

The Glory of the Lord

December 25, 2022

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. Merry Christmas! This week's message is titled The Glory of the Lord. Thank you to Amy, Gloria, and Don for being part of the video. The scripture reading is Isaiah 6:1-3

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Well, good morning, everybody. I bring you greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. This morning. To paraphrase many openings of many books. Happy to see you. Which is not in any books. But it's the subtext in in pretty much of the Bible. I have a few announcements I'd like to touch on this morning. We we have some some birthday celebrations coming up this week. We want to wish Amanda and Dianne and Debbie in particular, happy birthday and and happy birthday to anybody else who is who is celebrating. Speaking of celebrations, Don and Barb have moved. They are they are settling into their their new house in in St Catharines. So you can go it's gone now. But that's okay. The their address there is their address. Their address is available to you. We are in the process of planning for next year's budget. So please speak to me or one of the elders if you have any notes on that. And for if you have any expenses from this year, 2022 that you would like to have reimbursed, please submit those to me before, on or before January 8th. And then that way we can close out 2022 and have most fresh books for for 2023. We will expect to have our annual meeting early in the new year. We're not totally nailed down on the date of that yet, but that is coming up.

We also have a request from the giving knitters. They are looking for new or gently used coats to donate to children in need. So please speak to Janet or to Barbara. If you have a source on some coats, that would be very helpful. I'd like to I'd like to invite you to stand as we go to God in prayer at this time and then continue to stand for our our songs. Lord, we thank you for this time that we can spend together. We thank you for the great gift of your son, who brings us together as one. When you look at us, God, you see him and not the things we have messed up. And we are so grateful that his gift has covered over our sins. God, we think of those right now who have lost loved ones recently. Or maybe not so recently, but the hurt is still open. We ask for your comfort for them and that we may be able to reach out a loving hand to those families to be a support to them. We pray for those among us and not among us who are under the weather with various maladies. We think particularly of Jack and Marie both in hospital. And we ask that you would strengthen them and give their care teams your wisdom in supporting them and figuring out how to best heal their bodies so that they can join us once more. God, we rejoice with Don and Barb at a new beginning in their lives and a new community to to be a part of. And we we pray for a quick settling for them that they may be comfortable. And and we ask that you would give give their minds peace and and guide them into their their new community and into their new space as they seek to glorify you in St Catharines. We thank you for their long service here and we ask that you continue to bless them and their family. God, as we gather this morning to lift up our voices to you, we ask for your discernment and insight for those who are who are sharing thoughts. We ask that we have open ears to what they would have to say and that we are focused always, always on you. It's in Jesus name that we pray. Amen.

Communion

Good morning. I'm going to start this morning by reading the reading that Don has selected for this week. And then I'm going to go a little bit beyond where his reading leaves off, because I think the story that happens after this is relatable to me. So today's reading is from Isaiah chapter six verses one through three, but I will be continuing on till the end of verse eight and the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and exalted seated on the throne, and the train of his robe filled the temple above him were seraphim, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces with two. They covered their feet with two. They were flying and they were calling to one another. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole Earth is full of His glory at the sound of their voices. The door posts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. Woe to me I cried. I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips. And I live among people of unclean lips. And my eyes have seen the King of the Lord Almighty.

I'm going to just pause there for a second. I feel like this is a relatable thing. God comes. God shows up in the form of angels and we say Who I am of unclean lips. That is, I have said some things, I have said a lot of things, and I do not feel equipped to face God. I am not a good person and my friends are not good people. This is my end time, okay? It goes on in verse six. Then one of the Seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hands, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, See, this is touch your lips. Your guilt is taken away. Your sin is atone for. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? And I said, Here I am, send me. I feel like this is relatable because I think for a lot of us, when we are called by God, we say, Oh, but I'm not good enough. I am not good enough, I am a bad person. I have bad things in my past, in my life. I hope that people in my life I am not equipped. But I love this because when God says, okay, I equip you, I am cleaning your mouth. Who will go? I say those responses. Here I am. Send me. This is relatable to other times in the Bible.

