

It's God Spreading His Glory

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[0:00] I hope it's a good reminder for you and an encouragement that we need to tell others about Jesus! And I know this is something we've gone over a lot lately, but for several reasons I think we should go over it once again.

Maybe you're wondering, didn't Pastor Aaron just do a series on evangelism? Doesn't Pastor Bob or didn't Pastor Bob just do a class on evangelism?

Why spend four more weeks on evangelism? Why another series on this topic? If you're asking that question, and you might be, I have three reasons, and we'll go through those really quick.

If you're asking that question, here they are, the reasons for it. The first is, and I put this bluntly, and I mean nothing malicious by it, but most of us are still not very good at it.

That's the truth, that most of us are not very good at it still. If this was something that Grace Fellowship Church was doing week in and week out, we were beating the bushes and people were coming in regularly, then we could probably forego this series.

[1:14] But for whatever reason, that's not happening. And I can only speak for myself, but I'm definitely more comfortable staying in my house and with my family than telling others, including my neighbors and my other extended family, about Jesus.

I'm much more comfortable, as this is you, I'm much more comfortable talking about health care reform, recession, sports, movies, lots of other things, than I am speaking about Jesus.

So if you say, I'm pretty good at evangelism, or at least I'm trying, then you can bear with us, those of us who, this is still an ongoing struggle.

And I don't say any of that to run down Grace Fellowship Church. We have lots of strengths here, don't we? We're strong in doctrine.

We give generously. We love the brethren here. And those are all good things, but we do struggle with reaching out to others.

[2:25] Our strengths are good, and there's grace in God to overcome the challenges that we face and the weaknesses that we have. But we have to be willing to confess those.

We have to be willing to submit to the Lord's instruction in this area. So I'm not picking on anyone, and I'm not stirring up trouble. I love you. I love Grace Fellowship.

And out of love, I say, this is the area that we still need to work on. The second reason, that's the first reason, the second reason I think this series is necessary is this.

On the whole, and I'm not speaking for every single person, but on the whole, Reformed Baptists are not good at reaching out. This is an area that our movement has problems with.

We don't do evangelism well. We don't do church planting well. And I don't say that with any malice. This is an area that we as a movement, we need to work on.

[3:28] And I love our church. And I love ARBCA and the circle of churches that we're in. But again, out of love, I say, this is the area we need to confront. Recently, Matt Troop, he's a Reformed Baptist church planner in Fresno, California.

He wrote a research paper about church planting in the Reformed Baptist movement, and he revealed some very interesting things. Listen to some of these statistics.

His research revealed that of the surveyed Reformed Baptist churches, and he had over 100, so from ARBCA, from this group called FIRE, to the Southern Baptist churches, these were all churches that he surveyed.

27% of all the churches had no involvement whatsoever in planting churches. 35% had very little involvement in planting churches.

So a total of 62% of Reformed Baptist churches surveyed have little or no involvement in planting churches. Another interesting and startling statistic was that of all the churches surveyed, over the

last 10 years, there's been an annual average involvement in planting churches of 2.45%.

[4:54] So that means that in any given year in the last 10 years, 97.55% of Reformed Baptist churches had no church planting effort whatsoever.

So for whatever reason, the sad reality is that Reformed Baptists don't do evangelism or church planting well. And we live in this movement.

They affect us, and we affect them, and we need to recognize that this is an area of weakness and an unhealthy state to be in. So we can badmouth our movement, we can complain about it and moan about it, but that's not going to change the reality of it.

And so I'm hoping that this series will sort of waken us up a little bit and get us more motivated to evangelize in the right direction. The third reason, and I think this is the most important, is that every day our culture grows more and more post-Christian.

The largest unchurched, unchristianized nation in the world is what? Take a guess. It's really obvious.

[6:05] China. China. China. Very good. That's number one. Number two. India. Number three. United States. According to one set of statistics I saw, there's 195 million Americans that have no meaningful involvement in a Christian church, no meaningful contact with Christianity.

They don't go to any sort of church. They don't know the gospel. They don't understand the need for the gospel. They don't think in biblical terms at all. They don't think of sin and grace.

