

# Glory Only in the Newness of Resurrection Life

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes that the end of all God's ways is His glory, and that this is the ultimate goal to which all of His ways and works are directed.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 53:11, John 2:11, John 3:10, John 4:14-15, John 11:4, John 11:40, 2 Corinthians 1:8, Philippians 3:10, 1 Peter 2:7, 1 Peter 4:17

**Topics:** "God's Glory", "Resurrection Life"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes that the eleventh chapter of John encapsulates the culmination of Jesus' ministry, revealing that God's ultimate purpose is glory, achieved through the resurrection life. He discusses the necessity of brokenness and travail in reaching God's ends, illustrating that true knowledge of God comes through suffering and surrender. The sermon highlights that Jesus is in control of every situation, even when it appears otherwise, and that the old creation must die for the new life to emerge. Sparks encourages believers to commit fully to God, understanding that His ways may be beyond human comprehension but are always directed towards His glory. Ultimately, he reassures that through trials and tribulations, believers will witness the glory of God manifested in their lives.

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## Transcript

Reading: John 11

We turn again to this eleventh chapter of the Gospel by John, and I would remind you that this chapter represents the culmination of the life, teaching and works of the Lord Jesus during the days of His flesh. This is quite evident, for you notice that in verse 47 it says: "The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we?" The rest of the chapter shows that this was the last of a number of such councils, and it was in this last council that they decided definitely and finally that this Man must die. So here we have that which marks the culmination of His life and work at that time. The finality is not by the act, but is the fullness of the very purpose for which He came, and, more than that, it is the fullness of Divine counsels.

Behind this chapter there are two things. There are the eternal counsels of God coming to their completion in His Son at this time, and then there are the counsels contrary to God which are seeking to bring that Son to an end, to destroy Him. The Divine counsels are summed up in what is in this chapter. No doubt you have read it many times and perhaps you think you know it. If you were asked what John eleven is about most of you would say: 'Well, of course, it is the chapter about the raising of Lazarus from the dead',

and perhaps that is all that you would have to say about it. In so saying (forgive me if this sounds a bit critical of your apprehension) you indicate how really you have missed the way. Of course, we have all said that in time past, but as we have gone on we have come to see something more, and that is that this chapter contains all the major features and factors of God's ways unto glory. Have you grasped that? The end of all God's ways and works is glory, His own glory. It sometimes seems a tortuous way, as these sisters felt it to be while it lasted. It sometimes seems to be anything but glory, and you might very well decide, as perhaps these sisters decided at a certain point, that the end is not glory. You might feel that all this sorrow, distress, disappointment and despair could not lead to glory, but all that, from God's standpoint, is the way of glory and is unto glory.

Let me repeat: when God takes anything in hand - and you really must lay hold of this! - the end is going to be His glory. You need make no mistake whatever about that! The end of all God's ways is His glory. Read your Bible in the light of that, and you have the whole Bible in one chapter - the eleventh chapter of John.

#### FACTORS IN THE WAYS OF GOD UNTO GLORY

I have said that this chapter contains the main features and factors in the ways of God unto glory. What are some of these main factors?

A very big one is the incarnation of the Son of God; the Son of God taking flesh; God manifest in the flesh. Is that not a big one? The very purpose and object of the incarnation, of God taking flesh, becoming incarnate, is found in this chapter. Hold that for a while.

Then there is the method of God in redemption. Redemption is a big factor, is it not? No one will dispute that! In the eternal counsels of God redemption is a big factor, and the method of redemption is the substance of this eleventh chapter of John.

Another thing - and I am quite sure that, while you will have agreed with those other two, if you know anything at all about God's ways, you will agree with this - God's ways are very strange, and are beyond human explanation and comprehension. While God is in the process of moving towards His end, it is very difficult to follow Him. The Apostle Paul, who knew a good deal about the Lord, said of his experience: "Pressed out of measure" (2 Corinthians 1:8), or, as another translation has it, "BEYOND our measure". The Lord is always a bit ahead of us. It would not do for us to be equal with Him, would it? We would soon be taking the place of the Lord! If we were right upsides with Him in everything our dependence upon Him would very soon go. So the Lord gets ahead of us, beyond our measure, and puts us out of our depth in order to enlarge our capacity. We would never grow if that were not true.

The simple way in which John's Gospel illustrates that is in chapter 10:4: "When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them". Well, of course, you have sometimes taken that as a comforting statement, but there is profundity in every clause of the Divine Word, and this Gospel in particular reveals that. "When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them" - He always is ahead of them, and they are always a bit behind Him. In a sense, He is too much for them. They have to move on, and still move on, if they are going to come up to where the Lord is, and when they get there, they find that He has gone ahead again. They have to keep going, to keep running all the time.

