

Glory: Wanting It, Getting It, Having It

by Peter Jensen

The sermon explores the search for glory and how it relates to making a name and receiving a name from God, highlighting the cultural change in dealing with death and the significance of a name.

Duration: 54:13

Scripture: Genesis 12:1, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 19:26, Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 11:1, 1 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Glory"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the theme of glory and its significance in the context of funerals. The speaker mentions that funerals are a professional interest for clergy and shares that there are often funny stories associated with them. The speaker then delves into the idea of glory, emphasizing the importance of wanting, getting, and having glory. The sermon also touches on the concept of death and dying, and the role of the gospel in understanding and navigating these subjects.

Transcript

Well, thank you for the folk organising this, for inviting me to be here, and although it's the day off, I felt coming here was really worth doing, and it's a sort of day off for me to talk to you guys, so I've justified it like that, somehow. I've been asked to speak on the intriguing theme of glory, and so I've subtitled this Glory - Wanting it, Getting it and Having it, and we'll hear more about that in a little while. There will be questions at the end of this, and I'll be glad to engage in discussion and questions running up to the lunch hour, so please get ready for that, and that will be, from my point of view, an enjoyable part of the proceedings.

But before we get to questions, let me lay some groundwork on this intriguing theme of glory, wanting it, getting it and having it. One of the interesting things that's happened culturally in this part of the world, and I suspect elsewhere, though different cultures have their own way of doing things, is to do with the funeral. Now, I have a professional interest in funerals.

I have to tell you that I guess that when media people get together, eventually the conversation all moves in one particular direction. When clergy get together, inevitably the subject comes up at funerals. Just one of our professional interests, and there are a multitude of funny stories, which I'm not going to share with you this morning, about funerals and what happens at funerals.

It's just part of our profession. It's interesting to see, however, the massive changes that occurred in the way in which we deal with the dead and deal with death and dying. It is said, probably rightly, that in the 19th century people talked about death and dying and were really fascinated by it quite a lot and didn't talk about sex.

Well, I think that's a bit of a slur on the 19th century myself. I notice they still populate it. And that we talk endlessly about sex, but we don't want to know about death and dying.

Well, there may be some truth in that. And the way in which funerals have gone perhaps indicate it. What's been happening, of course, is that whereas the funeral really was originally all about reverently disposing of the body, and in the Christian context of hearing the word of God to the mourners about what's happened here, and the funeral services were extremely solemn occasions, fairly brief, and really to do with the body.

Having the body there was very important, and taking the body and taking it to its final resting place was really important. And although things may be said about the deceased person, it was really about death and dying and the gospel's input into this whole subject of death and dying, which was really important. All that has changed.

The body is still disposed of. That's true. But most of those who come to the funeral, well, they're not coming to a funeral.

They're coming to a service or to some occasion to celebrate the life of the deceased. And on these occasions, we gather together. Usually, there is no body there in order that we don't have to think too much about the awfulness of death.

So there is no body there. And what used to be the case where perhaps there was a sermon which would remind you of the gospel and of death and dying and of your own mortality and the forgiveness of sins and all that sort of thing and the death of Jesus, we now have very, very lengthy speeches about the dead. I don't know what to call these occasions.

On one such occasion that I went to recently, there were 15 speeches about the dead person. Some of them were short, but many of them were somewhat long. And of course, naturally, on the rule that you don't speak ill of the dead, these speeches blow up the reputation, blow up in the sense of make bigger and fatter the reputation of the dead person.

And it goes on and on and on and on. These occasions, I've been to quite a lot of them now, are absolutely depressing. I've gone out of them white-faced.

Here's this guy who I just thought was a fella. It turns out to be the greatest father that ever lived and the greatest husband that ever lived and the greatest worker that ever lived. And it's not me.

I know it's not me. I'm nowhere near what this bloke was and it's just very depressing. And because he was such a great one, of course, although it's a Christian, maybe a Christian occasion and people are trusting in the Lord, you don't get that impression at all.

There's not much about the Lord there and there's not much from the Lord's word. And you certainly don't get a proper sermon which talks to you about death, dying, sin, redemption, Christ. You get instead a further eulogy about the dead, eulogy to speak well of the dead, to speak well.

And you get a further eulogy which bumps up this guy's reputation and depresses all of us. Because he's gone to heaven, obviously, because he's such a wonderful chap. That's the message.

Even though this might be a Christian occasion, that's the message. When I was in, the lady who had died, the first speakers referred to her as an angel. By the time we'd finished, she'd become an angel and she'd gone to heaven as an angel.

