

FOR THE JOY PART 3 | BY THE GLORY OF GOD

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"The rising of the sun had made everything look so different - all colours and shadows were changed - that for a moment they didn't see the important thing. Then they did. The Stone Table was broken into two pieces by a great crack that ran down it from end to end; and there was no Aslan.

'Oh, oh, oh!' cried the two girls, rushing back to the Table. "Oh, it's too bad," sobbed Lucy; "they might have left the body alone." "Who's done it?" cried Susan. "What does it mean? Is it magic?"

"Yes!" said a great voice behind their backs. "It is more magic." They looked round. There, shining in the sunrise, larger than they had seen him before, shaking his mane, stood Aslan himself.

"Aslan!" cried both the children, staring up at him, almost as much frightened as they were glad. "Aren't you dead then, dear Aslan?" said Lucy. "Not now," said Aslan. "You're not - not a - ?" asked Susan in a shaky voice. She couldn't bring herself to say the word ghost. Aslan stooped his golden head and licked her forehead. The warmth of his breath and a rich sort of smell that seemed to hang about his hair came all over her.

"Do I look it?" he said. "Oh, you're real, you're real! Oh, Aslan!" cried Lucy, and both girls flung themselves upon him and covered him with kisses. "But what does it all mean?" asked Susan when they were somewhat calmer.

"It means," said Aslan, "that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know: Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards."

The magic of C.S. Lewis' account of Aslan's resurrection in the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe isn't in its correspondence to fairy tale fiction, but in its mimicking of true reality. He saw in the resurrection of Jesus the most compelling, most wonderful, deepest type of power. As we gather here on Resurrection Sunday we gather to remember not only the most significant event in all history, but also greatest story ever told. A story of redemption and life which provides the invisible backdrop and definition of many of our books, stories, movies and aspirations in culture.

But despite the prevalence of a tale of resurrection and redemption, the most important question we can ask of this story is the same one Susan asked Aslan, "But what does it all mean?"

In the resurrection death began to work backwards. A dead man came out of the ground a glorified man. Not less human, but more human than he had ever been. In the ensuing days he would go to show himself first to his disciples, then to a handful of travelers, and then even to a group numbering upwards of five hundred. With these people Jesus ate, he walked, he talked and he was touched.

They were witnesses of the most well documented miracle in all human history. But the challenge of the early church was not in their bearing witness to the resurrection, but in understanding the importance of it. The same is often true in our own lives. What I want to do today is fight for an understanding of the resurrection which matches scriptures emphasis on the resurrection. What we are going to see is: **The resurrection is properly beautiful only when it shows the believer the glory of God and life in Christ.** I say properly beautiful because as the Narnia story shows, there is a raw beauty in the idea of resurrection, but when understood through the lens of salvation it takes a proper and greater beauty.

Look again at Matthew's account of the resurrection in **Matthew 28:1-10**. In this story we see the women respond to the resurrected Jesus with fear and great joy and these emotional responses gave way to worship and witness. Now it's important to understand what the women knew about the death of Jesus. Jesus had made it clear at multiple times that he was going to die a death which would bring about the forgiveness of sins and a removal of God's just punishment against humanity. **Matthew 20:28, 26:26-28**, and it is even the pronouncement Jesus was given by John the Baptist: **John 1:29**.

At this moment in time, both of these women when they encountered Jesus, stood forgiven of their sins. The wrath of God was removed from them, and yet they were still willing to follow Jesus' command to be his servants. He called them to go and tell, and in a few verses we are going to see Jesus' great commission to an even larger group calling them to go to the nations practicing, teaching and proclaiming all that Jesus has done for them.

Why did these people feel the need to do this? You see from this moment on the church would go on living as forgiven, yet still actively wrestling against sin. As recipients of a simple message, yet striving to understand it more and more. Though saved themselves, they would not stand by idly, but would cross borders, face swords and lay down their lives for the salvation of others. Why? Because the resurrection of Jesus reveals an incentive greater than mere forgiveness.

This is important because I have often heard believers say, "I know if I got hit by a bus today where I would go." And nine times out of ten people say this line in order to justify their lack of worship, lack of affection and lack of godly living. As in, "I know I'm not who I could be, but I know I've been forgiven."

What separates a right response to Jesus and this anemic response to Jesus is a biblical view of the resurrection and its role in the gospel. And it is with this argument in mind that Paul writes this: **Romans 6:1-4**.