The Apostle Paul explains this when he said right at the end of his full life: "That I may know him" (Philippians 3:10). 'I have not caught up yet. He is still beyond me.' The mystery of God's ways, the

strangeness of what we call 'Providence', is a major factor of God's ways, and that is in this chapter.

Another thing, which is not by any means a small thing, is the farsightedness of God. How much beyond our seeing He is! Or let us come to this chapter - how much the Lord Jesus was beyond the seeing of these sisters and the disciples! They just could not see beyond this present happening and experience. The thing that was immediately before their eyes was their horizon. But God, in Christ, was moving here on the principle of farsightedness, beyond the incident, beyond the present. However big this was to them, He was far beyond it. His horizon was far outreaching this thing, and He was acting accordingly. The farsightedness of God is no small factor in the ways, the works and the dealings of the Lord, and it is all here in this one chapter.

How unfathomable are the ways and the works of God!

## THE LORD IN CONTROL

Now, having said that, let me step back for a moment and remind you of something here which we must get hold of. Do believe me, dear friends, when I say that it is not just the TEACHING of John's Gospel in one or all of the chapters with which I am concerned. This has to come right into our very own history. It has to be taken out of the Bible, out of the history of Jesus during His time on this earth, and put right into our history, and we shall never get anywhere unless that is true. It is applied truth, and not theoretical truth that is here.

So let me say this: The thing that comes out at us as we quietly and thoughtfully dwell in this chapter is that the Lord Jesus has the situation in His hands. Let me put that in another way. If this is God incarnate, then it is God with whom we are having to do here. When you come to this chapter you see how the Lord Jesus has everything in hand, and in His hands, and He is not letting it go out of His hands all the way along.

Look at the various aspects! He said He would go back into Judaea. The disciples immediately reacted: 'No, the Jews recently sought to kill You there. You must not go back there!' You see the move to take things out of His hands, to govern His movements, His judgments and His decisions, but He is not having it. He has taken this thing in hand, and, disciples or no disciples, He is going on. There is something that He is after, and He is in charge. Messengers are sent to him about Lazarus when He is away somewhere else, and undoubtedly the message means this, although it is not recorded: 'Lazarus is dying. Come, please! Come quickly! Come as quickly as You can!' The beloved sisters would have said that, but to do as they wished would have taken the matter right out of His hands and ruled His judgment, ruled His feelings, governed His movements, set a time that He did not set, and taken it over. No, He abode where He was. He had the situation in hand and was not going to let it out of His hands, although the appeal was from those whom He loved. It is stated that that was so. The situation was one which could appeal to any sympathetic heart, but that was not going to decide this thing. It was in His hands and He was going to decide the ground upon which He worked, the time in which He worked, and when He was going to move, and nothing would alter His decision. The Jews, of course, ever ready to criticise Him and discredit Him, and put Him in a bad light, said: "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of him that was blind have caused that this man also should not die?" All these forces were at work in every realm, from the centre to the circumference of His relationships, to get Him under control, but He was not having it. He had this matter in hand, and that is a very important thing. Why? He stated it: 'This sickness is not unto death, finally, absolutely. This sickness is not going to end in death, but is for the glory of God.' And what then?

"And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there." Oh, what are you going to make of that? Put yourselves in the position of these sisters with a beloved only brother slowly passing out, in the grip of this apparently fatal sickness. Their hearts were wrung with distress and anxiety, were breaking, and they had seen to it that He knew about it - and this was His attitude: "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there."

Well, you see, He has got hold of this situation and is in charge. We are dealing with God. He is in charge, and if He is working to a certain end you cannot hurry Him, you cannot take over from Him and make Him do what you want Him to do. He is going to reach His end, and it may be a very trying way for our flesh and our natures, but He will get there, for He is in charge.

## THE LAW OF TRAVAIL

We sometimes sing, rather glibly and without watching our words too carefully:

"How I long to climb to the utmost heights!"

I wonder if we realise as we sing that that the utmost heights are only reached through the utmost depths! You and I, dear friends, will never reach God's end except along the pathway of brokenness. That is what this chapter says. While we are whole, and substantial, and well-knit, and self-confident, we will never reach His end.

You see, God, right at the beginning of the Bible and of human history, planted something in human experience which became the LAW of all true knowledge of God from that moment. The great issue in the Garden was KNOWLEDGE of good and evil. Man made a bid for knowledge, under the instigation and inspiration of the devil, and God came along on that declension, on that breakdown, and established a law by which He said: 'You shall never have true knowledge except by this law. Everything that is going to be true and real in the future is not going to be gained so easily as you thought.' The law of travail was planted right at the heart of human life. Travail was introduced as a law for the future, and you and I know very well that true love only comes out of travail. Put it another way: we never value anything that has cost us nothing. We can let it go very cheaply if we have not paid any price for it, but if we have paid a price, if it has been costly, if it has meant something to us of real suffering, or sorrow, or great trial, that is infinitely precious to us, and we do not let it go easily.