I'm going to jump to Luke chapter one where Mary is being approached by the angel. The angel went to her and said, Greetings, you who are highly favored. The Lord is with you. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son and you will call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the most high. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His Father. David, and He will reign over Jacob's descendants forever. His kingdom will never end. How will this be? Mary asked the Angel. Since I am a virgin. The spirit answered. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you. The Holy One will be born. To be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth, your relative, is going to have a child in her old age. She, who is said to be unable to conceive, is in her sixth month for no word from God will ever fail. I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered. May your word be fulfilled in me. Then the angel left her.

I think this is a second relatable response we have when we are called by God. Who, me? I am too young. I am too inexperienced. I have not done the things that I need to do to be there and I won't ask for a show of hands, but maybe you can show hands in your heart. How many of us, when called by God, have said No? I am too bad. I have bad friends. I have made bad choices. You don't want me. And how many of us, when we have been called by God, have said, No, I am too young, I am too inexperienced, you don't want me. God equips those He calls and He sets us up to fulfill his calling. He gives us the gifts that we need.

Matthew 26, verse 39, going a little further. He fell with his face to the ground and prayed. My father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me yet not as I will, but as you will. I think we are not setting ourselves up to be called. Our job is to answer the call with Here I am, send me. That is the call of Christianity. And I think sometimes we feel guilty when we don't feel prepared, when we get a call. We're not to be prepared when we get a call. God prepares us. God prepares the weak. And God prepared Jesus and give Him the bravery that He needed to face what he was facing. He prepared Mary and gave her what she needed to face, what she was facing, and he prepared Isaiah to give an awful message to people and gave him the strength that he needed to face what he was facing. This story isn't about us. We don't have to be equipped. We just need to say, here I am. Send me.

Let's pray together. Dear God, we thank you for your calls in our life. We ask that you would give us the wisdom to see them and have the courage to say, Here I am. Send me. Amen.

Scripture Reading – Isaiah 6:1-3

This morning's reading. Is taken from Isaiah six verses 1 to 3. You've already heard it, so you're going to hear it again. So take it to heart. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and exalted, seated on a throne and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim. Each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory.

Sermon

Good morning, everyone. Glad to have you with us this morning. Yesterday, Barbie and I made our move into St Catharines and it went quite well. I woke up this morning and nothing really hurt except my shoulders and my head and my knees. And in fact, I think everything still hurts. But anyway, we'll try to get through it today. I love the Christmas season and I want to spend some time today talking about this word glory. That is a powerful word. It means a number of things. It means praise. It means honor. And it means distinction. And if you remember the story of Christ coming into the world, Christ who was with God from the very beginning but is sent to the Earth as an infant child and the glory of a wonderful man who traveled many, many months because they heard of a savior who would be born to go and see this child. So yes, glory means honor and praise and distinction. Many of us can remember in movies or looking in books of this child in a manger and people surrounding this wonderful child. And that child grows up. The magnificence, the resplendent, the happiness and the blessings from heaven come in the form of Jesus. And so in Luke chapter one, begin in verse 26, you can, if you have a Bible, you can follow along with me.

Luke Chapter one Beginning in verse 26, a familiar story. I don't know about you, but every time I read it I think I learn something new. Luke one beginning in verse 26 and I'm reading from a new international version, an extended one. In the six months of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth in a town in Galilee. Interesting. God sends an angel looking like a human being to a virgin. Pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, Greetings, you are highly favored. The Lord is with you. And Mary said, Awesome, no. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting

might this be? In other words, in today's language, she'd be saying, Are you nuts? This doesn't make any sense. And then the angel says to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son. And when I read that again early this morning, I thought, what would Mary's facial expression be confused. Mouth dropped, furrowed brow. What you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you're to call him Jesus. This is good news. He will be great. And he will be called son of the most high. The Lord God will give Him the throne of his father, David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever. His kingdom will never end. And you and I are part of that kingdom. That kingdom began. And you and I are just as much in that kingdom as when it started. We are carrying on the kingdom of God. It's a profound story. It's a wonderful story.

And then it says in verse 36, Even Elizabeth, your relative is going to have a child in her old age. And she was said to be unable to conceive in her six month for no word from God will ever fail. Mary's response was overwhelming. I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me, according to your word. Then. Then the angel left her. At that time, Mary got ready and hurried to a town in a city of Judea, where she entered Zacharias home and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard Mary's greetings, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice, she exclaimed, Blessed are you among the women. And blessed is the child you bear. But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears? Jesus, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill His promises to her. What a wonderful story this is. And I, even though at Christmas time, we read it over and over again. I think there's some interesting things that we can learn from this. I certainly have.

