**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**

**Watertown, WI**

**“Glory”**

Pastor Aaron Reseburg

Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025

*John 12:20-43*

Our reading for today presents us with two kinds of glory: glory from God and glory from man. It is Palm Sunday, and we see Jesus experience glory from man in His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. Yet, we know that in just four days, Jesus will set aside that glory and allow Himself to be taken by the authorities. He will be abandoned, beaten, whipped, tortured, and will finally be executed. Jesus sets aside the glory that comes from man in favor of the glory that He receives from doing His Father’s will.

That kind of glory does not look appealing to the world. It looks like a man hanging on a cross; it looks like service and self-denial. God does not glory in power and riches. He glories in self-sacrifice and self-denial, two things that we struggle with accepting as glorious things.

They loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. These are the harsh words that John uses to describe some of the religious rulers at the time. They chose their own comfort, wealth, and social status over faithfulness to Christ. In their hearts, they had begun to believe that Jesus really was who He said He was, the Son of God. Yet, their belief was not enough for them to put their faith in Christ. They didn’t trust that Jesus really would care for them.

This is the ongoing pattern of the Gospels: Jesus does miraculous signs, preaches amazing sermons and teaches many people, opening up the Scriptures to them, but when it comes down to it, many times the people go the way of the religious leaders. They reject Jesus.

There are many in America who believe in God, they may even believe in Jesus. They believe, but they lack faith. Faith is a gift from God, belief is something that comes from man. Many believe in a god, but they have rejected the faith that was given them in their baptisms. Faith is a relationship; faith is put *in* something. I believe that what I am standing on is the floor, but I don’t show my faith in it until I start jumping.

Over and over again, Jesus condemns those who believe but have not faith. “Not all who say to me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus is dealing with the Jews 95% of the time, and of course they believed in God. The real question is, of course, do they trust what He says? Do they put their faith in Him?

It’s the same question for many in America. Eighty-one percent of Americans say they believe in God, but their “belief” is not enough. It will not save them when they meet the God of the universe on judgement day. Your belief will not save you either. The only thing, the only one, who will save you is Christ and the faith that connects you to Him.

Belief is just an acknowledgment of existence. Faith is so much more! Faith in Christ doesn’t just acknowledge His existence. Faith in Christ also demonstrates a trust in His Word, and yes, of course, part of that is following God’s Law to the best of your ability. Faith in Christ leads a person to look at their life according to the Ten Commandments and repent of their sin.

A life of faith looks so much different than a life of belief. A person who has faith understands that being what most people call a ‘good person’ isn’t enough for salvation, because God’s Word is clear!

A life of faith goes to God’s Word continually. A life of faith seeks out God’s Word wherever it may be found, especially in church! The amazing part about faith is that it takes you out of yourself and helps you to see the bigger picture. Faith helps us to look beyond ourselves and see that there is a cosmic battle going on around us.

There is so much pressure around us to give up our faith. Confirmands, you will face lots of pressure to give up your faith. That pressure may come from friends, or it may even come from your family. The world makes us so many promises, if only we give up the faith. More money, more happiness, more time, more friends, more everything, and you know what, if you give up your faith, the world may deliver on some of those things. If you don’t come to church, of course you have more time and more money. If you sacrifice God’s Law to fit in, you might have more friends, and your life might feel happier for a while.

But none of those things last. Money, friends, and happiness come and go. They are here one day and gone the next, and one day, you will run out of time. They are all glory that comes from man, the thing the religious leaders were seeking after in our reading today. Christ experienced the glory that comes from man as He entered Jerusalem in our reading for today. The crowds cheered and praised Him, but their praise would not last.

Thursday was coming when the crowds would not shout Hosana but instead crucify. Glory from people comes and goes and it is a cheap imitation of the glory that comes from God through faith. Christ’s faith in His Father took Him to the cross where He was lifted up and crucified. There, we saw the glory that comes from God.

The glory we receive from God isn’t about showing off to the world, it is about obedience and love. Christ obeyed His heavenly Father, and that obedience took Him to the cross where He paid the final price for sin. Our obedience to the Father takes us to the cross as well. There, at the cross, we see the consequence for our sin. We see Jesus bearing our burdens and paying a debt we could never have paid.

God doesn’t care if you are rich or successful or if people like you; all of those things end up dragging people away from the faith more than they help people stay in. If your goal in life is to become rich and successful, you are seeking after the glory of man, and your faith is at risk. Seek after God and look to His Word instead of spending your life trying to bring yourself glory. Spend your life trying to give God glory.

If you live a life of humility, trying to bring God glory, your Father in heaven will glorify you. The glory He gives you will never fade and it will never disappear. The glory of God will sustain you into eternal life. Today, we don’t see that glory; it looks less like a king entering a city and more like a man hanging on a cross. Less like someone respected and known throughout the community and more like someone serving the poor and needy. The glory of God looks less like a shiny new car and more like family giving more of their money to the church than is comfortable for them.

One day, in the resurrection of the dead, we will see what real glory is. On that day, the last will be first and the humble will be exalted.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.