They're post-Christian. They've moved past Christianity. In our country, people live, they're born, they live, and they die without hearing the gospel.

It's not that they're hearing it and they ignore it. They don't ever hear it. And if we don't tell them, they're not going to hear it. They won't hear it from their friends because their friends are clueless. And they won't hear it from their pastors because they don't even darken the door of a church. So we live in a pagan nation. Whatever our country was 20 years ago, 50 years ago, 100 years ago, we live in a pagan nation.

[7:24] And so when you think of our culture, you should think of ancient Rome, ancient Greece, because that is what our culture is like. We can curse the darkness and we can complain and moan and say, I can't believe this is the way it is.

But that's not going to change anything. God has put a golden opportunity in our hands. He's put something in front of us to do that no other nation has had the opportunity to do.

And that is to present the gospel to people, to a culture that is post-Christian. And we have the opportunity to show and reveal a gospel where it can make the strongest, the most pagan person fall down on their face in joyful repentance.

We have that opportunity. So the need of our culture is the third reason that we need to be moving out. We don't have the luxury anymore of assuming that our culture is Christian and that people are going to hear the gospel.

They are not if we don't tell them. Well, that's the reason for the class. Let's begin. Where does evangelism begin?

[8:48] Where does evangelism begin? Evangelism begins with the Trinity. Evangelism begins with the Trinity. Let me ask you some questions. That's our first point.

Evangelism begins with the Trinity. Let me ask you some questions. What is the chief end of God? The chief end of God. That's for you to answer.

His own glory. God exists. The reason He does anything He does is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

So why did God make the universe? It's not a trick question. Why did God make the universe? For His own glory.

Why did God allow men to fall into sin? For His own glory. Why did God save sinners completely of His grace?

[9:46] For His own glory. For His own glory. Now let me ask you. Did God need to make a world, create a people, and have them fall into sin, and save them by His grace to glorify and enjoy Himself?

No. He didn't need to do that. Why? Why didn't God need people? Right. God is perfectly happy. God is perfectly satisfied in Himself.

There was no need for God to make men, to watch them fall into sin, to save them. Because God has everything that He needs inside the Trinity.

He doesn't need to have men glorify Him. Because He's completely happy, and He completely glorifies Himself. So keep following me here.

In the Trinity, each person glorifies, enjoys, delights in the others of the Trinity. So God the Father honors, and He glorifies, and He delights, and He enjoys the Son and the Spirit.

[10:57] And the Son and the Spirit, they honor and glorify, enjoy, and delight in God the Father. God did not create the world and let it fall into sin and save sinners out of it because He needed men to glorify Him.

He didn't need men to honor Him. Because God has everything He needs inside of Himself. God always, constantly, throbs with infinite delight in Himself.

He doesn't need us to make Him happy. He doesn't need to act to make Himself look good in front of us. Because His self-esteem, if you want to call it, is already infinite.

It's already as high as it can be. So why did God make a world, make men, and save sinners? It's because He wanted to spread His glory.

And that's a key word. He wanted to spread His glory. He wanted others, besides Himself, to know and experience what He experiences always.

[12:06] So the Father wanted everyone, everywhere, to have the ability to see and know the glory that was in the Trinitarian Godhead.

He wanted everyone, everywhere, to see how great and good and gracious, loving, holy, wrathful, just, wise, beautiful, powerful, patient, kind, delightful, precious, glorious, God the Son is.

And God the Spirit is. He did what He did to give glory to the Son. So that others could see how wonderful the Son is. And how wonderful the Holy Spirit is.

And God the Son and God the Spirit, they participated in creation and redemption. Why? Because they wanted others to see how wonderful and good and powerful and patient and holy and all the others that God the Father is.

They wanted others to know and experience His glory. So God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit wanted to take what was inside of them and spread it so that others could see.

[13:17] So God doesn't save sinners because He lacks something. But because His glory was too much, if you will, for Him to keep to Himself. It was too good for Him to keep it to Himself, if you will.

So the wonderful news of God's glory is what God gets excited about. God gets excited and He longs to show other people how great He is.

