

Call to Worship

"You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you."

Worship in song

Sing hymns and/or worship songs of your choice.

Reading from the Psalms

- Psalm 92

Prayer of confession

Loving God, in your generosity, you call us to move on and possess all the things you have for us.

Knowing this, we confess that we are guilty of staying within our comfort zones.

When we are invited to grow deeper in our faith, we stay within our comfort zone.

When we need to help the hurting in our world, we stay within our comfort zone.

When we need to overcome the habits that pull us back, we stay within our comfort zone.

When we need our minds to be transformed we stay within our comfort zone.

When we need to share the love of God with others, we stay within our comfort zone.

Forgive our lack of trust and give us the courage to journey on with you and live to your glory and purpose. Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also the sins of the whole world. (1 Jn 2:1-2)

Prayer of thanksgiving

God our Heavenly Father, your love reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies; your righteousness is great like the mountains and your justice as deep as the sea.

God our Heavenly Father, how priceless is your unfailing love both high and low find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house and you give them drink from your river of delights.

God, our Heavenly Father, please show:

- your love to those who know you,
- your justice to those who are upright
- your protection to those who are threatened
- and yourself to those who seek you.

Through Jesus, our Lord and Saviour – Amen.

Holy Communion

Psychologists tell us that when children grow up, young girls want to become princesses and young boys want to become heroes. Heroes can be hard to find in our age. So desperate are we to have heroes that our media grasps at likely candidates, promotes them and, sadly, by doing so, can turn them into monsters.

In our search for heroes, many turn to fiction. All of us are familiar with films in which the hero sacrifices himself so that his friends can live. It is stirring stuff.

At Holy Communion, we celebrate a hero, ...and we celebrate an amazing story.

It has been said that there is really only one story that has ever been written. In other words, there is only one master story of which all other stories are a derivative. The master story goes like this: It is the story of something good which becomes threatened by evil - until a hero rescues it back.

Some people, like C.S. Lewis, have suggested that the reason all stories are variants of this one theme is because all stories reflect the one epic, divine story in which Jesus is the hero, and we are the ones who are rescued from evil.

As such, Jesus' story becomes our story. We were the ones God thought were worth dying for. We were the ones the hero died in order to save. Jesus died on a cross the price for our sins which would otherwise make us ineligible for eternal life with a holy God. It is our story.

In order to help us remember the significance of this amazing act of self-sacrifice, Jesus instituted a simple ceremony for Christians. We read about it in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 *The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

Let us share bread and wine together and remember the one who rescues us back to God by dying for us.

The Bible Reading

- Isaiah 48:9-11

The Message: KNOW THE POWER OF GOD'S GLORY

God loves his glory. The American Baptist pastor, John Piper, wrote: *"God loves his glory! He is committed with all his infinite and eternal might to display that glory and to preserve the honour of his name."*¹

Does this make God an egoist, a self-idolater?

No, it makes God truthful. The fact is, God's glory is the best thing that exists... and God is the only one entitled to it. Divine glory is the embodiment of his qualities alone. Divine

¹ John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, (Mentor, 2003), p8.

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glory is the shining forth of his holiness. It is his holiness on display. John Piper wrote: *"The righteousness of God means that he has a right assessment of his own ultimate value ... God would be unrighteous and unreliable if he denied his ultimate value ... God acts in righteousness when he acts for his own name's sake. For it would not be right for God to esteem anything above the infinite glory of his own name."*²

There is nothing truer than God's glory; there is nothing more holy than God's glory; there is nothing more beautiful than God's glory; there is nothing more right than God's glory... and so for God to love anything else more than his glory would be wrong, for it would be a lie. For God to value anything else more highly would require God to deny the truth about himself.

God loves his glory.

There is nothing more holy, right and wonderful than God's glory. Therefore, God can't believe anything else is better, and be right. Anything else would be wrong. It would be a betrayal of truth, and God cannot be less than truthful any more than the laws of physics he instituted can be less than true.

There is nothing more worthy of love than God's glory, and there is not one else who has a right to this glory. Divine glory belongs to the One True God who. God will not share his glory with another. He cannot do so if he is to remain honest. God says, through the Old Testament prophet Isaiah: *"For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off... For my own sake, form my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another"* (Is 48:9,11).

God loves his glory above all else. He has created us for his own glory and he saves us for his own glory.

1) God created for his own glory.