This was a Christian funeral, allegedly a Christian funeral. We had one verse read from the Bible. We had no prayers.

One verse read from the Bible. And the only criticism of the deceased person was she wasn't much of a cook. Well, we can live with that.

Now, this is an extraordinary cultural change and we all ought to take a great deal of interest in it. I know there was a big article, I think, in The Australian about this recently. And I know others have taken an interest not beyond the Christian community.

But it is an extraordinary change. It takes us back to pagan times, where to speak well of the dead was about all you could do. With so much and so little knowledge about what went on beyond the grave, you would bolster the reputation of the dead as a way of keeping them alive.

It's the way of staying in touch with them. It's as if the agony of the human heart confronted with death speaks well of the dead and speaks a lot of the dead as a way of actually... And these days, of course, we do it with our screens. And we actually have the dead person on the screen doing this, that and the other.

And it won't be long before I attend one of these occasions where the dead person will be saying to us, by the time you hear me, I will be dead. But I want to say a few things to you. I'm sure it's happened.

I just haven't seen it. But it will happen. And these are ways of dealing with death and of saying to us, well, death is not sin, judgment, death, decay, separation.

The dead person still... It's rather like the movement which created statues of the dead. By the statue, by showing the statue, we're showing that the dead still has the power, that there's still a way in which the dead goes on. And I guess it's also, if you go back into pagan times, the long inscriptions, the epitaphs, all that sort of thing.

What motivated much of the... in the classical world about this was the search for glory. The search... You thought I might come to this in the end. The search for glory, for what you may call reputation.

The search for a name. So first of all, let's think about making a name. Because the idea of making a name and the idea of glory go together.

Let's think about your name for a moment. Now again, cultures differ here as to how you get your original name and whether it's your mother's name, your father's name and so forth. Cultures differ, I know.

But whoever you are, I think I'd be right in saying that you began life as a little baby by being given a name. You had no choice in it, I presume. I don't know of any culture, maybe there is, where you choose your name.

I take it that you are given a name. It's an act of grace by others. You're given it whether you like it or not.

Now, how does a name function? What is a name all about? Well, first of all, the name reveals. A name is a revelation. It tells us something about you.

Certainly in many traditions, a name has a meaning. So my name means Peter. My name is Peter, which means rock.

Perhaps rock head or something like that. But your name presumably has a meaning of some sort. And there was the idea originally that the name would both reveal something about you, rock, and or be a guide to you as to what you ought to be.

A rock, for example. So a name reveals and a name identifies. When the policeman pulls you over for speeding and says, what is your name? There is within you this temptation to say Peter Rabbit or something like that.

And then you don't give in to that temptation because you know what will happen if you do. When a teacher moves into a new class, of course, and asks the children for their names, it's a great fun to say, you know, every child in the class is called John Brown, unless you're called Alice Brown or something like this. You don't want the teacher to know your name.

Now, why? Because when we reveal our name, we are opening ourselves up to relationship. When the person identifies you and can tell who you are, that opens you up to a possibility of relationship with that other person. And that person has begun to classify you.

If you give certain names, I know exactly your ethnic background. I know where you're from. If you give me certain names, I know pretty well what year you were born in.

If you're called Andrew, I could identify what year you're born in if you're born here in Sydney. I'm exaggerating. But nonetheless, names tell us something about you and open you up to the possibility of relationship with another person.

We soon discover, as we go on, that names also have power. Names have power. Some names close doors.

I am so-and-so. Oh, thank you. Goodbye.

But some names open doors. I am so-and-so. Ah, come in.

Now, that works at a domestic level, but it also works, of course, in the corridors of power. It also works in the workaday world. It works in the world of the university.

It works in all sorts of places where names will open doors or close doors. And of course, if it's not your name that will open the door, you say, look, my name is Peter Jensen. I've come to visit you today.

So-and-so asked me to call. Ah, well, their name opens the door. And that's the way human beings work, and I guess all cultures work that way.

If you come in the name of someone, that can either open the door or perhaps close the door. But names have power, and we soon learn that that is the case. A nickname can be cruel or affectionate, or it can be admiring too, for that matter.

But you can dismiss a person with a name, and you can elevate a person with a name. Now, part of the business of going out into the world as we grow up is the invitation that we experience to make a name. You see, we begin by receiving a name, but as we go on and become our own people, we are invited to make a name.

I don't mean to manufacture a new name, but what I mean by that is your name is your reputation. Your name is your identity. Your name is what reveals.

And therefore, you have the temptation to make a name for yourself, to build a reputation which will bring rewards to you, to create glory for yourself. For name, reputation, glory are all connected. In some cultures, perhaps a majority of cultures, what determines behavior is very often shame and honor.