So God came right in at that point and put this law of travail into human life and human history, and said: 'You tried to get everything cheaply, but you will not get anything that is worth having without cost in the future.' And from that point, you notice all through the Bible, until you come to the travail of His soul, the travail of the Garden, the travail of the Cross, of which Isaiah had said: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied", that out of travail is the preciousness. It is the law, you see, that there is no reaching the heart of God and having true knowledge without costliness.

Peter learned that by a deep way. He tried to get things cheaply. "It is good for us to be here, Lord. Let us build three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah", and I suppose, although he did not say so, he meant: 'We will have some tabernacles, too. We will stay here.' Peter was like that, but he went the deep way of utter devastation by the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and years afterwards he wrote: "Unto you therefore which believe is the preciousness" (1 Peter 2:7).

The last picture of the Church is of the city, and its gates are of pearl, which is the very symbol of agony, of blood, of tears. That is how it is made. It is costly, and very precious because it costs.

I said that this is a comprehensive chapter, did I not? We will come back to it. Here are these dear sisters, and how they are baptized into the passion, the agony of the Cross, and how they are having to know a tasting of death in order that they might know the preciousness of resurrection life! There is no other way to it.

"I am glad for your sakes that I was not there." He was farsighted, and saw that, although He was running this risk of being misunderstood - for everybody, sisters and all, were misunderstanding Him and were incapable of comprehending Him - He must accept the risk. He saw beyond, to the ultimate. And what is the ultimate? "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

The end of all God's ways is glory. How rich and how full all this is! We are in the presence of God, and when we are there we are in the presence of profoundest realities. Oh, that we might have the grace, when the Lord has us in hand and is dealing with us, not to wrench ourselves out of His hand, but to remain there unto the inevitable glory!

### THE BATTLE OF COMMITTAL

I am so hesitant, dear friends, just to add words to words. I do want to make sure that what I am saying is going deeper than your heads, than Christian theory and doctrine.

First of all, as we said last time, there has to be the basic and utter committal to the Lord. Now, of course, I suppose there are few of you, if any, who would not say that you have surrendered your lives to the Lord, and perhaps you say that you are UTTERLY given to the Lord. You don't know what you are talking about! I am sorry to say that, but it comes out of very long experience. We shall never get beyond the point where there is no more battle to get perfectly adjusted to the mind of the Lord. It does not matter how long you live here. If you are walking with the Lord there will be, right to the end, occasions when you find it is not easy to accept some new revelation of the mind of God for you. Indeed, you will have a new battle every time on this, and that is what I meant when I said: 'You don't know what you are talking about!' That is not, of course, to discourage or discount any consecration that you have made, but there has to be a basic, initial, fundamental committal, when we say: 'Now, Lord, I do not know all that it is going to mean, or how it is going to work out, or what it is going to cost, but I put myself into Your hands. I am Yours. I am committed. You are my Master, and I want you to have the absolute mastery of my being. If at any time it becomes difficult for me to yield to Your mastery, I am going to seek grace to adjust to it.' There must be something of an attitude taken which is COMPLETE committal.

I ask you - not with the sum total of all that it means known to you - has the Lord got the mastery of your being, of your life? As we have already said, this touches every point and aspect. Has He got the mastery in your business, in your business relationships, in your business transactions? Are you doing business that does not lie in line with the glory of God, that is, are you doing business that is a contradiction to the glory of God?

I knew a young fellow once who had got on very well in business and had tremendous prospects, but he was in the biggest tobacco firm in Europe. He had a good position, with great prospects - and he came up against this matter as to whether the Lord was glorified in his doing that kind of business. He decided eventually that that kind of thing was not to the glory of God. As he saw it working out, he found that it was contrary to the glory of God in human lives, so he surrendered his position and came right out of the firm. For a time he was tested by his action and by the position which he had taken of faithfulness to God. The Lord looked after him in the end, but I am not throwing that in to say that you will get a reward, or will get

compensation.

The point is: not policy, but principle. The world is governed by policy, by what is politic and what is diplomatic. That is the whole spirit and law of this world, but the Lord Jesus is not policy nor diplomacy, and the principle is the glory of God.

That is what it means to be committed. Is your home in the committal, your domestic relationships, your social life and relationships?

And so we could go on. It is just not a matter of getting on your knees and saying: 'Lord, I am Yours. I give myself to You absolutely', and then when the Lord comes along the next day and says: 'What about this?' to say: 'Oh, I did not mean that!' The Lord is very practical!

