Text: John 1:14-18
Title: "The Glory of God in Christmas"

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION – I grew up listening to Andy Williams sing a Christmas song that has since been recorded by many artists. You've heard it. It's called "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year." And the lyrics go like this (don't worry, I'm not going to sing):

> It's the most wonderful time of the year
> With the kids jingle belling
> And everyone telling you "Be of good cheer"
> It's the most wonderful time of the year
> It's the hap-happiest season of all
> With those holiday greetings and gay happy meetings
> When friends come to call
> It's the hap- happiest season of all
>
> There'll be parties for hosting
> Marshmallows for toasting
> And caroling out in the snow
> There'll be scary ghost stories
> And tales of the glories of
> Christmases long, long ago

And I'm sure you have memories of the "glories of Christmases long, long ago…" It probably had something to do with some great celebrations, some beautiful Christmas decorations, some remarkable trips, or some tremendous surprises under your Christmas tree. And that's great. We all enjoy that.

> But this Christmas season what I want to happen for you and for me is that we will come away thinking about the words "glory" and "glorious" in an entirely different light. I want us to have a glorious Christmas, but more importantly, I want us to see the glory of God in Christmas. And I want us to learn how we can give glory to God during the Christmas season, and every other season of the year.

Turn with me to John 1:14. The Christmas Story, like all parts of the Scripture, is like a magnificent jewel. As you hold it up into the light you see facets of the jewel that are brilliant and glorious … to the degree that its beauty and glory is never exhausted. But I want us to remember that the jewel is not Christmas … the jewel is God and His Son Jesus Christ. I want us to see His glory in this season. Read John 1:14

What I want to happen for us this Christmas season is not that we'll be spellbound by the glories of Christmas, but the glory of God revealed in the Christmas story. I want us to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. And I want it to take your breath away.

ILLUSTRATION – In our worship planning this past week we talked about this and John Lee made this observation: Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Such is the case with glory. It's like a family on a vacation driving through some of the most magnificent and stunning beauty in the world, and the kids are asleep in the back seat, or engrossed in a video game. And they miss it.

And the same is true when it comes to the glory of God. It's exploding all around us and it's magnificent … but we're engrossed in other things, distracted by other things … who is going come to our party … what gifts will we buy … how will we pay for them … you know the drill.

I want you to remember that God's gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, magnified His glory to all who will see it. Let's keep the glory of God our primary ambition through the holidays ... and through all of life.

The challenge to defining something like "glory" is similar to defining "beauty."

ILLUSTRATION: It's easier to define the word "football." A football is an oblong object made of leather and rubber. It is inflated with air and gets to be about a foot long and about 7 or 8 inches across. It has some laces on one side. You grip the ball in your hand with your fingers around it and you can throw it and catch it or kick it. And you would have a pretty good idea what a football is.

Now if I were to try to define "beauty" for you, it would be much more difficult. There are some words in our vocabulary that we can communicate with because we can see them. But it's not that easy with something like beauty. I can point to several things that are beautiful and you might get the idea, maybe. But it would be tough. The same thing is true with "glory."

So what is God's glory? I want to give you a brief, one-sentence definition. We'll break in two to help us grasp it. God's glory is …

1. THE MANIFOLD <u>EXCELLENCE</u> OF GOD…

When I talk about the "excellence of God," I'm talking about the blend of incredible virtues and qualities and abilities that God alone possesses.

ILLUSTRATION – After Dr. Coggin's memorial service last Friday, I was saying to one of the family members that we really needed more than an hour … we needed four hours, maybe four days, to adequately exhaust the virtues, qualities and abilities of that amazing man of God.

But multiply that factor a billion times when it comes to the excellence of God.

ILLUSTRATION – You can go to Grand Canyon, and the first time you see its vast beauty, it takes your breath away. And maybe you go back another time, and it's still pretty incredible. And you go again and, yes, its magnificence, but to be honest, you've been there and done that, and it doesn't captivate you like it did the first time.

But get this: The excellence of God … His virtues, qualities and abilities … will never be exhausted in all eternity. God will never be a "has-been." His glory will never become like an old glorious hotel that was grand in its day, but that day of glory has gone and it's time for it to be torn down to build a new and more "glorious" hotel.

That's why the repeated exclamation of the Bible is "to God be the glory forever and ever!"

The glory of God is His manifold excellence. There are so many different facets to His excellence and perfection that we can look and find more and more and more.

Now God's manifold excellence is seen in …

- **His holiness (Isaiah 6:3)**

  Isaiah 6:3 (NIV) - And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

  You might have expected have expected the angels to say "the whole earth is full of His holiness." But no, they say, "the whole earth is full of His glory."

  Holiness is God being in a class by Himself in His perfection, greatness and worth. He is infinite in perfection, infinite in greatness, infinite in worth. God is what no one else is. That's what it means to be holy.