As I mentioned there are two things today which I think we must understand if we want to see the resurrection of Jesus as properly beautiful, and the first is this: **Resurrection Glory**. What do I mean by glory? I mean what is meant by the word both biblically and culturally even today: the visible radiance of something majestic, the splendor of something beautiful.

Glory is one of those weird words to define because it's easier to point to. It's easier to say, "To know 'blank' is to know glory."

Paul's argument in Romans is we should not sin because just as Christ was raised from the dead we too should walk in newness of life. He is fixing Christ's death and resurrection as the center point of our whole life. But in the middle of it is something beautifully profound. Look back at **Rom. 6:4**. Just as Jesus was raised by the glory of God the Father. Now we do see at other times that Jesus was raised by the power of God, **2 Cor. 13:4a** or in another way **Colossians 2:12**.

But the clearest explanation of the way in which Jesus was raised from the dead is given here in Romans 6:4. Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of God. In other places we see God doing things by the power of his word, we see him doing things by his mercy, by his might, and by his Holy Spirit. But here and only here do we see God doing something by his glory. In scripture we have seen God do many things: he breathed the world into existence, he made man out of dust, he carved the seas with his hand, he steers the hearts of kings like rivers, he heals the sick, he calms the storms, he brings rain, and storms, sun and peace. But God in his divine providence has so desired to attach the centrality of his glory to the work of raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus was raised by the sheer majesty of God's radiant glory.

So I have a question for you: When you think of God's glory what do you think of? When you want to experience God's glory where do you go? Perhaps you go to nature where we encounter God's great power. We feel that power when we stand on the bridge of Avalanche Creek in Glacier, the roaring water, the carving of rock by the force of the current. Even the secular world has attached God's power to natural events. Though tongue in cheek, insurance companies have clauses that protect them from "Acts of God." Unforeseeable and

powerful events which cannot be accounted for.

But was Jesus raised from the dead in order to simply show God's power? Is our problem as humans that we do not see God as being powerful enough? The apostle Paul says that this isn't the case when he says: **Romans 1:20**. People can encounter God's power and never be saved. So what is it that the resurrection shows us that is so unique in scripture? Look at Jesus' prayer the night before his crucifixion: **John 17:24**. In looking at the cross, Jesus' prayer was not simply that men would be forgiven, but that they would see in a proper way the glory of God in himself.

That is what makes Romans 6:4 so compelling, look again at it **Rom. 6:4**. The resurrection was a powerful event, for it is certainly a powerful thing to undo a curse which had damned a whole race, it is certainly a mighty thing to shatter the chords of death, it is certainly an act of great force to raise a man out of the grave...But the power of God is seen primarily in the glory of God. The might of God's power is in his glory, and God has chosen to show his glory supremely in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the resurrection of Christ, God's glory is seen in its fullest because God's character is displayed most radiantly. In the death and resurrection of Jesus we see God's justice applied towards sin, but we also see God's mercy applied to sinners. In the resurrection we see death, as man's ultimate enemy, undone by the life of Jesus Christ. In the resurrection we see the plan of God from before the fullness of time **that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he blessed us in the Beloved. In this we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.** (Ephesians 1:4-10).

To encounter to glory of God is to see the saving beauty of God in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. To see the glory of God is to see the salvation of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus. This phrase: "By the glory of God" is the mesh point of the whole cosmos. It is the synapse, the spark plug, the space between God and man. And it is essential for us to understand the beauty of it and here is why:

Romans 6:5-11. Not only does the resurrection show us the beauty of God, but in being saved by Christ's death we are also united with him in his resurrection. Which means that all of the glory with which God raised Christ from the dead is also the glory you experience inside your salvation. The same glory that was sufficient enough to raise a man who died for the weight of all the sins of humanity, is the same glory that was lavished on you in your personal salvation.

We become saved when we see the glory in the good news that though we were sinful and under God's judgment, Jesus came and died in our place so that we can live with him in his life. This is both a response to need and a response to beauty. We realize that we have a problem and the solution is not only utilitarian, but beautiful because it exposes us to the glory and heart of God himself. It is in this passage we also see the second aspect of the resurrection we must see if we want it to be properly beautiful in our life: **Resurrection Life**.

Paul says that it is by glory that we have been saved, and that this glorious salvation puts us immediately at odds with sin in our life because in Christ we have died in sin. The power of the cross is sins forgiven, the power of the resurrection is life restored. Look back at **Romans 6:11**.