And so He makes this world so that He could show people what a wonderful God He is. And He saves sinners so that He could show people how beautiful He is.

Everything God does is for that reason. So that others will experience and enjoy and appreciate His glory. So God is the first evangelist.

Evangelism doesn't begin with any of us. And it doesn't begin with a program or the church. It doesn't begin at Pentecost or any place like that.

[14:23] Evangelism begins with God. In making this world and saving sinners by His grace and giving us the law and giving us the gospel and giving us all the word and sending His Son to die for sinners and giving the Holy Spirit.

God's message in all those things, the thing that He wants us to get and understand, is that God is glorious. He wants us to understand how wonderful He is.

So God has gone public. He's gone public with His glory. So we live in an advertisement-saturated culture, don't we?

You've heard the statistics. Children before their age of 10, they've seen like 42 quajillion commercials, right? They grow up with people advertising to them.

So everywhere, people are trying to get their message out. They're trying to have people experience their product and enjoy what they're doing. They want people to buy what they're selling.

[15:29] Well, in the same way, God went public. He went public with how wonderful God is. He took what was inside of Him and He showed it to the world.

Didn't Calvin say that this world is God's theater to display His glory? This whole world, this whole history is God's theater.

God is on the stage. God is doing these great acts. And we are in the audience, if you will, watching and seeing how awesome God is.

God is. Well, evangelism begins with the Trinity, but it reaches its climax in Jesus Christ. And that's our second point.

Jesus Christ, the evangelist. Turn in your Bibles to the first chapter of John. The first chapter of John. 38 times in the book of John, Jesus is said to be sent from the Father.

[16 : 35] 38 times Jesus is said to be sent from the Father. Jesus was on a mission. That is the underlying message of John. Jesus is on a mission.

What is His mission? The prologue of John says that Jesus' mission was to shine as a light. He came to spread God's glory.

He came so that others could see God's glory. Look at verse 4. In Him was life. And that life was the light of men.

Jesus was a great light and He shined. He shined so that men could see. Look at verse 14. The Word. Verse 14 of chapter 1.

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory. The glory of the one and only who came from the Father. Full of grace and truth.

[17 : 35] From the fullness of His grace we have received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God.

But God the one and only who is at the Father's side has made Him known. Why was Jesus sent to this world? To save sinners.

But according to John it was to shine as a light. And what was that light? It was the glory of the one and only.

It was a reflection of God. He was to shine so that other people could see God. And that life was the life of men.

To see that light was to have life. It was to understand and appreciate and know God the Father.

[18 : 35] To have that life, to see that light, was to receive one blessing after another. To see it was to experience grace and truth. So the Father sent the Son to do something.

He sent His Son to spread His glory. So that others could see how full of grace and full of truth God is. And that's the gospel.

God is the gospel. So let me ask you. Where do we see God's glory the brightest? Creation. I don't think so.

The cross. I think creation is second. Don't get me wrong. I think it's at the cross where God's glory shines greatest.

Jesus Christ's glory and His mission reached its climax. His light shone the brightest at the cross. So you're in John.

[19 : 36] Turn over to chapter 12. John chapter 12. John chapter 12. Look at verse 23. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

What does glorified mean here? The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. What does glorified mean in that context?

Mark. Mark. I think that's partly the answer. Look at verse 24. The next one.

This is going to tell us what he's talking about. I tell you the truth. Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies. It remains only a single seed.

But if it dies. It produces many seeds. when Jesus said, it's time for me to be glorified, he was talking about, it was time for me to die.

[20 : 42] It's time for me to die. Look at verse 27. Now my heart is troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?

No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name. So let's dig into Jesus' mind here in these verses.

What was he thinking as he was coming to his death? He's approaching the cross. What is he thinking? He's looking at the cross and he sees the place of his glory.

So as he suffered, he was exalted. And as he was shamed, he was honored. And as he died, the one, the one seed that died, would spring to life many people.

His life was crushed, and the result was, out of his life, the loss of his life, life would spring up for many. Jesus saw the cross as the place of his glory.

[21 : 53] And he saw the cross as the place where the Father was glorified. It was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.

