

**"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of heavenly forces!
All the earth is filled with God's glory!"** (Common English Bible)

**Holy, Holy, Holy is GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies.
His bright glory fills the whole earth.** (The Message)

At some point in your life, whether young or old, you have likely sat under the blanket of a dark night and watched as fireworks exploded and filled the dark night with color and wonder. If you have ever been in a place where you can lay down and witness a full dome over you, you witness the lights of the fireworks push to every edge of that dome. The last several years our family has found ourselves at the edge of or on water and when that is the case, the lights even shine and reflect from below. Fireworks that fill the sky are magnificent and breath taking.

As fireworks fill the skies around the world this 4th of July, or drone displays as I have heard in some parts of the world, and we reply with "Wow!", "Beautiful!", "Look at that one!", I pray we will be able to stop and think and give recognition to the fireworks of God's glory that fill the whole earth and reply with "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God the Almighty!"

God's glory fills the whole earth. Do you know what that means? The glory of God is relevant to everything, and the glory of God is the only reason why anything that matters matters. It means God's glory is all around us. Do you see it? Do you feel it? "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God the Almighty!"

Just when we might have thought Satan has won and we are down for the count- I mean there is so much going on in the world that might suggest that, war, anger, poverty (Did you know 67% of Lynchburg is considered at or below the poverty line), bitterness, judgment, entitlement, quit (people giving up and giving in), separation, loneliness, illness, sudden deaths, tragic deaths, unnecessary violence, etc.- just when we might have thought Satan has won and we are down for the count, we need to remind our short term memory loss and tendency toward doubt that "No!" God is not dead, God has not been defeated, and because we are God's, citizens of heaven, created in the image of the divine, filled with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are not down for the count. God is the God of impossible possibilities, helping the unable be able, turning can't into can. God is the God whose glory fills the whole earth like fireworks bursting with brilliancy and power and wonder.

Throughout the scriptures there are many different words used to try and capture the essence of the glory of God: not only glory, but also beauty, splendor, majesty, magnificence, excellence. These words are hard to define precisely, but we all know what they mean. In addition to words, the scriptures also contain images to describe the glory of God: fire, light, a cloud, a throne, a temple, a storm, a king, a shield, a crown, a war chariot, an ocean.

Something we learn about God's glory throughout the scriptures is that God's glory is God's weightiness in wonderful qualities such as might, beauty, goodness, justice, and honor. When it comes to these characteristics and so many others, God has them in superabundance. Thus, when we think of God's glory, we remember that God has all good things in greater quantity and quality than we can ever imagine.

Something else we learn about God's glory throughout the scriptures is that God's glory is solid and substantial. It isn't mere reputation. It isn't dependent on anyone or anything else. God's glory reflects God's essential nature.

One of the most powerful and paramount examples of God's glory shown is through the gift of God's son, Jesus. Hebrews 1:3 says, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory. . . ." Let us think about what this means for a moment. In Jesus, the glory of God came to dwell among humanity, taking on human flesh and becoming one of us. Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. This means as Christ was humbled on the cross when he died to pay the price of sin for humanities sake, the glory of God was displayed. And when Jesus rose again from the dead, the glory of God was shone in its brilliance.

Why did God send Jesus? Yes, we could answer this question with John 3:16-17 and say out of love and for the purpose of salvation. That is a perfectly solid and theologically grounded answer. To dig a little deeper, however, we could also answer this question with "The radiance of God's glory" came for all to see; so the whole earth and all its inhabitants would witness and come to worship the glory of God. As the gospel of John explains, Jesus came to give light to everyone in the world (John 1:9). Jesus came to draw us to himself, the light of the world, so that we could come out of darkness.

There are perhaps many things we could glean from why God sent Jesus out of love, for the purpose of salvation, as the radiance of God's glory, but what I would like to acknowledge for a brief moment is the unfortunate reason that humanity had lost its compass and way when God sent Jesus. God, who from the very beginning of time has expressed ultimate love for humanity by continuing to provide, search, deliver, and save, because humanity has a multitude of times turned their back on God for the sake of other gods, decided to give the greatest gift possible: God incarnate. The gift of Jesus was an effort by God to get humanity back on track: back in right relationship with God. From the beginning of creation, I have always understood that God, as maker of heaven and earth, created so creation would reveal

God's glory and in turn glorify God. In light of this, we could ask, "How are we doing with that today? How is humanity doing with that today?"