There was Simeon who worshiped knowing that he had seen the Christ. I'll read this to you from Luke two. Now, there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the constellation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ moved by the Spirit. And the Spirit is very much involved in the story of Christ. Simeon went to the temple courts. I watched this when Joseph and Mary brought in the child Jesus to do for Him what the custom of the law required. Simeon took Jesus in his arms, which is an interesting experience. Seems like they didn't really know each other. But he goes and takes the baby from Mary, takes in his arms and says, Sovereign Lord, as you have promised you, now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all for the glory. Excuse me. Of your people, Israel. One of the challenges of Christmas, and I think it's really I think it's really been digging at my heart. We knew that we were going to be moving pretty soon. It was going to be Christmas time and so forth. And you get busy and thinking about, well, what gift can I get this person and what can I do? And how is all this going to happen? And it's all kind of overwhelming. Sometimes I think this is not really what Christmas is. Christmas is the baby Jesus being born. And then Christmas is when I said yes to Jesus. And when you said yes to Jesus.

But it's more than that. It's it's the gift of this same Jesus who was born, who lived, who died, who is raised again, who has gone into heaven, is coming back. But listen, who lives inside each one of us. And sometimes that we forget that is to say, Jesus, you are always with me. You promised. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I am with you always there is more to you than you. There's something even greater than your own intelligence. Your own physicality. It's Christ who lives in you. Many people don't believe it, but that doesn't change the fact that Christ lives in us and to be aware of this. So in

Luke two, it's a powerful scripture. Sovereign Lord, as you have promised you, now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in sight for all the people. A light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of Israel itself. And again, one of the challenges at Christmas is leaving the Christ child in the manger, as if the child never grew up. And as we know, Christ is Lord in the flesh. So we're not really sure who wrote the book of Hebrews. It's a powerful scripture. It's wonderful talks about angels, talks about Old Testament people, talks about the future. It's wonderful book. But in Hebrews chapter one versus one through three, listen to whoever wrote Hebrews. We're not sure. Listen to what this person said:

In the past. God spoke to our ancestors, to our forefathers, through the prophets at many times in various ways. So we think by saying we talk Zachariah, Zephaniah, Amos, all the Old Testament people. But in these last days, God has spoken to us by His who son whom He appointed heir of what? Everything, everything. He is the air of all things. Everything and through whom he made the entire universe powerful. The Son is the radiance of God's glory. He is the exact representation of God, His being, sustaining everything, sustaining all things. Every time you take a breath, it's from him. Every time you sleep. It's from him. Every time you wake is with him. Every time you cry, it's with him. Every time you let your imagination go, it's with him. He'll never leave you. He will never forsake you. He sustains everything simply by his word. So in Colossians chapter one, 15 through 20. So we look at the New Testament. Basically the entire New Testament, even though it has instruction, is really all about honoring Christ himself because he honors us by allowing us to come to him.

So in Colossians one, beginning in 15, Christ is the image of the invisible God. Whatever God looks like, Christ looks like, whatever Christ looks like, God looks like the firstborn. Overall creation for by Him. All things were created. Everything in heaven, everything on earth, everything visible, everything invisible. Whether thrones or powers, rulers or authorities. All things were created by him and for him. You and I were created for him. He is the head of the church, the body. He is the beginning and the firstborn, even among the dead. So then everything. Even Christmas. He might have the supremacy. At Christmas time. We sometimes forget this. It's not just presents and that's great. It's not just the music. And I love it. It's it's not just buying frenzy but it's him. It's him. So that at Christmas he has the supremacy. It's wonderful if we can teach our children and grandchildren that very thing for God was pleased to have everything, all his fullness, dwell in Him and through Him to reconcile to himself all things on earth, things in heaven by making peace. How did he do that? By shed blood on the cross. It's interesting how good Friday. Easter and Christmas are all packaged together in one, John said the word God's word became flesh and he made his dwelling among us. Now, watch this. We have seen his glory and the glory of the one and only who came from the father, full of grace and truth. When you're sad, when you're hurting, when you're lonely, when you have those really, really lonely feeling. Sometimes inside it's to remember you're not alone. You've never been alone. You will never be alone. I am with you always. So in the last book of the Bible, the celebration Revelation 5:13, it says, Then I heard this every creature in heaven. Have you ever thought who's in heaven besides people, angels, every creature in heaven? What's that? The Seraphim, I guess. Like, wouldn't it be amazing? I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and on the sea and all that's in them singing to him. Who sits on the throne and to the lamb. Be praise and honor and glory and power forever and for ever. The glory of the Lord is demonstrated in such a variety of ways. At Christmas.