It's the cross. It's not creation. It's the cross where God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit show truly how wonderful wonderful and glorious God is.

God's power and his creativity and his genius and his wisdom shine in creation. But it's at the cross where we see God's glory.

We get the closest look at who God is. So let me ask you, what do we see of God's glory at the cross? What is so magnificent about the cross?

What attributes of God do we see? His heart. What do you mean? That's good. How much he loves us. That, Paul said in Galatians 2.20, the life I live in this body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and he gave himself for me.

[23:11] What does Romans 5.8 say? But God demonstrates his own love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The cross is this grand demonstration of God's throbbing, beating heart of love for his people.

We just started learning how deep the Father's love for us, the song, and it says, how deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that he should give his only son to make a wretch his treasure.

How deep the pain of searing loss, the Father turns his face away as wounds which mar the chosen one bring many sons to glory.

How much does God love us? He loves us enough to wound his own son, the chosen one. So God demonstrates his love at the cross.

What else of God's glory do we see at the cross? His holiness. What do you mean? Right.

[24:25] We live in a culture that just takes it so easy on itself, it doesn't see sin as a big deal. God sees sin as a very, very big deal.

I don't know how to describe it except you go to the cross and you see the price of forgiveness and it's the son of God being smothered and crushed and wounded.

That's how holy God is. That's how serious his justice is and his righteousness and his purity. What else do we see of God's glory at the cross?

His mercy. Yeah. the cross, we see a place where it's this weird paradox.

It's a place of no mercy. He has no mercy on his son. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And at the same time, we see God's pity on his enemies.

[25:29] And I don't know about you, but there are really no words to describe how evil my heart is and how evil my sin is in the depths of my sin.

Every one of us has sinned against infinite kindness. Every breath we take is kindness and every sin that we commit, everything that we do that we shouldn't do and everything that we don't do that we should do is vile.

It's disgusting. We've been beggars. I've been a beggar and someone has given me something very generously and then I've murdered them.

There's no words to describe how evil our sin is, but he gave Jesus what I deserve. He gave Jesus what I deserve and he gave me what Jesus deserved.

That's mercy. What else do we see at the cross? Victory?

[26:45] Right. We see God's power and we see how at the cross Jesus Christ overcame all the satanic forces that were facing him.

Colossians 2.15 Having disarmed the powers and authorities, that's demonic forces, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Imagine you're in Rome and there comes the conquering general and in his train are all these beaten soldiers and all these slaves and generals, the ones that that general has conquered.

And he's parading them through the streets of Rome and the Roman citizens are just scorning them and making fun of them and mocking them. And that is the picture of what Jesus Christ did at the cross.

He made a public spectacle of Satan and it was at his weakest that Jesus Christ showed his great power.

[27:56] We also see God's wisdom at the cross. There's a problem. There's this problem that we have and that God has.

It's the problem that's motivating the whole book of Romans. How can God forgive and say you're just to sinners when they're not just?

How can God show mercy and justice at the same time? It's a problem no human could figure out. It was something that no one could understand.

How could God be just and the justifier of the unrighteous? Well, at the cross, he untied the knot.

He figured out what needed to be done.

He solved the problem. And at the cross, our substitute took our sin and we took his righteousness and God was just at the cross.

[28:58] And God is just when he says to a sinner, you're righteous because of the cross. God's glory shines greatest at the cross.

And that is absolutely fundamental for understanding what we are to be about in evangelism. That is absolutely fundamental if we are evangelize.

God's blazing glory, the center of all of his glory, is centered at the cross. That is where we see it at its brightest. It is not in the wonderful creation.

And we as reformed people have this great appreciation for the world around us, don't we? We love looking at the stars and saying, God, how great thou art.

And we love watching the falls of Niagara and how powerful that is. And that's just God working with his fingertips. But we see God's glory the brightest at the cross where the Son of God was made a bloody sacrifice.

[30:07] So that's the center of God's glory, if you will. And that is where God pursues his glory the most. So Jesus Christ, his work and his life and his death and his resurrection is God spreading his glory so others could see.

God's evangelistic work is centered at the cross. We see it in creation, we see his glory in creation, but we see it most at the cross. So Jesus Christ was the greatest evangelist that there ever has been because his life and his death was the gospel itself.

