

Falling short of God's Glory

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Date: 23 August 2015

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[0 : 00] Well, as I said earlier, it's great to see you all. I've been away, me and my family have been away for the last three weeks. As you may or may not have known, we visited Scandinavia. We had the great privilege to be able to visit Scandinavia.

And it was a great holiday, but even though it was a great holiday, I must say I'm really excited to be back. I'm really glad to be back, partly because as I was traveling, it allowed me to stop and think. As traveling and holidays do, they allow you to stop and think and take a step back and consider things and reflect and experience new people and new cultures. And in doing that, I actually came to realize how important our work here in St. Mark's is.

I mean, I've always known how important it is, but just going away and seeing new places and new people just reminded me of how important what we're doing here is. And so I'm excited to be back because, you see, as we traveled, I was reminded again of how lost our world really is, how disconnected people are from God.

And you see that as you experience people and cultures. And this was particularly highlighted for us in the beautiful country of Norway that we visited. I don't know if you've ever been to Norway, but it's a country that is surrounded by God's beauty of creation.

[1 : 21] A country that actually used to reach out to God in its history, but clearly doesn't anymore. The only churches we saw in Norway were museums, were only active churches centuries ago.

And the people walking around, you get a sense that they had very little awareness, let alone interest in Jesus and the things of God. But of course, it's not only in Norway.

That struck me in that particular country, but it's not only there. It's everywhere today, isn't it? Wherever you go in our world, people seem to be less and less interested in Jesus. The world is becoming increasingly secular.

And I want to share with you why I think that is. Why secularism and a lack of interest in Jesus is rising in our world.

I think it's because people are gradually losing sight of the reality of sin. Sin today is really not a big issue. People don't lose sleep over it.

[2 : 23] It's not a big thing. Most people wouldn't even call themselves sinners, and even if they did, they don't really see their sin as that serious. In fact, most people think that if they had to stand before God one day and he had to judge their life, they would probably get by okay because they've done more good than bad.

Most people generally think that, even if they don't articulate it. And so Jesus and what Jesus came to do really has little relevance in our world. Because people think they don't need him.

And that's why this morning I want us just to think again about sin. And about what sin really is. And to understand why it's so serious.

And the seriousness in our lives. And it's something you don't often hear about in today's world.

Preachers don't often preach. Because preachers aren't very popular if they preach on sin.

It's not comfortable. But it's something that is spoken of seriously in the pages of Scripture. Not least of all in the book of Romans. Which we're going to pick up again this term. If you were with us in the first term, you'll remember that we looked at the book of Romans.

[3 : 31] And we're going to continue. And what you may remember, if you can think that far back, to the first term, is that Romans begins on a very negative note.

The first three chapters of Romans are just all about sin. It's all about the human predicament. It focuses entirely on the situation that we're in.

And the sin that we have inside us. It's quite depressing to read the first three chapters. You kind of want to flip over them. But they are very important. This concept of sin is very important for us to

understand.

Even if we don't want to talk about it. Because unless we get sin, unless we get the problem we're in, Jesus and what he did won't really mean much to us at all. And so before we continue from where we left off with Romans, this term, this morning I just want to go back to what we've already covered, to one single verse in chapter 3 to help us to understand what sin really is.

That's what I want us to understand this morning. And that's the verse we're going to be looking at. The only verse we're going to be looking at in depth this morning is Romans 3 verse 23. So turn there.

[4 : 40] It'll be on the screen behind me as well. It says this. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

So according to this verse, the real problem that you and I are in, the real problem that humanity is in, is not just that we've done some naughty things that God doesn't like in our lives.

No. Our real problem is much, much deeper than that. It's that we actually fall short of the glory of God. That is what our real problem is.

And this morning, we need to understand just what that means to fall short of the glory of God. And so there's really two different aspects to that phrase, to fall short of the glory of God, that I want us to look at.

The first thing that it means is failing to reflect God's attributes. Okay, so think about this. What does the word glory mean? How do we use the word glory in our world?

[5 : 42] Well, glory is really defined as the full display of someone's attributes, their characteristics, the good things about them. So when the Springboks win the World Cup later this year, you see how positive I am, they'll come back and they'll display the trophy and they'll get glory.

You know, we use the word glory to talk about that kind of situation where someone's done something really good and people are crediting them for that. Because the full display of how good they are as a rugby team will come out.

If they are, we'll have to wait and see. But the word glory, that's what it means. The display of the good things about someone or something. And so God's glory, what it means, is the full character and goodness of God displayed for all the world to see and enjoy and appreciate and adore.

And Scripture tells us that God created the whole universe. Everything that is here was created for that purpose, for His glory. Everything that He made.