  God's perfection can't be improved upon, can't be imitated, and that is incomparable. Nothing can be added to God from someone else that can make Him greater than what He is in whatever quality you can imagine. That's His holiness.

- **His wisdom (Romans 16:27)**

  Romans 16:27 (NIV) - to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

  God's glory is seen in His wisdom. This is God's incomparable ability to know and do the right thing in the right way at the right time. God isn't just great at this … He's perfect at it.

  God's manifold excellence in seen in…

- **His power (John 2:11)**

  John 2:11 (NIV) - This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

  EXAMPLE: Remember when Jesus friend Lazarus because sick and Mary sent word to Jesus for Him to come. And Jesus said, "This illness will not end in death. No it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified." Well you know the story. Lazarus dies, and his family is disappointed that Jesus didn't arrive in time. But when Jesus does come, they took him to

where Lazarus was buried. And Jesus tells them to remove the stone from the tomb. And Martha, the other sister, said, "Um Jesus, you might want to think twice about that. He's been in the grave four days, and it's there's liable to be a bad odor." But Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" And with that Jesus demonstrated His power by raising Lazarus from the dead.

God's manifold excellence includes…

- **His <u>goodness</u> (Exodus 33:18-19)**

  Exodus 33:18-22 (NIV) - Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." [19] And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

- **His <u>judgment</u> (Ezekiel 39:21)**

  Even when God flashes forth in judgment upon evil people or nations, His glory is seen.

  Ezekiel 39:21 (NIV) - "I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay upon them.

- **His <u>love</u> (Psalm 115:1)**

  Psalm 115:1 (NIV) - Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.

Now I want us to get back to the text I read at the beginning. For you see, in the person of Jesus we see the manifold excellence of God. And John mentions two "excellences" in particular…

- **His <u>grace</u> (John 1:14)**

  John 1:14b (NIV) - We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of <u>grace</u> and truth.

- **His <u>truth</u> (John 1:14)**

  John 1:14 (NIV) - We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and <u>truth</u>.

  Truth is that which is <u>real</u> (as opposed to fake) and that which is <u>right</u> (as opposed to wrong).

And these are just a few of the manifold "excellences" of God. But there's another part of the definition. The glory of God is the manifold excellence of God …

2. … ON <u>DISPLAY</u> FOR ALL CREATION

John 1:14 (NIV) - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. <u>We have seen his glory</u>, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

God's glory is the display, the public display, of God's manifold excellence. You see all that I've said could be true of God, but we would not know it, and would not be able to appreciate and applaud it, if God had not revealed His glory to us.

God's manifold excellence is on display…

- **In His Son.** God sent His Son … His glory perfectly displayed for all creation.

  In Christmas God is saying, "I want you to know my Son in whom I am well pleased,"

  This glory of Christ in His incarnation is seen when Jesus takes His inner circle of guys with Him up on a mountain. And there the Father pulled back the curtain of the incarnation and allowed them to see Jesus in His radiant glory. And they heard the Father's pleasure in His Son.

  Matthew 17:5 - While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

  Peter would not get over this:

  2 Peter 1:17 - For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

  The Gospel account tells us that the men fell facedown to the ground. As humans we aren't capable of sustained exposure to the full glory of God.

  ILLUSTRATION: It's sort of like watching the sun rise. At first there's just a glow in the sky. Then a little sliver of the sun appears on the horizon. But when it fully appears, we have to turn our eyes away or it blinds us.

  But the fact is that the Father can gaze upon the Son and never have to turn His face away. And God wants us to delight in the Son the way the He delights in His Son. One day we will be able to gaze upon the glory of God without having to turn our faces away.

So we see God's manifold excellence on display in the person of Christ. We also see it on display …

- **In the <u>Word</u> (John 1:14)**

  John 1:14 (NIV) - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. <u>We have seen his glory</u>, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- **In <u>creation</u> (Psalm 19:1)**

Psalm 19:1 (NIV) The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

- **In <u>heaven</u> (Revelation 21:10-11)**

  Revelation 21:10-11 (NIV) - And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. [11] It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

  Sometimes in the Bible heaven is simply called "Glory." Why? We will be able to walk in the full expression of God's manifold excellence without being consumed.

CONCLUSION

There will come a day when all anyone can see is the glory of God. And for us to fully enjoy heaven, the Bible says there will have to be change. Heaven is a perfect place, and only perfect people will live there. You say, "Well that rules me out. I'm not perfect." No, that's why there must be a change. The Bible says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. We must be changed and that change happens for God's people when they die, and Christ returns and raises our earthly bodies. And the Bible says in I Corinthians 15 that our new bodies will be "glorious." It was sown like a seed in dishonor, but it will be raised in glory.

That only happens for people who are saved. Are you saved today? We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, the Bible says. The only way that can be changed is for Christ to come into your life.