Everything that he did, everything that he was, said, this is the way to be saved, this is how great God is. Well, that's this foundation for doing evangelism.

Evangelism begins as God's mission, and it operates through Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection. But evangelism, God's work of evangelism doesn't stop until it reaches into our hearts. Because all those things could be true, but if God doesn't enter into our hearts and make us appreciate them and see, wow, Jesus Christ loved me and he gave himself for me, until that is beating in our hearts, then we're not ready to evangelize.

[31:38] And until that beats in our heart, God's work of evangelism isn't done. So, God's glory, God's glory is like the tsunami wave, right?

It starts way out there. It starts way out there in the center of the Trinity. Something so far removed from us that we'll never ever understand it, and it builds and it grows and it enters history in the person of Jesus Christ, but the waves break on the shore, if you will, when God invades our hearts and in our lives, and he breaks us, and we see how wonderful God is.

But that work hasn't done its, hasn't reached its fulfillment until we are so full that we have to tell other people. Because God's mission is not to save us and keep the glory inside of us, he wants it to overflow into our neighbors and our friends.

God's evangelistic mission hasn't reached its purpose until we're telling others about what God has done for us. Until we join God in his mission, then we haven't understood God's glory yet.

Until we've joined God in spreading his glory, then we haven't understood what God is doing. God's glory is doing.

[33:04] Let's talk about the implications. Two practical implications of all this theology. I understand this was very abstract. It was sort of out there.

But we're going to bring it in. We have to understand all that if we're going to do evangelism. But now it's time for practical implications of all that. The first is this.

Evangelism is something that we get to do. It's not something that we just have to do. It's something that we get to do. Evangelism is us joining God in his mission.

God is marching into the whole world. Jesus Christ invaded our world with the gospel. And now in evangelism, we get to join ranks with God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And that is a privilege. It's something that we get to do. It's not just something we have to do. Are we commanded to evangelize? Yes, we are.

[34:11] John 20, 21 says, as the Father has sent me, I am sending you. We are sent. Jesus was sent. We're sent. And we must go.

But it's a privilege. It's not just something we have to do. God is sending us to do what he's doing. God is sending us to work hand-in-hand with Jesus Christ.

And that's a privilege. It's a privilege that we don't deserve. And I think this is sort of why we're so backward about evangelizing so often. We view it legalistically.

We think, this is something I have to do or I'm not going to be a good Christian. and we beat ourselves up over it. And we look at it as something that God makes us do and we better do it or we're in trouble.

We're not what God wants us to be. Was that Jesus' attitude? No. Hebrews 10 says, when Jesus came into the world, he said, sacrifice an offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.

[35 : 18] Then I said, here I am. It's written about me in the scroll. I have come to do your will, O God. Jesus came with all of his heart into this world to spread God's glory.

This wasn't something that he had to do. This was something that he had the opportunity to do. Remember the incident at the Samaritan well with the Samaritan woman? Jesus was talking to that woman.

And his disciples came back with food and something to drink or food and Jesus said, I have food to eat that you don't know anything about. Evangelizing, telling others about God was food and drink to Jesus Christ.

And I don't know about you, but you don't have to argue with me to go to the dinner table. If you want to put food in front of me, I'll gladly eat it. And that's how Jesus looked at evangelism.

He enjoyed it. He loved it. It was nourishing. It gave him joy in his heart. It was something that he was commanded to do. He was sent from the Father.

[36 : 24] But it was more than that. It was something that he took enjoyment in. It's something that he got to do. We too often see evangelism as eating our vegetables. We have to do it.

It's no fun. Was that Paul's attitude? He said, Christ's love compels me. Paul didn't suffer shipwreck and beating and starvation and nakedness and all the things that he suffered so that he could do something that he had to do.

He did all those things. That was the cost of doing something that he had the privilege to do. Paul never got over God's grace and his mercy and his life.

Paul was a violent man and God made him into an apostle. Three times in the book of Acts, Paul is telling his story of how Jesus saved him. It was something that he never got over.

