

5-9-21 To God Be the Glory

Acts 12:18-25.

Being that we are ambassadors, representatives of God, it is our purpose to bring Him honor and glory in our lives. Are we living this life in a way to bring God glory? Or are we living for ourselves?

"To God Be the Glory" hymn (slide)

I read part of a sermon by Thomas Watson, a Puritan from the 1600s. In answering the question, "How shall we know when we aim at God's glory?" Watson offered three answers.

1. When we prefer God's glory above all other things.
2. When we are content that God's will should take place, though it may cross ours.
3. When we are pleased to be outshined by others in gifts and esteem, so that His glory may be increased.

Our role then, to borrow from Watson, is to respond with appreciation, adoration, affection, and subjection.

When people look at us, they should see the weightiness and beauty of God on full display in our lives because **Colossians 1:16** says we have been created by God and for God.

Colossians 1:16, "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."

I. **God is Undefeated. (Always Wins!)**

- Herod's plotted to kill Peter was turned upside down when the Angel of the Lord set Peter free.
- **Read verse 18.**
- To state that Herod was mad would be an understatement. **Read verse 19.**
- We read in **verse 20** that Herod was even more annoyed.
- The word for "angry" means, "furious, exceedingly hostile and enraged" and is in the present tense, indicating Herod was continuously angry.
- We're not sure how these cities got on his bad side or why Herod was so lit up. Perhaps it's because of some unfair trade competition from these two seaport towns.
- Tyre and Sidon were independent city-states, but they came together to make an appeal: **"...and having made Blastus, the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country."**
- A **"personal aide"** was a personal assistant who was responsible for the king's living quarters and guarding his personal finances.

- Perhaps the famine mentioned in **Acts 11:28** was making their situation worse. In any case, they needed Blastus to help blast away the animosity so Herod would lift the grain embargo. We don't know for sure, but they may have bribed Blastus.
- **Read verse 21.**
- Historians tell us this **"set day"** was a two-day celebration with day one set aside to celebrate the birthday of the Roman Emperor Claudius and day two to honor Herod himself.
- The historian Josephus mentioned his robe was made of silver which would have glowed and glistened in the bright middle eastern sun. In addition, silver ornaments were attached to the robe causing bright light to shine in people's eyes, creating a kind of disco ball effect. Herod was a spectacle of glory and splendor.
- The **"throne,"** also known as the bema seat, was an elevated place of judgment, often used for making pronouncements on judicial matters. From this spot Herod "delivered an oration." The tense indicates he did something similar to pastors when they preach "went on and on."
- In **verse 22** the crowd pampered and praised the pompous king:
- This was Herod's final test. Would he receive this blasphemous praise, or would he quickly refuse it and give God the glory?
- In contrast, when Peter encountered people wanting to worship him in **Acts 10:26**, he was quick to say, **"Stand up; I too am just a man."** Instead, Herod neither denied nor deflected this adoration.
- It's a serious sin to take God's glory from Him. Listen to these passages.

Isaiah 42:8: "I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols."

Isaiah 48:11: "For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another." God repeats, "for my own sake" twice for emphasis.

Psalms 115:1: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name be glory." Showing our propensity for taking glory for ourselves, we must continuously repeat, "not to us, not to us."

- Herod did not rebuke or reject the people's applause. As a result, God took Herod out, **read verse 23.**
- What was the final sin of Herod, where God stopped him? **"he did not give glory to God."** He elevated himself up to be god.
- Read from Josephus' writings of this event.
- An angel freed Peter so easily, with a finger's worth of effort, here we see an angel struck down the great king Herod. He died a horrible death, with worms eating him from the inside out before taking his last breath. One pastor said, "Herod was living for the moment, but would spend eternity in Hell paying for the brief moment of glory!" Indeed, none are so empty as those who are full of themselves.