And certainly, you can see this in the ancient world, where people had to make do without the revelation from God that we have, and they had to work out what human life was about. They did not want to be ashamed. They didn't want to lose face.

There's a connection between honor and the face, and glory in the face too, scripturally. They didn't want to lose face, to lose their reputation, to lose their name. They didn't want to be ashamed.

Or alternatively, they are motivated by, pushed forward by, their ambition was to gain face, to gain honor. And so in many parts of the world, and indeed here too, in this part of the world, the whole idea of shame and honor, very often determines human behavior. It shapes human ethics.

It determines the sort of person you are and you want to be. You do not want to be ashamed. You don't want to lose face.

You want to gain honor, reputation, glory for yourself. Now, I don't know a great deal about the media. I'm a consumer and a victim.

No, I'm just kidding. More than a media person. And so I can't very well apply this to your situation, but let me suggest to you, as an observer, it is very interesting to be an observer as long as I have, and to realize that how important the byline has become.

My memory of the newspaper from years ago was that you would very rarely know who had written any particular person. It was the Sydney Morning Herald that wrote this, not Malcolm Brown, who mentioned a person who writes for the Herald, and no one to me. These days, of course, all that's changed and virtually every story has the byline of the person involved.

I'm presuming that gives you a name. I'm presuming you like it like that. I'm presuming that when you involve yourself in media work, you are very keen to tell people who you are on the radio.

This is Joseph Donnelly, if there is such a person, reporting to you from Big Ben. Or whatever. It wasn't that thing on the BBC, brilliant, where she interviewed the taxi driver.

Have you seen that? No? Perhaps you don't want to know about that anyhow. Okay. Look up BBC interview taxi driver, where she interviewed a guy who'd wandered onto the set and sat down, and she interviewed him as an expert witness.

It's really interesting. And the look on the taxi driver's face is priceless. Anyhow, that's by the by.

How did I get there? I'm presuming that the byline is your name, and as time goes on, you are hoping, for example, that your name becomes well known. That you turn from being a little name into, in your business, a big name. Now, I don't know that all of you have this ambition or something like that, but I take it that that's one of the things that may push you, in terms of ambition, in terms of getting glory, to become a big name which is instantly recognised.

Now, I won't name names here, but anyone who lives in this part of the world will be able to give you the list of half, even consumers, let alone media people, will be able to give you a list of the half dozen names, or perhaps dozen names, that are instantly recognisable, men or women, through television, print media, and so forth, instantly recognisable by everyone. They have become the big names of media. And I guess one of your options in terms of ambition is to make yourself into a big name so that, if I can put it this way, the definition of a big name would be, I guess, that you pass from making news to being the news.

So the fact that you've said it, the fact that you've had that interview, the fact that you're involved in this really tells us that this is important and this has got substance. You've passed from being merely a name, a byline name, to being a name in itself. That's glory.

That is true glory. It's glorious to be recognised not as a news reporter but as a news maker. That, I guess, could be an ambition in your line of work.

Well, let's turn then to, I just talked to you about making a name. I'm now going to talk to something I'm going to call the glittering prizes because there are prizes in making a name for yourself. And after I've talked about this for a little while, I'm going to talk to the verdict of God and I'm going to talk about receiving a name.

Okay, so here we go. The glittering prizes. What prizes do you get when you do make a name for yourself? Well, money.

A way of getting the reward is to be well-moneyed. And you know that maybe it's only one in every hundred but there is one in every hundred persons in the media world who make a lot and a lot of money by doing very well at this indeed. So money and perhaps even if not a lot and a lot of money, good money can be made by making a name for yourself by getting glory in that way.

Second and more interesting perhaps, power. For those who are consumers and for those who are, if you like, in the news, relationship with the media, that's why you were surprised when I said friendly. You didn't believe me for a minute.

You thought it was an incredible answer and no doubt you're right. I couldn't think what else to say. I tried for something at least.

That's what I generally try to do. The sense that you are a rabbit caught in spotlights is very, very common for those of us who are the subject of the media's attention. It isn't always like that.

When you go to the town of Dubbo and the local newspaper interviews you, you don't feel as though you're a rabbit in the spotlight. It's usually a very friendly experience but certainly to be confronted with a group of journalists when you're in a difficult situation, awkward situation already for some reason or other is to feel yourself like a rabbit in the spotlights. Now, you will, if you make a name for yourself, your name will lead to power because those who rely upon you perhaps to make their case in public or rely upon you to make their case in public in a way which doesn't damage them too much will certainly be very

deferential and you will learn to love the deference.