God did not have to create us to fulfil some unmet need. God freely chose to create us because his essential nature is expansive, loving and sharing. God invites you into his kingdom, his community, where you can bath in delight seeing God's glory.

Why did God create a people for himself? He tells us in Isaiah: *"I created (them) for my glory"* (Is 43:7).

2) His acts of salvation are for the sake of his glory.

When God's chosen people, the Jews, utterly desecrated the Sabbath (the day set aside to worship him) God did not wipe them out, even though they deserved it. God had in mind his reputation amongst the other nations of the world, which would think poorly of a God who allowed his people to be destroyed. They would think poorly of such a God because they would not understand that God wiped them out in an act of judgement. The surrounding nations would simply think that the Jewish people had been wiped out because their God was weak.

God had in mind his own glory when he chose to bring his people through a forty-year journey in a desert and install them in a fertile, promised land. Ezekiel writes about this

² John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, (Mentor, 2003), pp13-14.

saying: *"Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the desert. They did not follow my decrees but rejected my laws—although the man who obeys them will live by them—and they utterly desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and destroy them in the desert. But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out."* (Ezek 20:13-14).

God does nothing that detracts from his glory and God does everything for the highest of motives and worth – for the sake of his glory. *"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD..."* (Ezek 36:22-23).

The other-centredness of God

The self-centredness of God needs to be appreciated, because if you don't, you will never understand the other-centredness of God.

God is not only holy, glorious and hallowed, he has a moral and a loving goodness that is ultimate. You cannot, and must not, separate the truth that God loves his glory above all else, from his moral and loving goodness – for they are aspects of his glory.

We see both the glory of God and the goodness of God in this profound truth: God invites you to be part of his glorious community. In other words, God invites you to share the enjoyment of his glory. It is God's ultimate gift. It is the gift of himself.

When God graciously entered into a covenant with his people by which God and his people tied themselves inseparably to each other, God took an amazing risk. He put his reputation, his glory, in the hands of others who claimed to be his people. He gave them the right to call upon him when they were in trouble because they were his covenant people, a people he was duty bound, by his name's sake, to help. This is reflected in the writing of the Psalmist who says: *Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!* (Ps 79:9)

As we have heard, God's people did not always carry God's glory with care, and they sometimes came under God's judgement.

When God judged those who challenged his glory, God was pointing to an eternal truth. Only God's glory will last. God is uncompromising about truth. When God judges those who try to defile or usurp his glory, he is protecting what is right. God is uncompromising about righteousness.

When God died on a cross to take the blame for our sins that would otherwise make us ineligible for life with him, he was rescuing us back to himself. God is uncompromising about love.

You cannot separate God's glory from God's love. God's acts of salvation towards us are done for the sake of his glory. God created us and is building his kingdom, his loving community, to reflect his glory. Satan has tried to usurp God's glory and defile it.

Know God's Glory

Therefore, God moved to save his creation and his people. He did so for the sake of his glory... and because he loves us.

A key aspect of God's glory is that he loves.

Conclusion

When the apostle Paul writes: *"Do all to the glory of God"* (1 Cor 10:31), I hope that statement now makes perfect sense.

John Piper asks us this searching question: *"Do you feel most loved by God because he makes much of you... or because he frees you to enjoy making much of him?"*³

The question is, will you add to the glory of God, or will your actions tarnish God's glory?

Let's commit ourselves to displaying God's glory.

Prayers for others

Pray with passion for those things God has placed on your heart, remembering the persecuted church, world events, the sick and our leaders.

Benediction

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col 3:16-17)

This service was provided to HopeNet SA by Dr Nick Hawkes

3 John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, (Mentor, 2003), p16.

Know God's Glory

KID'S CHURCH or KID'S TALK or SUNDAY SCHOOL **God loves everyone**

Galatians 3:26-27

Cut out a giant heart shape from a piece of cardboard.

Then cut out six small human-shaped figures from the heart. (A gingerbread man biscuit cutter can be useful to help you get the shape quickly. In fact, you could make the heart out of gingerbread and cut out real gingerbread men.)

Decorate the human figures (with icing or crayons or sticky coloured paper) so that one:

- has dark coloured skin,
- has light coloured skin
- is poorly dressed
- is richly dressed
- is a girl
- is a boy

Read or paraphrase Galatians 3:26-27. Teach its significance by saying that if any of the figures is missing, something is missing from God's heart. God loves everyone.

P.S. If you have made ginger-bread men, have fun eating them (after checking dietary needs and that the food has been prepared safely).