So evangelism for him wasn't just a chore. It wasn't eating his vegetables. It was a privilege. So if we're ever going to start evangelizing like we ought to, we need to change our attitude about it.

[37 : 32] It is not something that we just have to do. It's something that we get to do. God isn't pointing a gun at our head and saying, you do this or else. We get to join God.

we get to join God in this wonderful quest of telling others about him. So God is saying, come along, follow me. We're going to go talk to people about how good I am.

Jesus isn't saying, I saved you. Now you better tell others about me or you're an ungrateful wretch. He doesn't say that. He says, go and make disciples of all nations and surely I'm with you always, even to the end of the age.

I've always looked at that verse, and I think it's probably mostly true, but I've always looked at it in the sense of, you know what, we go and Jesus tags along and he helps us as we go and tell others. But could it be that he'll be with us because we're going to meet him along the way and doing what he's already doing, that we're going to meet him in relationships and in people because he's already at work.

[38 : 43] We run into him as he's at work and it's not the other way around. He doesn't tag along with us, we tag along with him. That's the first implication of the theology, that evangelism is something that you guys get to do.

You don't have to do it. No one's putting a gun to your head. The motivation isn't that. this is something that is a privilege. The second implication is that we can't glorify God unless we tell others about Jesus Christ.

God wasn't satisfied to make a world and watch people fall into sin. He wasn't satisfied to do good works, but he sent Jesus Christ to reveal himself more clearly.

So our wonderful lives of obedience, our freshly mown lawns, our good work ethic, our clean living, our well-behaved children, our financial uprightness, they don't glorify God unless we tell others

about Jesus.

And this is what I mean. Is God glorified in our obedience in all those areas? Yes. Yes. That's for sure. But is God's glory spread when we do those things, but we don't tell others about Jesus?

[40:02] No. No. No. We can live those wonderful lives, but if we don't tell people about Jesus, what do our lives say? What do all those good works say?

It says, I'm good and you're not. My life is all together and yours is not. I'm better than you. You need to try harder. You're a big mess.

So, our uninterpreted lives. When we don't tell other people about Jesus, what they do is actually lead people away from God.

They lead people away from Jesus than actually bringing them to him. So, it would have been better for those people to never have met us if we don't tell them about Jesus.

Do you understand that? Like, if they just see my good life and they say, oh, I want to do that. I've got to try harder. That's taking them away from Jesus instead of bringing them to Jesus if we don't tell them.

[41:06] So, we need to say, you know, the only reason, the only reason my life is like this is because of Jesus Christ.

The only reason my family has any semblance of being something good is because Jesus is good and let me tell you about him. we can't assume that they know.

We can't assume because they don't know. We can't assume that they'll figure it out. We have to open up our mouths and tell them. God spoke through Jesus Christ, and so we have to speak Jesus Christ to others, or there's just going to be a big misunderstanding.

Well, there's probably a hundred other implications, and we'll probably be talking more about those, but those are the first two. Evangelism is something that we get to do, and we have to tell others about Jesus or they're going to be led away from God instead of to him.

So let's repent. Let's repent of our slowness and our wrong attitudes about those things, and let's take joy. This is something that God is inviting us to. This is a privilege.

[42:19] He's inviting us to a banquet. He's inviting us to eat and drink and to find joy in telling others. He's inviting us to join him in his mission to spread his glory to the world.

Well, let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, only you can take these things and put them on people's hearts.

And so I pray that you would do that. If there was anything wrong or misunderstood, will you clear those things up and help us to grasp what you are doing, what you are going for, what your mission is, and will you give us grace to join you.

Will you help us to get over our fear of men and just our shyness or whatever is keeping us from joining you, and help us to, out of great joy, out of the love that you've shown us to go and tell others.

Father, your glory needs to be spread. People aren't worshipping you. People that should be worshipping you aren't worshipping you. And you have given us the task to go and make disciples.

[43:37] Will you help us to be faithful in the duty that you've given to us, but will you help us to see it as more of something that we have to do? It's something that you've loved us and you've given us to do.

Lord Jesus, will you work in us, forgive us of our sins, and help us to be more obedient. It's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.