Our biggest problem in life is that we stood as enemies of God, but here Paul says that we can be made alive, right again, with God but only when we consider our lives dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus. The implications of the resurrection are not only an immediate removal of sin, but also a new life which must be lived.

I think this is best illustrated in the book that everyone was supposed to read in High School, but no one really did: *A Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens. In the book there are two main characters who look stunningly alike, but are both wildly different. Charles Darnay is the successful heir to an aristocratic fortune, and Sydney

Carton is a self-loathing servant class citizen. And both Darnay and Carton love a beautiful young woman named Lucie. Because Carton and Darnay look so similar it is a hard decision for Lucie to make, but ultimately she chooses to marry Darnay and the two have a daughter.

But this story takes place in the midst of the French Revolution. Darnay is condemned to die in the guillotine since he is part of the aristocracy, but Sidney Carton had vowed to give his life for Lucie's happiness. So in the middle of the night Carton crept into prison, drugged Darnay, and exchanged clothes. Since they looked the same, Carton would be able to die as Darnay, and Darnay would now be able to return to his family safely under the name of Sydney Carton.

The book ends with a the narrator speculating what it was that Carton saw as he climbed the guillotine to die for a man who would now live the life which would have been his, and this is what he saw:

"I see the lives for which I lay down my life, peaceful, useful, prosperous and happy, in that England which I shall see no more. I see Her with a child upon her bosom, who bears my name. I see that I hold a sanctuary in their hearts, and in the hearts of their descendants, generations hence. I see her, an old woman, weeping for me on the anniversary of this day. I see her and her husband, their course done, lying side by side in their last earthly bed, and I know that each was not more honored and held sacred in the other's soul, than I was in the souls of both."

I see that child who lay upon her bosom and who bore my name, a man winning his way up in that path of life which once was mine. I see him winning it so well, that my name is made illustrious there by the light of his. I see him, fore-most of just judges and honored men, bringing a boy of my name, with a forehead that I know and golden hair, to this place-- then fair to look upon, with not a trace of this day's disfigurement --and I hear him tell the child my story, with a tender and a faltering voice."

It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known."

What makes this story so beautiful is not simply that Carton gave up his life so that Darnay would escape death. The beauty of this story is that Carton suffered death so that Darnay could live a life which would have previously been impossible for him.

If Darnay were to stay Charles Darnay, he would die a prisoner of the Revolution. But since he was given the opportunity to live as Sydney Carton, he was provided life to the fullest.

This is what Paul means when he says this: **Romans 6:10-11**. You see if Charles Darnay decided to stop living under the name of Sydney Carton, he would be killed. But because he saw the name of Carton as life, he chose to live his life in the substance of his savior. And a greater name is given to us in the gospel.

In Jesus we have more than a potential to live a new life, we have the promise of one. A new life lived daily, with all our power and all our awareness on the greater exchange which happened on the cross. We are not merely forgiven, we are reborn. To miss the beauty of this new life is to miss the glory of God in your salvation.

Yes we have been given a resurrected life after our death in this world, but even more you have been given a new life now. One which we live under the joyful weight of Jesus. Look at what Paul says a few verses later: **Rom. 6:20-23**.

Do you yet see the necessity and beauty of the resurrection? Do you see the life-exchanging, God-glorifying, soul-satisfying gospel of Jesus Christ. For those who are not saved in here, this is your call to salvation. This is the only way in which you will have life. There is no right application of any sermon until you see the glory of God.

To the believer in here I want to offer you hope. We can often feel confined by God's glory instead of captivated

by it. We look at the language of scripture and we find it to be something we haven't experienced emotionally. We can talk about experiencing God's glory, but to be honest we don't really feel it.

In all of the gospel accounts of the resurrection we see eye witnesses even respond inconsistently to the risen Christ, but two things changed this. The first is Pentecost where believers were filled with the Holy Spirit, today if you believe in Jesus Christ you have that Spirit, and part of the Holy Spirit's role is to help us see God rightly. The second is time. It was nearly 20-30 years between the resurrection of Jesus and the first writings of scripture. Peter's perspective of the resurrection is different in 1 Peter than it is in the narrative of the gospel. And that's because our whole life is a process of growing in a greater understanding of God's beauty. At times it might come in drips, and it might come in floods.

But our theology of the resurrection shows us that we should expect to grow in our ability to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus. So take heart and pray. For if we share in Christ's death, we share in his resurrection, and we have access to the glory of God forever.