The stars and the mountains and the rivers and the animals and trees and lightning and molecules and taste buds.

[6 : 58] Everything that is in this world that God created was for the purpose of displaying something of who He is. Creation is meant to reflect the attributes of its Creator, to glorify Him.

And each thing, each element of creation glorifies Him in a slightly different way. It shows us a different attribute of God. So a stormy ocean shows us the power of God.

I happened to be in a stormy ocean a couple of weeks ago in the North Sea. And it's just so powerful and you feel so small and it's so intimidating. And that just shows us how small we are and how powerful and big and mighty God is.

A sunset shows us the beauty of God. That He created something that could look so beautiful. The water cycle and fruit growing on trees shows us that God cares.

It shows us His care for His creatures that He made. And when we look into space and we see the stars and we see the dance of planets and moons in orbit. And the fact that the earth is the precise distance from the sun to maintain life.

[8 : 09] Not too far away, not too close. And the moon is the perfect mass to create the gravitational force needed to keep the earth tilting. Just so that we have four different seasons.

So that we have crops that can grow from the ground that we can eat. All of that shows us the wisdom, the infinite wisdom of God in caring for His world. You see how every aspect of creation is there to show us something about God.

It's to show us an attribute of God. Creation displays who God is. The heavens declare the glory of God, says Psalm 19. But you know, Genesis tells us that when God had made all these things.

When He had made the sun and the moon and the stars and the mountains and the oceans and the plants and the animals. And it came to the sixth day of creation.

He still wasn't quite satisfied with what He had made. He still wasn't quite happy. There was something missing. All of this still didn't fully reflect God's glory.

[9 : 12] And so He made people. Creatures. But different to all the other creatures that He had made. Creatures made in the image of God, we're told.

Like no other part of creation was. Unique. Creatures designed to reflect an attribute of God that no other part of creation could reflect. And you know what that attribute is?

It's the attribute of love. Love. Love. No other part of creation has the ability to love like humans do. And that's why when the teachers of the law, you'll remember, came to Jesus and they asked Him, What is the greatest commandment?

What is the main duty of people in God's world? Do you know what He said? Love. That's what it all comes down to. He said, All the law and the prophets are summarized in love.

Love God. And love your neighbor. And that's why. That is how. We are meant to glorify God. That's how we are meant as human beings to reflect God's attributes.

[10 : 15] We are to exhibit His love. No other part of creation can do that. So how's that going then? Hmm? When we look around in our world.

When we look into our own lives. Honestly. Are we as humans in general reflecting God's love? No. Not a chance. Not even close.

Unfortunately. I mean, picture for a second if we were. Picture a world where we did do that. Where everyone loved one another with the love of God. Where everyone looked out for the needs of other people before themselves.

Think of what that world would be like. No one would be in need. No one would have to worry about themselves. Because everyone else would be looking out for them. Which would allow them, of course, to focus on others in turn.

And it would be truly heaven on earth, wouldn't it? If everybody loved like we were made to. And yet, do we see that when we look in the world? No. We don't see that at all.

[11 : 17] We as humans do the opposite, actually, of that. We put our own wants before the wants of other people. We do the opposite of love. We look out for ourselves first. Which eventually causes all the problems that we see in our world.

Wars and poverty and corruption and broken marriages. You see, those all come down to a failure to do the one thing we were made to do. Which is to exhibit the love of God. God. I mean, we had one job.

And we messed it up. Like the guy who worked in this factory to put tabs onto custard cartons. Let's have a look at that picture. All right.

You might notice that the tab putter on it. That was his one job in the factory. He had to put on the tabs on the custard cartons. And he messed it up. He put it at the opposite corner of where he was supposed to.

Now, that's just a silly example. But much more seriously, humans, we had one job. We had one job in creation. To love. To exhibit the love of God.

[12 : 20] And we messed it up. And that is what it means to fall short of the glory of God. You see, humans are the one part of creation who don't do what they're supposed to do.

Which is to reflect the glory of God. All other creation does reflect the glory of God in its way. But we were meant to reflect the greatest, most amazing attribute of God.

Which is his love. And we failed to do that. And that's the first part of what it means to fall short of his glory. We failed to display his glory.

We failed to reflect his glory. But there's another meaning to that phrase which we need to understand this morning. Because we weren't just made to display and reflect the glory of God. We were also made to enjoy and treasure and delight in the glory of God.

And that is another thing that we don't do. Another way that we fall short of God's glory. We treasure anything but the one thing we were made to treasure. Which is God himself.