Not the difference, the deference. You will love it that people are frightened of you. You will sense fear in others.

There could be respect. So certainly amongst the dozen or so media names in our part of the world, two or three of them I would say I simply respect. I think they do their job superbly well.

Doesn't mean I always agree. Doesn't mean I'm always happy with what happens to me. But I have to say they do their job superbly well as professionals and I respect them.

And if you do your job well and if you gain sufficient glory and name, people will respect you and look to you for your opinions. They'd like to know what you think about certain things. Sometimes adulation may even follow.

You may turn indeed into that wonderful creature, a celebrity. All those ways of power are open to the person who make their name, who engage in the hunt successfully, engage in the hunt for glory. In the building, in the end, you may even have a lecture series named after you.

That'd be good. Books written about you. Perhaps not so good, depending.

I'm thinking of a particular book but I'm not going there. Buildings named after you. Well, there is a Fairfax building, let me put it that way.

And portraits done of you and hung in the great prizes and so forth and so on. And you will have social success. You will have social success.

The world will approve of you while it fears you. All these things are open to the people who make their name in your business. I realise that not everyone does.

Many don't. But they are open to people who make their name. I'm talking about the glittering prizes associated with glory, with making your name.

I've mentioned money and power. Now I'm going to come to one perhaps a little more subtle and that is identity. One of the problems of our age is the question of who am I? My identity.

With the collapse, particularly in the West, with the collapse of the religious answers to that question, there has developed, to change the metaphor, a vacuum. And the inability of parents to pass on to their children a sense of identity to answer the question, who am I? Yes, we are given names by our parents, but they are not able at the same time, so easily as they used to be, to pass on the gift of who that name really is. This creates in our community a new restlessness, a deep anxiety that some psychiatrists have been talking about and isolating as one of the psychic sicknesses of our age.

A new anxiety, a quest, a restless quest, anxiously to seek and to discover ourselves. Who am I? Trying to find the answer to that question. Trying to find the answer to that question in the face of other people, for the way in which we human beings are created is that we discover truths about ourselves in the face, in the attitude, in other words, of other people towards us.

One of the greatest gifts that I had, I have to say, in my whole life, in fact, yeah, I'd say just one of the top two or three gifts. I was born into a family in which mother and father really loved their children and

brought us up with boundaries, but they were for us and mother and father loved each other. I was born into a very happy family.

Now, what a gift. If you've been born into a family with an alcoholic dad, if you've been born into a family which is dysfunctional, if you've been born into a family in which things have gone terribly wrong, you will know how difficult it is. It's not impossible.

But how difficult it is to overcome some of those disadvantages. Now, my mother always used to say, if you can't be a leader, at least look like a leader, was what she'd say. She expected her boys to be leaders and my poor elder brother, he never made it, but now I'm only joking.

Ralph, if you ever see this, I'm only joking. It was just a joke. But all of us had a strong sense of self, a strong sense of who we were, a strong sense, a positive sense about ourselves.

Now, this may be nonsense. It may be a very bad thing for a person to have, but it has helped me, I have to say, and it's helped me greatly. It's a gift.

I didn't earn it. It was a gift given to me by the two people who God gave me as parents. If we are living, as I suspect, in an age in which that gift is much more rarely given than it was, where happy families are no longer the norm and where people don't come together in marriage in the way that they used to and have children in the way that they used to and understand how best to pass on the sense of self to their children, if, as I suspect, these things are so, then we will have lots and lots of adults in the world with a vacuum within them and a tremendous desire to fill that vacuum and to find out who they are.

And one of the obvious ways to do that is to discover who you are in the face, not of parents, but of strangers. To have the good opinion of other people around you helps to fill the vacuum. To read off their faces, in other words, to read in the way they treat us something of my worth.

That's the mechanism by which we've been set up to understand who we are. And if we read it in the face of strangers, if we caught it, in other words, and we long for it, if we're interested in what other people think of us, that helps us somehow to make up this lack of identity. If they affirm us, if they give us honour and glory, if they fear us, if they defer to us, if they ask for our opinion, all these things go to being very important for me personally as I want to make up who I am.

And the good opinion of others then takes the place of a moral compass. Instead of being guided by God's word and conscience shaped by God's word, we're rather guided instead by the opinions of others, by the world around us, by the culture around us. And the source of meaning in our lives is really what others think of us and our opinions.

Now one of the glittering prizes when you make a name for yourself, one of the glittering prizes is the fulfilled sense of identity. You then know who you are. However, if you seek the glittering prize, if you seek to make a name for yourself, if you seek glory, you may often fail.