I'm not sure if you've ever read this. I think I have. Once before it was written by a man by the name of John H. Ballou in December of 1950. And the article of this true story is called On the Top of the World. Here's what he says When 19 years old and just out of school, I packed a sledge sledges like a very large toboggan loaded up. I packed a sledge one day in preparation for a trip. Some Allison, some 500 miles north of Dawson, up in the Yukon, 500 miles north of Dawson. This was to be the first Christmas I had ever spent alone. And my most hazardous journey in the dead of winter. Can you imagine? My objective was to chart a ledge that was only partly indicated on a crude map drawn two years previously. The markings on the map were reliable, but I hardly anticipated the variety of hazards ahead. So think of being part of this. As I read, the trail was over ice and snow, frozen rivers and lakes, steep grades and rock hills. I knew I could expect and did have blizzards. I experienced hungry wildlife and the peril of food shortage if delayed for any length of time.

I have never started on a trip of this type without talking to God, making it clear what my mission is and asking His divine protection for both myself and my beloved dogs. I believe his help can come while I'm on the run, or whether in the church, in prayer, as long as it's honest and sincere. On December 24th, 1908, I was camped about 250 miles out of Dawson in a desolate moonlit spot with nothing but snow covered mountains in the distance and the dogs by my side. The weather had been fine and the going good, all of which would made me deeply grateful while preparing my Christmas Eve meal of tea and bacon over a pitch stick fire. I thought of my family thousands of miles away gathered around the fireplace, singing Christmas songs, opening Christmas gifts under the tree. I could see the faces and guess that most of the talk and what was going on, I knew the conversations. I also knew that my mother was just as strongly thinking about me and my progress as I thought of her. It seemed as if I could hear my mother's prayer. I straightened up and said, God, you are being good to me and my dogs. I know you will comfort Mother in her thoughts and let her know that I'm all right. And not long near cold. Even though far away.

Then. Then I was startled by a hissing sound in the distance. In seconds, the hisses changed to sharp crackling noise. I looked around quickly as the sound grew louder. I saw the sky begin to brighten in the north. Excuse me. Multicolored shafts of life shot skyward. The glory of a took my breath away. It was the aurora borealis in splendor. There I was, with a reserved seat only for me, showing me the greatest Christmas pageant one could ever hope to see. All the colors of the rainbow reflected on the snow covered mountains flickered over the smooth, snowy surface. It had the effect of a magnificent, shimmering oriental rug.

And then the dogs. My dogs began to growl. They were tense. They stood as still as iron statues. I scanned the horizon. They're coming toward us from the distance was a pack of wolves. All the beauty was suddenly blacked out in the sight of. Am I going to get out of here alive? I knew my dogs and I were windward from the pack. I don't think they could smell me. I hoped their brilliant lights would distract the wolves from seeing me too easily. But for how long? And to my dismay, wolves formed a large circle about 100 yards in front of me. I could count 14 wolves. Then the leader of the pack took his place in the center of that sitting circle and began to howl at the moon. Soon, there was a full chorus of 14 howling, hardly symphonic voices. For over an hour, this howling kept up as my tension mounted. Then, as the aurora borealis began to sink back the northern earth, the leader of the pack abruptly stopped his howling, turned and started back in the direction from which he had come. And all the other wolves followed behind him.

I was, to say the least, relieved, puzzled, and so on, all that I could hardly believe of what I had seen. Had the wolves put on a worship service for my benefit? I haven't heard a church bells ring since. That doesn't remind me of this. My most spectacular Christmas experience. I call it the glory of the Lord.

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