

Sunday morning November 12th 2017 at CBC
Sermon outline: Mark 10:35-45

Today we are considering the principle known in Latin as 'soli Deo gloria' – to the glory of God alone. This is the Biblical principle that no-one and nothing should ever seek to share or steal the glory that rightfully belongs to God alone.

[1] UNDERSTANDING THE GLORY OF GOD

Before we come to Mark 10, we need to understand that 'glory', in relation to God, can have more than one meaning.

[a] the 'atmosphere' in the presence of the Lord

All descriptions of the presence of God in the Bible are necessarily framed in terms that we can understand and cannot always be taken literally.

[i] The moral atmosphere

See Exodus 34:6-7

[ii] The mysterious atmosphere

See Ezekiel 1 and Isaiah 6

Notice that both men were initially overwhelmed by what they were shown.

[iii] the transcendent atmosphere

See Mark 9:3-6

Notice once again the response of those present!

[b] the future for those who belong to the Lord

See Colossians 3:1-4

[c] The acclaim that rightfully belongs to the Lord

We find this expressed time and time again in the Bible; here are just three examples:

See Psalm 104:1; Luke 1:46-49; Ephesians 1:3-4; Revelation 7:11-12

[2] MISUNDERSTANDING THE GLORY OF GOD

The verses that were read to us provide a sad example of what happens when the nature of the glory of God is misunderstood. Here are two disciples of Jesus making what they should have realised was an outrageous request. How could they possibly have thought such a request was legitimate?

[a] the origin of misunderstanding

The origin of such thinking is not hard to find, and it is very close to home for all of us. Quite simply, this is human nature. We have a natural tendency to think more of ourselves than we should, and to think a lot less of God than we should.

[b] the consequences of misunderstanding

the rightful place of God is forgotten

The consequences of not giving glory to God can easily be seen in the world at large. Instead of giving God the glory for the wonders of creation, we give the glory to human and animals. But the sad thing is that the glory of God can be ignored or downplayed in the church, amongst people who should know better.

And the request of James and John shows how easy it is to inflate one's own importance. Now to be fair, their inflation of self was not as gross as what happens in the world. They were not seeking to dethrone God and place themselves on the

throne instead. Their problem was more subtle. They wanted to share in the glory of God and of Jesus.

[ii] The strange paradox of salvation is ignored

The paradox of sacrifice

Jesus made it quite clear that James and John did know what they were talking about. In particular, they had forgotten, even though Jesus had said it three times, and at least once recently, that his way to the throne in the kingdom was via the cross.

The paradox of service

The Lord also pointed out that the atmosphere of the kingdom is service, not rule. Those with aspirations to kingdom greatness must be servants, not lords.

[iii] The extent of the kingdom is overlooked

Did James and John have any idea about how much the death of the Lord would accomplish? Surely they did not. In the same way we, who have access to more scriptures than they did, can have only a dim understanding of the final extent of the kingdom, when a great multitude of people too vast to be counted, shall stand before the throne. And if we were to think in purely human terms of accomplishment, could they really think that once all the Lord's people had been gathered, they would be worthy of those two top places?

[3] ANTICIPATING THE GLORY OF GOD

Were James and John entirely wrong?

Yes, they were wrong to ask for the seats next to the Lord Jesus Christ. They were utterly out of order and did not understand what they were asking for.

Yet they were not wholly wrong.

They looked forward, however dimly their view at that time, to a kingdom ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely it was that kingdom, again however imperfectly viewed, that the criminal next to the Lord Jesus was thinking about when he asked for help.

And this brings us back to something quite remarkable which we passed by earlier.

Colossians 3:1-4

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

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If you are a believer in Christ a day will come when you will find yourself within the glory of God. You will not take away anything from his glory, indeed he will be glorified in you, your salvation will be magnificent to others, just as the salvation of others will be magnificent to you. And on that day, what will be your uppermost thought? - "To God alone be the glory!"

Or, in the last words of the letter of Jude:

To the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore. Amen.