Most people do fail, in fact. And sometimes therefore, we give ourselves over instead to such self-defeating and destructive patterns of behaviour as promiscuity, promiscuous sex, drug taking, of which the worst of course is alcohol, and a frenetic work style. When we see the abuse of alcohol, when we see promiscuous sex, when we see a frenetic work style, we see a culture which is desperately trying to fill the vacuum in who they are, caused because, well in the end, they've abandoned what God says about who we are.

They've turned their back on God. Now one of the ways in which this works too, of course, is the clash that some feel between the domestic self and the public self. It may well be that you wish to make a name for yourself, you wish to have that glory, and therefore in your public self, you work this frenetic lifestyle.

You're busy out there doing everything. But in your domestic self, in your home circle, you don't want to live that lifestyle. And you're caught in a terrific bind between making a name for yourself and actually relating to the ones you love.

And that is a classic difficulty which modern men and women are experiencing more and more, as people try to get glory and at the same time to have love. Sometimes people have to choose between glory and love. And we often make the wrong choice.

What does God think about all this? Let's turn now to what I call the verdict of God. There's a remarkable passage in Genesis chapter 12, I beg your pardon, 11, the great story of the Tower of Babel, where the whole world had one language and a common speech. And as men moved eastward, they found a plain in China and settled there.

And they said to each other, come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly. And they used brick instead of stone and bitumen for mortar. And they said, come, let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens so that we may make, do you remember? Correct.

And I say this for the benefit of those watching this in the DVD. Why aren't you here with us? Anyhow, leaving that to one side, make a name for yourself, make a name for yourself. That was their aim.

The Tower of Babel built with the latest technology, bricks, bitumen, built with the latest technology in order to make a name for themselves in the face as contrary to God himself, so that we're not scattered over the face of the whole earth. And then it says, the Lord came down, which I think is a joke. The Lord came down to see the city and the tower the men were building is so small, he had to come down and inspect it.

The Lord said, if as one people speaking the same language they've begun to do this, then nothing they plan will be impossible for them. Let's go down and confuse their language so they won't understand each other. And so it happens and so forth.

Now, this story, this sort of basic building block story from way back there is true of human history again and again and again in different ways. We try to make a name for ourselves as a society, as individuals to attain the glittering prizes of those who will turn their backs on heaven, backs on God. They want to attain the glittering prizes of what earth can offer.

And so the Lord confuses their language. He scatters the people. And again and again, we are demonstrated to be technologically ingenious, technologically ingenious in ways which enable us to gain meaning from each other and to neglect God.

But always the ingenuity turns out to be flawed. We invent plastic and we pollute the earth with it. We create cars and we use up the oil.

We invent television and we put on programs. We create the internet and we deliver up Wikipedia and pornography. We are destroying research by having so much data, which is not the same thing as research.

We keep destroying ourselves. And I think the internet is once again the Tower of Babel. Brilliant, but flawed and actually divisive in the end so that you can have censorship when it matters and all the other things.

You know what goes with the internet. We destroy truth. We can't help ourselves because we may seek glory, but as we seek glory for ourselves, we forget that we are flawed and sinful human beings and we cannot give ourselves glory.

We cannot create it for ourselves, for glory is a gift. Yes, people may honour you. People may give you great titles.

People may give you... I think I have six titles in all. It's actually marvellous. My whole name goes for pages.

It's wonderful. But you know, it's all trash. It's all garbage.

It's all meaningless. They give you the titles in order to make you do the job. It's all carrots and sticks.

You know, all this glory which we give, all this glory which we want from other people flows into the tragic flaws of our own characters. Yes, there are times in which as media people, whatever job you're doing and don't hear me wrong here, the job you're doing is a job under God and a very important job under God. We are meant to be doing this sort of thing.

But it's the question of why we do it and how we do it which is an issue here. Yes, there are times when good, faithful, brilliant work will be aptly and properly awarded. What I'm talking about here is not that there should be no rewards, no glory, if you like, or something like this, but the question of our motive, the question of what's really important for us, the question of how we will understand ourselves in the light of what people give us and do for us.

If you go about your work seeking power and identity as the motives, seeking to make a name for yourself and to be glorious, then I say to you, go back, you're going the wrong way. So finally, receiving a name, just briefly, and then we'll have questions. The Tower of Babel story is contrasted in the next chapter, chapter 12, where humankind is viewed there as building a tower to go to heaven and try to assault on heaven and this sort of thing, and God comes down and deals with them.

But now we come across an individual. Chapter 12, verse 1, the Lord said to Abram, leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you.

