him for His efforts for you. Glory be to Jesus! As we focus on His cross, we have one more blessing to embrace.

## II. BY HIS CROSS, HE BRINGS ETERNAL LIFE.

God has not hidden the result of sin from us. We experience its cruel force as we see family members breathe their last and then disappear into their graves. We know that we too will come to that end. Not only does God remind us of sin and death with each weekly edition of the obituaries, He has also clearly said, ***"The wages of sin is death"*** (Romans 6:23). Death is a constant in human history. We come here, we live, and we die. You can't change that. I can't change that. No leader, except one, has changed that formula. Muhammad, Confucius, Buddha, Lenin, Washington, and Lincoln were all great leaders, but they could not and have not altered God's announcement, ***"The wages of sin is death."*** That announcement is worse than the obituary pages because God reminds us that the death He speaks about is eternal separation from Him and the blessings He provides to those in heaven.

The cross of Jesus has changed that forever. What wonderful news we find in the cross of Christ! 1 John 1:7 says, ***"The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin"***. The cross of Jesus brings justification—a declaration that we are innocent and forgiven. All are ***"justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood"*** Romans 3:24+25. Glory be to Jesus! We stand acquitted before the court of God's justice.

Is it too much to believe that with the forgiveness of sins also comes life? That's also what God says. Since the wages of sin is death, ***"the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"*** (Romans 6:23). Eternal life is our gift of grace through the cross of Jesus. We are encouraged to see His cross and raise our voices in praise! Glory be to Jesus!

Yes, eternal life is yours through the cross of Christ. Your sins are forgiven, and Jesus promises you life, ***"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"*** (John 3:16). You know that passage. How often it seems to recede into the background when we experience life's tragedies. When we sense our own aging process and come to the realization that we are no better off than any other human being. We need to look to the cross of (†) Jesus. We will die. We will shed this corrupt flesh. Yet we shall live. We will even be raised with glorified bodies, no longer handicapped by the corruption of sin. So Jesus, who died and rose again, says, ***"He who believes in me will live, even though he dies"*** (John 11:25). The mission of Jesus was to die for our sins and rise again. He finished His mission. Glory be to Jesus!

## III. JESUS HAS ETERNAL GLORY.

Let's not forget who Jesus is. He is the Lord of glory from eternity. We confess in the Nicene Creed that he is "Very God of God, Light from Light, true God from true God." Jesus Himself claims He is the Lord of glory from eternity. In the prayer in our reading, He says, ***"Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed."*** What a claim! Before Adam and Eve, Jesus had glory with His Father. Yes, He is God. He also claimed that He should be honored as God. He said clearly that ***"all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent Him"*** (John 5:23).

There were glimpses of that eternal glory while Jesus was here on earth. His miracles demonstrated that He was certainly more than just a great teacher. He took Peter, James, and John to a mountaintop and met with Moses and Elijah. On that transfiguration mount, they saw more than just a human teacher. They saw that **“His face shine like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light”** (Matthew 17:2). Most of the time His glory and majesty were hidden, but they were hidden so that He could accomplish His mission.

When we see the cross of Jesus, we should remember that there too (†) He hid His eternal glory. He appeared helpless, like a victim being executed by the hands of Roman soldiers. No one could see eternal glory in a bloody man accused of being a traitor to Rome, condemned unjustly, and crucified. Yet, at the death of Jesus, one of those Romans was so moved that he confessed, **“Surely He was the Son of God!”** (Matthew 27:54). That Roman did not see the eternal majesty and glory of Jesus, but he saw the cross, endured the darkness of Good Friday, and felt the earthquake at the death of Jesus.

The glory of Jesus is His cross. It's still hidden from the world around us. The world wants pizzazz, a celebration, lights, awards, glitz and glamour. The lowly cross seems out of place. I think sometimes we are even tempted to minimize the cross of Jesus. We think that the church should be prominent and should influence society and the world. We are at times disappointed by the way the visible church today is despised and even persecuted in our world. Ridicule and disgrace are the daily lot of Christianity, rather than acclaim, glory, and honor. We may be tempted to abandon the shame of the cross and its hidden glory. Some of Christendom has, looking to prosperity rather than humility. Looking to popularity rather than saving message of Jesus.

But see the cross of Jesus clearly. This world will all disappear. Satan even tried tempting Jesus with **“all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor”** (Matthew 4:8). But Jesus resisted because He knew that all those kingdoms and their glory were already His and that they soon would be gone. All the fame, power, influence, and importance of those nations and people would be gone. That stark reality is still true. We see it even in our own lives. All we count today as our accomplishments, prize possessions, glory, and fame will disappear and vanish. Some probably already have.

Jesus is the eternal Son of God. He came to claim you for His eternal kingdom. He humbled Himself to accomplish His mission. His lowly bloodstained cross is your hope for life. He wants you with Him eternally, and He came to redeem you for His kingdom. Remember that He has eternal glory—a glory He had before the world existed. When the book of this world's history is closed, He will still be there. And He will come in His glory for you, to take you from this world of sorrow and misery.

There He will welcome us to heaven where all shall sing, **“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”** (Revelation 5:12). But for now, see His cross clearly and praise His Holy name, for through Him all your sins have been forgiven and eternal life is yours. Glory be to Jesus! In Jesus name, amen and amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
AMEN