Forgive me for speaking like this, but we must, for we are in very serious times, and God is coming near to His people in order to sift out. The end is going to be a tremendously sifting time amongst the Lord's people. Peter says, speaking about the time of the end: "The time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17), and if it begins with us, where will the sinner and the ungodly be? We shall be sifted down to this: Is your priority in life really settled, and is that priority the glory of God? If so, whatever happens, you will go through and you will reach God's end, the glory. "It is God with whom we have to do!"

## GOD'S ATTITUDE TO HUMAN LIFE

In this chapter we are dealing with the ultimate things, the primary things and the eternal things. I am going to say what may perhaps be a very difficult thing for you to accept, but it shouts at us and we cannot get away from it, much as it hurts us and we do not like it. The attitude of the Lord Jesus towards the situation and all concerned with it is God's attitude towards human life as it is. Here in this chapter you find human life represented by a number of different aspects. You have the Jews, the scribes and the Pharisees. Well, you are not perhaps surprised at God's attitude towards them, but move on into the heart of the chapter. Here are these dear sisters, and there is this man Lazarus, as far removed from scribes and Pharisees and ruling Jews as could be, humanly. You would say that they are lovely people, but what is the attitude of the Lord Jesus? He is non-committal, holding a reserve. It says that He stayed where He was for two days, and that when He came at last Lazarus had been dead four days. Four days had elapsed between receiving the news and arriving there, and, as you know, they mentioned to Him the state of things which naturally would have prevailed. WHY did He let Lazarus die? He could have raised him, for He had healed many others and raised other dead. Why this one who was so beloved? Why did He allow the sisters' hearts to be broken, torn with this sorrow and this distress? Why this attitude? This is God's attitude to humanity at its best in Adam as well as at its worst. This humanity at its best is something that in Adam God has set aside, and He is not going to patch it up. He is not going to give it medicine to cure it. He says: 'It must die!' The only possible thing is resurrection, a new life altogether, something different from the natural and earthly even at its best.

Do you think I am exaggerating, or going too far? I want you to pick up this Gospel and read it from end to end. Why the marriage in Cana of Galilee? Why did He attend, why did the wine fail and why did that terrible predicament arise? "They have no wine", says His mother, in a kind of appeal and expectation that He would do something. Consternation is over the whole thing. There is no resource left. It is an end of the very thing that makes life. "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." It had been the appeal in a predicament, the appeal of an opportunity, the appeal of a mother's heart, the appeal in a

difficult situation, but, no, He would have none of it, for there is something more in it than just patching up this feast. There has to be something that is above the natural, and that is newness of life, and not the old thing patched up. This old thing MUST die, and then resurrection alone is going to be the answer. That is the explanation - something different. God's attitude is that the old creation is bankrupt, and the only prospect is a new creation life. "This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory" (John 2:11). Glory is the end of God's ways. How? In something that is beyond all natural possibility. Cana is the beginning and Lazarus is the end of the story.

In between - I cannot stay with them, but I will just remind you of some of them - there is Nicodemus, with all his religion and all his learning, to whom Jesus said: "Art thou the teacher of Israel and understandest not these things?" (John 3:10). All the religious knowledge, learning, position and tradition are bankrupt. 'You must be born from above. This natural life of yours, though it be all like that, will not get you through.'

There is the man at the pool of Bethesda. He was for thirty-eight years lying in that position, struggling every day to get on to his feet and into the water. Try that, perhaps a dozen times every day for thirty-eight years, and see whether you have much hope left at the end! Without the use of the pool and without any artificial aid, He who is the resurrection and life comes on the scene and there is another sign, another showing of how hopeless the natural is until Jesus comes in, but He comes in with another kind, another order of life.

Then we come to the woman of Samaria at Sychar. What a story of moral bankruptcy that is! "Go, call thy husband... I have no husband... Thou saidst well, I have no husband, for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." Everything has been exhausted in that realm, "but the water that I shall give shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life" ... "Sir, give me this water" (John 4:14-15).

So John goes on with his Gospel until we come to Lazarus, and there in one chapter all this is gathered up, showing that the glory of God is the end - "Thou shouldest see the glory of God."

The glory of God is not something that God can do in human life, for He is not going to patch that up. Men can do that. You call in the doctors and they may help to keep this thing alive for a time, but God says: 'No let that die. The glory is not in that kind of thing. It is something absolutely new and different.'

The end of all God's ways is like that. I do trust that you will interpret everything in the light of this. Have you suffered? Have you been knocked about? What are you doing about it? Are you putting it merely and only into the category of things common to man? No, the end is glory, and when you come through you will see the glory of God in the newness of resurrection life.

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