I will make your name great. It's interesting, isn't it? That was said 4,000 years ago and we're talking about him right here and now. There's a promise fulfilled.

I will make your name great. Abram's name is received like his birth name, so this name is received from God. His reputation comes from God.

He receives it by living under the word of God. He receives it as he receives the promises of God and is asked to live by faith in the promises of God. Trust me, said God.

Trust my word. Do what Adam and Eve failed to do. Do what the men of the Tower of Babel failed to do.

Here is my promise. It's words. Yes, it's just words.

Now live by trust in those words and I will make your name great. Put yourself where human beings need to be, under my rule. That is the place of true fulfillment.

That is the place of true glory, under the rule of God. It's not, you see, a matter of honor and shame. They are the false categories invented by this world in the absence of God.

It's a matter of guilt and innocence. And for those that is concerned, we are guilty sinners. I said guilt and innocence.

I meant guilt and forgiveness. As far as that is concerned, we are all guilty sinners in need of God's forgiveness. It's not a matter of honor and shame in the community.

It's a matter of what God's verdict on our life is. And God's verdict on the life of Abraham was not that he was a good man, but he was a man who lived by faith. He was justified because he lived by faith.

God's verdict on his life was entirely, entirely positive because he lived by faith. Please notice he didn't withdraw from the world. He wasn't taken up into heaven like Enoch was.

He lived within the world, but he lived within the world as one who, in a sense, did not belong in this world. He lived in this world as a sojourner. He lived within the culture, but he looked beyond the culture for the approval or disapproval that came from God himself.

And dear brothers and sisters, this is true for every Christian. It's not just true for people in your particular profession or mine. It's true for every Christian that you will make a complete mess of things you will seek for all the wrong things.

You will let the world manipulate you because they'll give you the glory you hunger for unless you put your trust and confidence in the word of God as Abram did and live under the word of God trusting in God's verdict on your life, not the verdict of the world on your life. That is the key issue for you. In the end, who am I trying to please and whose verdict is really going to matter to me? And there will be times in your life as there were times in Abram's life when choosing the verdict of God will be extremely painful and will lead to loss of the esteem of this world, will lead to the loss of the glittering prizes that this world offers because you are determined to please God and you put your trust in the ultimate verdict of God that that's what really matters to you, nothing else.

We want media people. We need media people. Media people are in an honoured profession.

Communication, the communication of truth is immensely important. Indeed, it is the foundation of our civilisation that we should do so. I honour you for the jobs you do, many times quite difficult jobs that you do.

I think in many ways do them well. I honour you for being in a profession which is so important to the rest of us. But I ask you to make sure that as far as you as Christians in the media are concerned, that you will live not looking to the world's prizes and to the honour and glory that will come from this world, but looking to the honour and glory that will come from God himself, looking for the name that he will give you, the special name that is yours alone, that he will give you, the glory that will come from him rather than the glory that will come from the world.

You might have a rotten funeral. They might tell all sorts of awful stories about you. Or maybe they'll just throw you, throw you away.

That doesn't matter much, does it? I hear more lies spoken at funerals than anywhere else by the sound of it. But what we're really interested in is what God says. They might write a biography about you.

You might be one of those persons that's written about. And they might be very positive or it might be negative. Who cares? In the end, it's God's verdict.

Look, let me finish with this 2 Corinthians chapter 4, 2 Corinthians chapter 4, which does talk about glory. It says as Christians at the end of chapter 3 that we ought to be being changed from one degree of glory to another as we grow into the likeness of Jesus. That's where glory is, growing more like Jesus.

End of chapter 3. Now, end of chapter 4, he says, we do not lose heart, though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we're being renewed day by day. Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us, now listen, an eternal weight of glory, an eternal weight of glory. Far outweighing all those troubles and afflictions.

So we fix our eyes, not on what is seen, on the faces of others and their opinion of us and whether they're frightened or whether they're, you know, think we're glorious or whatever. We fix our eyes, not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen, the face of Jesus Christ is eternal.

Shall we pray? Then we'll have some questions and answers. Dear God and loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, we thank you, our gracious God, that in the end, all is gift and the gift that you give us is the name you give us. We pray, Heavenly Father, that you would help us so to live in this life and the jobs that we do here, that we may look not to the things of this world, but to the things of the world to come and that eternal weight of glory, not to the opinions of others, but rather to your opinion and to what you think of what we're doing.

And we pray, Heavenly Father, that you would give us strength to say no to those glittering prizes and rather, yes, to the great reward of knowing the Lord Jesus and being with him forever. And we pray these things for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Thank you. Shall we take a break for a minute? Good idea. Stand up, stretch.