[13 : 20] And so this is the second aspect of what it means to fall short of the glory of God. It means failing to treasure God's glory. I mean, what do we treasure in our lives?

Think about it. What do you treasure? What do you prioritize? What is valuable to you in your life? Well, typically, we treasure the things that give us pleasure.

The things that make us comfortable. The things that make us happy. Money, maybe. Health. Relationships. Leisure. Whatever it is.

Those are the things we treasure. That's what we tend to focus our energies and attention on. And we're terribly distressed when those things are taken away from us, aren't we? When we don't have

enough money.

Or our health declines. We're sad. We're depressed. We're distressed. And that's why Jesus says, Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Our happiness in life is dependent on our treasures and whether or not we have the things we treasure.

[14 : 25] Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. But you see, we aren't meant, we aren't made to treasure the things of the earth.

The things that God gives us. We were meant to treasure what these things point to. What these things display to us. Which is God himself. God's glory.

Who he is. We're meant to enjoy that. And treasure that and delight in that. Above all the things that are just meant to point us to that. But we don't. You see, we're meant to make God's glory the center of our lives and our happiness.

Because if it is. If God's glory is truly your treasure. Then in any given situation, your priority won't be, well, what will make me most happy and comfortable now.

No. Your priority will be what will glorify God. And if that's the case, you'll be happy no matter what situation you're in. Because God will be glorified. And he's made sure of that. That's his ultimate goal in every situation.

[15 : 26] And he wants you, you see, to connect. To pin your happiness and your well-being on that. On his glory. Which is far more certain than the fleeting pleasures of this life.

He wants you to treasure that above all other things in the universe. He wants you to delight in that. He wants you to find your joy and your satisfaction and your happiness in him and in his glory.

Because that's how you'll be truly happy. Because that's what you were made to enjoy. That's what you were made to delight in. That's what you were made to find your ultimate satisfaction in.

More than anything else is the glory of God. And yet, we don't, do we? We don't look to God's glory and God and his characteristics and who he is to delight and give us happiness.

Our ultimate satisfaction. We don't look for it there. We look for it in all the other things that won't satisfy. In other words, we fall short of God's glory.

[16 : 26] We fall short of it. We don't treasure it above all other things. In fact, Romans 1 tells us that we exchange the glory of God for images, for things on earth.

That's what it means. We have exchanged the glory of God for things that can never really satisfy us. And that is what sin really is.

If we want to get to the bottom, to the heart of sin, that's what it is. It's sidelining the glory of God and making other things more important. And in fact, all sins, every sin we commit in our lives is rooted in that core sin of not seeking to glorify God in any given situation.

Not treasuring his glory above all other things. For example, King David, who Adrian mentioned earlier, he sinned. When he sinned, he sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba.

And then he arranged for her husband to be killed. And then after that, Nathan the prophet came to David to call him out on this. And God spoke to David through Nathan.

[17 : 36] I want you to listen to what he said. It's from 2 Samuel. God said to David, you despised me when you took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. You despised me.

That's what God said to Nathan. And on that verse, John Piper, you may have heard of him. He's an American pastor. He makes a really interesting point on that verse when God says, you despised me to David.

He says this. We could imagine David saying, what do you mean I despised you? I didn't despise you. I wasn't even thinking of you. I was just red hot after this woman and then scared to death that people were going to find out.

You weren't even in the picture, God. And God would have said, the creator of the universe, the designer of marriage, the fountain of life, the one who holds you in being, the one who made you king, that one eye, the Lord, was not even in the picture.

That's right, David. That's exactly what I mean. You despised me. You see the point? David's real sin, according to God, wasn't so much the adultery and the murder.

[18 : 44] It was that he didn't treasure God and his glory above all other things. He wasn't even thinking about God's glory. That was his real sin. He was seeking first what would make him happy rather than what would glorify God.

In other words, David fell short of God's glory. But it's here in Romans 3.23 that we learn, sadly, that's the case for all of us. Every single one of us, the Bible tells us, falls short of the glory of God.

In other words, we all, every one of us, fail to prioritize the glory of God and treasure the glory of God above our own wants. We don't do that. We fail to delight in the glory of God as the most important thing in the universe.

We fail to find our happiness and our joy and our satisfaction in God's glory. And instead, we make ourselves the most important thing in the universe. The universe centers around us and what we want and what will be good for us.

And we look for our happiness in the fleeting pleasures of the world. And that is what sin really is. That is the core and that's the heart of all sin. And that's what it really means for us to fall short of the glory of God.

[19 : 58] It's first a failure to reflect God's glory, to exhibit God's glory as he made us to do. And secondly, it's a failure to treasure and delight in God's glory above all other things.