- Brothers and sisters, you and I exist for one primary purpose and that is to give glory to God. The greatest good we can do is to always seek God's glory.
- The word "**glory**" is one of those religious words we often use but may not understand. It literally means, "**To be heavy or weighty**" and has to do with "reputation, fame, splendor and prestige." It's also related to the word "magnify" which means when we give God glory, we're really helping people see how big and beautiful He really is.
- The opposite of giving glory to God is selfishness and pride. If I'm interested in taking credit or just focusing on myself, then God doesn't get the glory.

Colossians 1:16, "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."

- No one can match His power, avoid His punishment, or frustrate His purposes. If you take on God, He will take you out.

Because God always wins, make the pursuit of His glory the story of your life.

II. **God's Word is Powerful!**

- **Read verse 24.**
- The word "**but**" is a term of contrast. Nothing could stop the spread of the gospel. It didn't just increase incrementally, it continued to multiply magnificently.
- The word "**multiplied**" means "to be made full." Herod was history and Jesus was alive. The leader of that part of the world was dead, but the living Word was alive.
- Both the worms and the Word of God were God's instruments. The worms wiped out Herod while the inspired, infallible, irresistible, inerrant, invincible, and authoritative Word of God marches on! The Word continues to save sinners and sanctify saints! God is undefeatable, always wins and God's Word is Powerful, the gospel always works!

One theologian stated, *"At the beginning of Acts 12, we have James dead, Peter in prison, and the tyrant Herod basking in his popularity and power. At the end of the chapter, we have Peter free, Herod eaten by worms and dead, and the Word of God growing and multiplying."*

Commentator Thomas Constable writes, *"Nothing seemed capable of stopping the expansion of the church. Corruption and contention in its ranks did not kill it (Acts 5-6). Its religious enemies could not contain it (Acts 4:1; 8:1-3; 11:19). Even Roman officials could not control it...God's purposes will prevail."*

- **Verse 25** shows us how God positions gospel workers to do the work of gospel proclamation.
- While King Herod was being hollowed out by worms, our holy God was preparing some key servants for missionary work.
- They had been in Jerusalem to distribute the money raised by the church in Antioch. When they returned, they brought the nephew of Barnabas with them.
- People of faith are always called to live by faith as they give glory to God with their lives.

Make the pursuit of God's glory the story of your life.

Application

1. Work at doing everything for God's glory.

- **1 Corinthians 10:31: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 6:20: "For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."** Let's reflect His glory and when praise comes our way, let's deflect all glory to Him. **We should be reflectors and deflectors.**

2. Is there anything you're doing right now, that does not bring glory to God?

- If so, confess it as sin and ask Him to help you turn it around for His glory. Here's a good question to ask when you're faced with a decision: Can I do this activity, or have this conversation, or post this comment online, to the glory of God? If you can't do something for God's glory, then you shouldn't do it.

3. To live for the glory of God there must be complete surrender.

- **Isaiah 43:7** says you have been created for God's glory: **"Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."** Have you ever surrendered to Christ? Is there something you're holding back? Have you been backsliding? If so, it's time to come back.



4. Because God is a jealous God, He will judge those who do not trust in the saving work of Christ.

- Listen to **Hebrews 9:27: "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment."**

Earnest Hemmingway once wrote that morality was not going to impose itself on his life: "I'm living proof that one can live any way he chooses and succeed...I have fought in revolutions...I have satisfied my desire, and I stand as living testimony to the fact that you can sin and get away with it." Ten years to the day after he wrote that, he put a shotgun in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

5. Repent and receive Christ as your substitute.

- **Romans 3:23** says, **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** **Romans 6:23** adds, **"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."** God has made a way for you to be saved. It's time to repent and receive Christ now.

Philippians 2:11 says: **"And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."**

Everyone will eventually bow before Christ. Do it now and you'll be saved. If you wait too long, you'll face God's judgment seat and will still bow before Him...but it will be too late for you to be saved.

If you're ready to give your life to Christ for the glory of God, pray this prayer with me.

Brothers and sisters, God always wins, and the gospel always works. I urge you to make the glory of God the story of your life. It's the only way to live, and it's the only way to die.

1 Timothy 1:17: "To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."