Then we'll have some questions. Okay. I have a question.

Sure. Whatever. If we wrap up at one, that'd be great.

Take 20 minutes of questions. Oh, sure. Okay, folks.

I didn't ask you to enjoy yourselves. Okay. Oh, am I supposed to stay here because of this? I've never been in a... This is really exciting.

Yes, sir. Thanks very much for what you had to say. And I hope I'm not detracting from the main thrust of your message by asking you maybe what might be a supplementary question.

When the Genesis account of the Tower of Babel contains that part that God says nothing will become impossible for them, what does God mean? And is it really possible that we could get to a point where

nothing would be impossible? Thank you. This is Benjamin, I think. Benjamin's asked about the Genesis account where it says God... Do I need to repeat this? May help.

Where it says God said that nothing shall be impossible for them. Is that true? And is it possible that nothing will be impossible to us, et cetera, et cetera? There's two ways of reading this. I think it's ironic.

I think God is saying nothing will be impossible to them, i.e., from their point of view, nothing will be impossible. It'll only encourage the blighters, if I can put it like that, and encourage them to continue on. I think it's ironic.

But it may not be. It may be God speaking seriously, nothing will be impossible for them. But if so, it's not an absolute.

Only for God is things not impossible. It will be a relative. So what he's talking about there is it will vastly increase the power of human beings to do all sorts of things and in ungodly ways.

Now, you can take your choice there. I prefer the ironic version. But whatever it is, he's not speaking absolutely.

That would not be true of Scripture as a whole. But he's speaking relatively of the increase of power that would follow from such a human technological advance done for all the wrong reasons and in the wrong way. Okay, thank you.

Someone else? Yes, ma'am. I just wanted to mention, on top of what you said, great talk, but Philippians 2 talks about sort of Jesus, how he kind of became a lot of the low, but then God gave him the name that's above every name. So in terms of, how can we, I guess that's an example that we could put from Jesus who humbled himself to the point of death on a cross.

And God subsequently gave him the name of God that is above every name. Thank you, Caroline. Caroline has said, first of all, it was a really good talk.

I noticed that. But that doesn't mean anything. She's just trying to flatter me.

So I noticed that as well. Thank you, Caroline. You want me to analyze, didn't you? Yes, yes, yes.

She's drawn our attention to Philippians 2, and rightly so, to the passage about the Lord Jesus humbling himself. He did not count equality with God something to be held onto, is what it means. He had it.

It was not something he held onto, but it was something he was prepared to give up in order to come down amongst us, to live amongst us as human being, already humiliating enough, so to speak, but also then to be put to death on the cross and be highly exalted. And God has given him a name, which is above every name. I think what Caroline is pointing out is again, gift of God.

God has given Christ the name that is above every name. Christ did not seek it, but he was given it, if I can put it like that. I think that's the point you're making.

But of course, that is a crucial passage for understanding glory and honor, as is then Philippians 3, where Paul says, look, I have all the glory that you may expect in this world. I was born in the tribe of Benjamin. I was circumcised on the eighth day.

And he goes through a list of achievements and accomplishments. And he says, it's all garbage for the sake of knowing this Philippians 2, Jesus Christ as Lord. Now that Philippians 2, the Lord, Philippians 3, us fit together just like that.

And yes, of course, they're very relevant to this discussion. And we need to know that. Yeah, ma'am at the back.

I can't see your name, but you might tell me. Thank you. And I still didn't catch your name.

I do beg your pardon. Jodie, the question is to do with the remarks I made about carving out identity and what's happening in the Anglican world and Anglican communion. I'm not sure how well, how broadly this is known.

But of course, as you know, in the in as you do know, I presume Western Christianity is now racked by a great division in all the big denominations. And it really is a division between those who let me say when I say it really is, let me try to put it this way. One of the difficulties that what? Sorry, one of the interesting things about the Christian faith is that as it passes in and out through history, it's always got to have to do with the culture around it.

And the question is, to what extent can the culture around it be brought into the Christian faith? To what extent can the Christian faith be modified properly by the culture around it? And to what extent should it resist? Now, that question confronts every Christian every day and certainly confronts churches and denominations. With the collapse of Christendom and the and really the decline of the Christian faith in the West from 1963 onwards or thereabouts, this question of culture has become an acute one, very acute indeed. Now, in particularly in the United States, but also in Britain and other places too, one of the flashpoints for the connection between culture and the gospel is over human sexuality.

This is obvious, it's just obviously going to be the case because sex is important to everyone I wouldn't be here without it. And yeah, good, okay. Corny, I know, but there we go.

