"We Live for His Glory"
1 Peter 4:8-11
A Sermon Delivered by
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United States Naval Academy Chapel

Last week we heard from Chaplain Carter as kicked off our series based on our Protestant Chapel congregation's purpose statement. He spoke of being embraced by God's grace. This week, we take a look at living for God's glory. In a few minutes we'll see how very closely the two intersect.

Romans 11:36 says, "For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory." Everything is for God's glory. The beautiful desert night sky I saw in Iraq reflects God’s glory. The vastness of the sea I saw while serving on a ship reflects God’s glory. You've had similar experiences when you literally see his glory. A bird glorifies God every morning outside my window...every morning...very early. I just wish he would glorify God a little later. Glory is revealed in nature. God’s glory is best revealed in Jesus because he brings God's character to light.

In all of creation, there are only two of God's creations that fail to bring him glory. The first is fallen angels (demons). God created them for his glory. They rebelled. Rebellion is sin. When we sin, we fail to give God glory. Which brings us to the second of God's creation who fail to bring him glory...people...us.

Romans 3:23 says "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." None of us has lived a life that reflects the full glory that God deserves. But that doesn't mean we give up in our pursuit. Speaking through the Prophet Isaiah, God said, "They are my own people, and I created them to bring me glory.” (Isaiah 43:7 GNTD) Looking at it from another perspective, Jesus said, I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. (John 17:4 NLT)

Jesus honored God the father by fulfilling his purpose here on earth. When we fulfill the purpose he has for our lives - and that looks different for every individual - then God is glorified. Well, how do we do that? How do we glorify God?

We bring God glory when we worship him. Let me suggest to you that worship is far more than gathering here on Sunday morning and sitting through the service. Worship is a lifestyle. Everything you do can be an act of worship. This is one area in which I get tripped up. Because I have so many things on my agenda - things I feel need to get done - that I have a tendency to just plow through the task list and fail to see those around me. Which brings us to a second way we can worship God.

We bring glory to God when we love others who share our faith in Christ. Jesus said, "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (John 13:34) On first glance this seems like an easy one. It should be easier to love those who believe like we do, right? I love how Mark Lowry, a Christian comedian, puts it: “You know those family members? You'll cry at their funeral, but you don't want to go on vacation with them.” There's a lot of truth in that. It's a lot easier to say we love the Body of Christ when we don't look at individuals with all their quirks and...issues. You know what I mean? But God says, accept each other, love each other, then he will be glorified.
We glorify God when we become like him. The apostle Paul said, “Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31 NIV) When you came to belief in and gave your life to Jesus Christ, he gave you a new nature and he wants to continue to work in and through you to change your character to be more in line with his. We cooperate in that process when we make right choices: when we consider what conversations we listen to, what words we speak, what attitudes we have toward others, what thoughts we allow to linger in our minds, the people we hang around, what we look at, and what we tolerate in our hearts.

Long before Jesus came to earth, God called Moses to set up boundaries around the base of the mountain to protect the holy area set aside by God. In the same way, we need to establish godly boundaries within our own lives to protect his glory in us.

When the schedule was developed for this series and I realized I was assigned this part of the purpose statement, I had this sense of dread - fear really. Because to get up here and preach about living for God's glory when I know I fail him on a daily basis is convicting. Except for God and his grace. Do we have to be perfect and never have a weak moment in order to glorify God? Thankfully, no. He is glorified even in our weakness. Paul quotes Jesus as saying, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul continues, saying, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV) Even in our weakness, God is glorified! Actually, our weakness brings him the most glory. We can rest in him, knowing that his work in our lives to make us more like him is a process. Every good thing we do is only by his grace.

We bring glory to God when we serve others with our talents. “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16 NIV) God didn't give you talents, skills and abilities to keep them all to yourself. He wants others to benefit from your efforts. “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” (1 Peter 4:10 NIV) I have a couple of thoughts on this; first and probably pretty obvious, but I'll throw it in there just in case. Everyone has different gifts. Not everyone has the skillset to be a Naval Academy Graduate. Exhibit A is standing right in front of you to prove my point. Some are called to be doctors, administrative assistants, musicians, flight attendants, trash collectors...Trash collector, I am very grateful that God put a few people here on earth to collect trash. We give God glory when we serve him with our individual gifts. That's pretty obvious, but there's another concept we need to consider.

We give God glory when we serve others, relying on his strength. Let's face it; some of us are better at winging it than others. In my previous job, I interviewed religious leaders who wanted to be Navy chaplains. When I asked one gentlemen what he thought was his biggest weakness, he replied that he was often guilty of relying solely on his own strength and natural talents that he failed to see what God wanted to do in and through him. How many of us are guilty of that? How many of us are willing to admit it?

I want to read to you a quote I read by John Piper earlier this week: "If the totality of our dependence on God would hit us full force, O, how differently we would live and do good. We would ‘serve as one who renders service by the strength which God supplies.’ We would not boast in our achievements, nor criticize the speck in our brother’s eye, nor grumble about inconveniences, nor be presumptuous in any way, as if even existence itself could be taken for granted! No, a person who truly owns up to the fact that he exists by the word of God, that all his strength and moral resolve is a gift of God, that person will have a spirit of joy and gratitude and
lowliness. And in serving this way God gets the glory." We bring God glory when we serve him, relying on his strength to carry us.

We live for God's glory when we tell others about him. God does not want his love and goodness to be a secret. We have a hope that the world is looking for and God gives us the privilege of being the messenger. How many people like giving bad news? Go ahead; raise your hand if you like giving people bad news. What about good news? Isn't it great when you have good news to share? When someone else has the same good news, sometimes you fight over who gets to tell it first. We have good news! Jesus loves us, despite our warts and all, and wants to rescue us from bondage to sin and death. There is no better news! So let's fight over who gets to tell it first. And bring God glory! "As God's grace brings more and more people to Christ...God will receive more and more glory."

Who are you living for? Are you living for yourself or for God? Are you living your life pursuing your own goals, comfort and pleasure? Or are you living for God's glory, knowing that he promises eternal rewards? "Anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, you'll have it forever, real and eternal. (John 12:25 MSG)

God is inviting you to live for his glory by fulfilling the purpose for which you were created. The way you do that is to: First, believe that he loves you and made you for his purposes. God wants to have a relationship with you through his son, Jesus, who died on the cross for you. No matter what you've done, God wants to forgive you. Second, receive Jesus into your life. Receive his forgiveness. Receive the Holy Spirit who gives the power you need to fulfill the purpose for which you were created. If you are ready to live for God, I invite you to pray this prayer: Jesus, I believe in you and receive you. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Glorious and gracious God, I wish we could say without hesitation that you are our glory. We do live for your glory at times. But there are also times when we seek our own glory most of all. Forgive us for getting our glories mixed up. Help us, by your spirit, to live our lives for you and your glory. May we be a channel of your grace and a reflection of your truthful love in our part of the world.

We are mindful of those who need our prayers on this day. Those who are enslaved in human trafficking. Those who are persecuted for their faith and separated from their families. Those who dealing with serious health concerns. Those who are grieving the loss of loved ones. We lift up to you the family and loved ones of those killed this week defending our country. May their legacies continue and their memories comfort those who are mourning.

Thank you, Jesus, for your grace and it is in your name, we pray. Amen.