But now think about this. If God's glory is what the universe is really all about, if everything in the universe is made for that, if God's glory is the center of reality, if God created all this and he created us for the sake of his glory to reflect it and treasure it and enjoy it, if we're not doing that, then there's really no reason for us to exist at all.

You see, God didn't make the universe for us. He made it for him and for his glory. And if we're not doing what we were made to do in that universe, we have no place in God's world.

As Romans 3.12 says, we've become worthless. We've become worthless. That's what the Bible says. Now, we don't want to think of ourselves like that.

We hate to think of ourselves as worthless. The world is telling us you're worth something. You're valuable. You're the most important thing. We don't want to think of ourselves as worthless.

[21 : 11] We don't instinctively think about that. We value ourselves. We want to be valued. We want to see ourselves as something important. But the truth is, if we are not living for the glory of God, there is nothing good or valuable about us.

And the only thing fit for us is death and eternal separation from God in hell where our worthlessness becomes complete. See, this is the seriousness of the situation we're in.

This is what the world desperately needs to know. But what it also needs to know is, praise be to God, that in his compassion, he doesn't want that for us. He doesn't want us to be worthless.

He doesn't want us to be separated from him for eternity. He wants us to come back to him. And he wants us to experience his glory. He wants us to delight in his glory. He wants us to find the thing that we were made for, to be the people we were made for.

And that's why he sent Jesus into this world for us, to live the lives we should have lived, to be the person we should have been. Jesus was the man who always lived to glorify his father in heaven.

[22 : 20] He was the only human who's really done what humans were made to do. The only human who was really ever worth anything in God's sight. And then you know what he did?

He died in our place. He died in our place and took on all of our worthlessness, all of our sin, all of the things that make us worthless. He took that on himself.

He paid the price for it to give us access into God's glory once again so that through Jesus we are worthy of God again. We are, through him, we become the people who we were made to be.

And that is the good news. That is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is what this church exists to make known to this community, to the world. What Jesus did for us.

But you see, that only makes sense, doesn't it, if people first understand the bad news of sin and how serious sin is and what it means to fall short of the glory of God.

[23 : 18] The bad news that without Jesus we are worthless in God's sight because we have just fallen short of his glory and there's no remedy. We can't do anything about that. That's the bad news.

The good news, though, is that it's through Jesus that we can come back to being who we were truly made to be. You. You can be who you were truly made to be through Jesus.

But only through Jesus. It's only through Jesus that we can begin again to reflect the glory of God in our world. As Jesus enables us to do that.

Enables us to love like God loves. That's what churches are supposed to be, by the way. Churches are supposed to be outposts of people loving each other in the power of Christ.

And so reflecting the glory of God to the rest of the world. The world outside. Like we were made to do. You know, when Jesus was about to leave his disciples, you know what he said to them? This is the commandment that I leave with you.

[24 : 15] Love one another as I have loved you. That's his. He gave two instructions to the church. The first was the Great Commission. Go out and tell the gospel. And the second was love one another. Because we are supposed to be outposts reflecting God's glory.

Coming back to what we were meant to do. People who live for the glory of God. Who treasure that above their own comfort. And above the fleeting pleasures of the world.

People who work for and pray for and desire the glory of God above all other things. That is what we are called to be. And so I close.

And I ask you one question. Are you one of those people? Is God's glory what your world is about? What your life is about?

God's glory. Do you reflect God's glory in your life? Do you treasure and delight in that glory? Or do you still fall short of that glory? Well if that's the case.

[25 : 16] Then it's not too late for you to change. And I urge you to come to Jesus. Because that is the solution. To the problem of falling short of God's glory.

I urge you to really give your life to him. And trust him. And let him rescue you out of your prison of self-centeredness. To be born again into a new life.

A life lived for something much greater than yourself. A life lived for the glory of God. I invite you to come to Christ. And start that life. And so I want to pray for you sitting here this morning.

Bow your heads with me. May God be glorified in your life. Through Jesus Christ may he wash you clean from your sin. And may he set your heart to treasure his glory.

In these coming weeks and months may you learn to find your ultimate joy. Not in the fleeting things of earth. But in the glory of God. May you meditate on his word day and night. May you rejoice in all situations.

[26 : 15] So that no matter what you go through. God is glorified. And so that you are satisfied. May all things in your life. Good and bad. Result in the glory of God. And may you come safely to his glorious presence in heaven one day.

To the eternal bliss of experiencing the glory of God forever and ever. God you do all things for the sake of your glory. And so we know that you will answer this prayer.

Which I pray in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Let's forget the joy of God. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[27 : 14] Amen. Amen.