Sex is important to everyone. It is immensely important to all our persons. Our sexuality is very important to us as human beings.

Don't ever be surprised. People say to me sometimes, oh, why are you going on about sex? Well, everyone else says, why shouldn't I? But also when you have a, when you have the collapse of the idea of God and the transcendent God and all that sort of thing, the culture then has to scabble to find an idol to take that place. And I think the idolization of our sexual identity is a necessary comeback from the way in which we have given up worshipping God.

Read Romans 1, for example. Now the question for all the churches then is, well, how much is this cultural shift really neutral? How much is it negative? How much is it positive? And we're all faced with this issue. And for those of us who are relatively conservative in these matters, one has to say, well, we've changed a lot too in the face of the cultural shift in the last 40 years.

We've changed our mind on a number of issues. So for example, 40 years ago, we would have said that the practice of homosexuality was a criminal offence and should be treated as a criminal offence. Now we would say, no, it should never have been treated as a criminal offence.

I just consider my mind as one area where even for conservatives, generally speaking, there has been a shift. That's not necessarily a bad thing. Now the Anglican communion is in the middle of a meltdown over precisely this issue with many, perhaps on the liberal side, saying, well, we need to shift in our attitude to homosexuality.

They're not saying in regard to all gay sex. They're saying in regard to what you may call faithful gay sex, which mirrors marriage. They're not saying yes to promiscuity, but they are saying yes to sexual expression, same-sex sexual expression.

Whereas others are saying, no, this is absolutely impossible. The Bible is against it. The Bible is our authority.

I think that's generally agreed that the Bible is against it. The Bible is our authority and you ought not to go down that track. Now if you are on the conservative side of this issue, it's no good simply saying the Bible is against it.

That is very important. That's fundamental, et cetera, et cetera. But we now need to work out why the Bible may be against it.

We need to do a lot more work in that area to be able to explain it. Sometimes I might say being able to explain it in the media is very hard because people don't give you space and time to talk about this. But we need to do that work.

Now my take on this, I am getting to the issue that you raised. My take on this is that the current exaltation of sexuality has precisely to do with the question of who am I and what my identity is. And not least so in regard to gay sex.

And I think if we're going to talk about this, we've got to talk about the way in which this is an attempt to find who I am. And it's an attempt which will lead to misery and pain. But I don't think we can simply write it all off as though it's nonsense.

Nor do I think we can simply write off the liberals as though they're all idiots. No, they are trying to grapple with a real problem that always confronts Christianity. I think they're making a mistake.

But I think we need to recognise that all of us have the same situation ahead of us and we need to provide better answers perhaps than we have before about why it is that the Bible does say no, this is a boundary you shouldn't cross. And it is to do with identity and all that. Forgive this very long disquisition.

I generally find if I talk a long time it quietens everyone down. Okay. We'll just take one more question.

One more question. You mentioned 1963 as a critical year. Hello David.

How are you? Good to see you. 1963. 1963 that sparked all this thing off.

What happened in 1963? Well, who was born in 1963? That's what happened. There is the person. I think it's Robin.

The question is I mentioned 1963. I do go on like this. I'm trying to desperately think what the answer is.

It's okay. This is all perciflage going up here while I'm thinking what on earth am I going to say about this? I mentioned 1963. Yes, it's a sort of provocative thing to say but it's not so silly.

In a major book written in 2001 or thereabouts by a British historian called Callum Brown called *The Death of Christian Britain*. I think I'm right in saying that he identified this year. It was a year of a number of things but amongst them the year when the contraceptive pill became widely available.

And it's ridiculous to tie everything down. Any great revolution can't be tied down to one thing but the contraceptive pill may be thought of as a symbol of the revolution that followed in the next 10 years in Western culture with the rise of feminism for example, with gay rights, with the abolition of censorship laws, a hundred other things that occurred at about that time in Western culture. And if you're going to say any year you might say 1963 but you could choose other years as well.

I'd say the decade of the 60s and it's interesting to observe that the old lefties the old lefties part of their DNA is cultural revolution and many of them have been shaped by the 1960s and about their beliefs as I talk to them and as I also talk to them a number of the more thoughtful ones as what I would call the more thoughtful ones are now beginning to say whoa, wait a minute were the freedoms we granted ourselves in the 1960s actually good for the human race? Were the boundaries we decided to cross then actually right boundaries to cross? And at long last there's a little bit of a turn I think even amongst what you may call the old lefty brigade about whether it was altogether wise to cross the boundaries we crossed back then. Folks, thank you very much that was the last question apparently I'm very grateful for your questions.

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