In full transparency, we could do better, right? Assuming our answer would be "Yes, we could do better," then where do we turn to know how and what to do? I am glad you asked.

- I. we must turn to God because God is the source of all good things. And the good news for us is that God is willing to share all of God's glory and radiance with us.
- II. we must look to Jesus because Jesus is the example for how to live fully into God's glory.
- III. we must seek to glorify God with the many good gifts God has provided by using the example of Jesus' life as a compass and way toward truth and life. We, as God's people, are to participate in the fact and brilliance of God's glory filling the whole earth. We were not created to be bystanders sitting on a shoreline watching God's glory sail along. Our calling in life, our main call, main purpose, number one task, and responsibility, is to glorify God through our actions and words and thoughts, by what we choose to do and what we choose not to do.

When we acknowledge God as the source of all goodness, receive God's plentiful gifts with gratitude, and use them to enhance God's honor, then we are glorifying God and God's glory fills the earth. In what ways, you might ask? What are some examples of glorifying God? I am glad you asked.

A way in which God's glory fills the whole earth is revealed when we confess our sins before God. When we confess our sins, we are putting on display God's glory by declaring God's righteousness. By confessing, a window is open for transformation and renewal, expressed through the new life we live in gratitude for God's mercy. Living a new life in Christ is living in glory to God.

Another way in which God's glory fills the whole earth is revealed when we forgive others. Our God is a forgiving God (Ps 130:3-4; Mic 7:18-19). When we forgive others, we are proclaiming God's compassion and eagerness to forgive. It has been said that we are never more God-like than when we forgive. That is why Jesus places so much emphasis on forgiving others in the disciples' prayer (Mt 6:12, 14-15). Forgiving others puts God's glory on full display.

Another way in which God's glory fills the whole earth is revealed when we put our trust in God and not other gods. If God does all things for our good (and God does), then demonstrating our trust in God puts God's nature and character on display. The life of Abraham provides a remarkable example of this. Romans 4:20 notes that, "with respect to the promise of God, Abraham did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God." At the end of his life, Paul recounts how the Lord stood with him, strengthened him, and rescued him from every evil deed, and concludes that the Lord

will bring him safely to the heavenly kingdom, to God be the glory forever and ever (2 Tim 4:17-19). Putting our trust in God declares God's glory.

Another way in which God's glory fills the whole earth is revealed when we, with God's help through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, produce fruit. And I don't mean apples, oranges, bananas, and such. Jesus says: "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit" (John 15:8). Living a life that adorns God's attributes- love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control- puts God's glory on display. When God's communicable attributes are reflected in our lives, the abundance of that fruit shared glorifies God.

Another way in which God's glory fills the whole earth is revealed when we give thanks to God. Psalm 50:23 says, "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies God." Expressions of gratitude to God sets God's glory on a pedestal. Thanksgiving directs our focus on the One who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). Giving God thanks for all God is and all God does is like lighting a firework and watching it blast into the sky in celebration.

Like giving thanks, prayer also shines the spotlight on God's attributes of goodness and omnipotence. The Lord encourages and invites us to, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will rescue you and you will glorify me" (Ps 50:15). In John 14:13 He adds, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Prayer, talking with God, gives God glory in that we are telling God, "I want to share with you, know you, listen to you, abide with you."

Glorifying God is not a memorized mantra of special words or phrases. Rather, it is a life that reflects the attributes of God, a lifestyle that is consumed with putting God's glory on display. Like a city built on a hill or a lamp set on a lampstand, glorifying God entails letting the light of the attributes of God shine before others so that others will join with us in glorifying our Father in heaven (Matt 5:14-16).

Long ago, I believe Augustine put into words what it means to abide, remain with, be connected to, God's glory: *Give me a man in love; he knows what I mean. Give me one who yearns; give me one who is hungry; give me one far away in this desert, who is thirsty and sighs for the spring of the Eternal country. Give me that sort of man; he knows what I mean. But if I speak to a cold man, he just does not know what I am talking about.*

May God never stop revealing God's glory and may we never stop yearning to witness God's glory and do all we are able to partner with God in filling the whole earth with God's glory. With God it is possible. With God we are able. With God we can.

Let all God's people say... Amen.