

WHEELERSBURG BAPTIST CHURCH **“Nurturing a Passion for the Glory of God”**

November 7, 2010

READ PSALM 57

¹ Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. ² I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me. ³ He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me; Selah God sends his love and his faithfulness. ⁴ I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts—men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords. ⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth. ⁶ They spread a net for my feet—I was bowed down in distress. They dug a pit in my path—but they have fallen into it themselves. Selah ⁷ My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music. ⁸ Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. ⁹ I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. ¹⁰ For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies. ¹¹ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

If you carefully consider this Psalm of David, you will discover that in the midst of his overwhelming problems, he cried out to God for help and protection. You will also begin to understand that this man had a passion for God’s reputation and glory among the nations. David had a passion for God to be exalted and praised in all the earth, and he wanted His glory to fill all the earth. Today I am going to speak to you about nurturing a passion for the glory of God. I’d like to begin by helping us understand the word “passion” in the context of this message.

How would you define passion?

Here are a couple of dictionary definitions:

an object of desire or deep interest ardent affection : LOVE

a strong liking or desire for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept

Here’s another: Driving and motivating desire that keep us going and touches our souls.

So what is your passion?

What do you live for? What do you long for? What floats your boat? What flips your switch? What fills your tank? What excites you? What brings you gladness of heart and delight? What upsets you? What moves you to tears? What are you deeply grateful for? What puts a spring in your step, and delights your heart? What causes you to sing? What do you love to talk about? When all is quiet and settles, what do you think about?

Listen to these positive words that describe passion: Excitement; attention, interest, curiosity, drive, anticipation, longing for,

Listen to these negative words that describe passion: Jealousy, anger, disappointment; a fear, and a dread.

Why do you get out of bed in the morning? What keeps you going? What captures your attention and energy?

Is it food, money, pleasure, approval, admiration, esteem, respect, reputation, stuff, experiences, fantasy, vacation, Christmas morning, a hobby, sports, work, music, King's Island, movies, ministry, clothes, shopping, entertainment, self actualization, personal achievement, grandchildren, children, your relationships, your spouse, your girlfriend, your children, some project, the boss, my employees, the neighbors, friends, enemies?

All good questions when we are trying to understand our passion and what we really love.

This message is primarily for those of you who have said you want to follow Jesus Christ – on His terms, and live as a member of His Kingdom with Him as the King. I am speaking to you also realizing that if you are like me, at times you realize that these passions and desires get out of control, and they eclipse your passion for the glory of God. I am speaking to you if you want to nurture and rekindle your passion for God and His glory.

Where we will begin is to consider and understand that God has a passion, and it is for His own glory. Turn to Exodus 20.

Read Exodus 20:1-6

And God spoke all these words, saying,² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."³ "You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

In verse 5, God states that He is a jealous God. On the surface, that seems a bit odd, because the word and emotion attached to jealousy in human experience is often sinful and wicked. We are not talking about human jealousy. Unlike us, who are often sinful and unholy in our jealousies and desires, God is holy and pure, and His desires are holy and pure as well. God says clearly that He is a jealous God, and He will not share His glory with anyone or anything else. What is this attribute? God will not share His glory with another. He is jealous, with a passion, for His glory and worship, for He alone is worthy of all attention, praise, honor, and adoration.

This concept is revealed when Jesus lays out the requirements for discipleship. Jesus says that we must love the Lord God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In fact, He said to be His disciple we have to forsake all other affections and pursuits and give all to Him. God is not mocked, and will not take back seat to anyone or anything. Any affection, person, or thing that we place ahead of Him is considered an idol. Jesus said you cannot serve two masters, because you will always love one and hate the other. The bottom line is God is passionate for His glory and preeminence. Everything in all creation will ultimately bow the knee and bring honor and glory and submissive obedience to Him. This is His agenda and His passion, and if we want to

grow in our passion for His glory, we first must recognize that there IS no other agenda other than His glory.

Secondly, to make God's glory our priority, we must recognize and savor His glory. So where can we see and experience the glory of God?

WE CAN SEE GOD'S GLORY IN HIS CREATION

Psalm 19:1 states *"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge."*

When is the last time you slowed down and invested some time out of town away from the city lights to just gaze up into the heavens? Do you observe and study and inquire about the world around you with a curiosity? God displays his handiwork in creation, from the minute cellular level of life to the amazing expanse of the universe. I encourage you to ponder the works of creation, and allow your amazement of God's glory to grow. Listen to the following set of facts, and stand in awe of God, the Creator:

The sun is so large that, if it were hollow, it could contain more than one million worlds the size of our earth. There are stars in space so large that they could easily hold 500 million suns the size of ours. There are about 100 billion stars in the average galaxy. When I hear numbers like 100 billion, I have no comprehension. If you can follow me, this may give you some idea. If we were to count 250 a minute—day and night—it would take us about 1,000 years to count to 100 billion. That's how many stars are in an average galaxy. And there are at least 100 million galaxies in the known universe.

How does that make you feel? Do you have a little deeper sense of the glory of God? The creation is God's way of displaying His magnificence, majesty, and glory. Enjoy it. Study it. Savor it. Appreciate it. Be overwhelmed with the vastness, beauty, intelligence, and creativity of God Himself that is reflected in the great things He has done. Appreciate and wonder at the Creator who made it all out of nothing by merely speaking a word.

Another place you can see God's glory is in His expression of common grace to all mankind.

GOD REVEALS HIS GLORY IN HIS KINDNESS TOWARD ALL MEN

In every human being, you can see the fingerprint of the creator. In every smile, every tear, every laugh and cry, as well as expression of kindness, mercy, and human love, God's presence and glory is revealed. The fact that human beings are caring and compassionate at all is an expression of God's kindness. The inner compass of conscience, that sense of right and wrong, is an expression of God's image in every person. Consider the ability for artistic expression in human beings. That is also a reflection of God's image. The fact that people have the capacity to imagine and create in their mind and then materialize those thoughts is a reflection of their Creator. When an artist paints a picture, a composer writes a beautiful melody, a potter crafts a vase, an architect designs an elegant building – all testify to the image of God in his highest expression of creation, mankind. If you want to kindle a deeper passion for God's glory, recognize his presence and signature in the beauty of human creativity and expression.

God reveals Himself in creation, in common grace, in human conscience and creativity. But the tragedy is the response of mankind to this majestic display of God's kindness and glory. Because man is a sinner, he responds in self exaltation and rebellion toward the Creator. Though worship and gratitude toward God is the appropriate response to the display of His kindness and glory, the Bible in Romans 1 says that instead of being thankful to God, man worships the creation. As a result, they invoke the wrath and judgment of God, and God gives them over to the result of their rebellion, which is depravity and death. As His redeemed people, this should warn us to develop a hatred in our hearts for any sign of ingratitude, pride, or idolatry. God alone is worthy of all praise and honor as we enjoy what He has given to us.

So we see the glory of God in creation, in common grace, and in mankind. And now, we turn to the fullest expression of God's glory, the person and work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

GOD FULLY REVEALS HIS GLORY IN THE PERSON AND WORK OF HIS SON CLIMAXED AT THE CROSS

If you want to fuel the fire in your heart for the glory of God, you must invest time and thought into knowing and understanding the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is the full and complete expression of God's glory. God has graced us with the Scriptures that expound the fullness of God's glory in Christ. Every passage and story and teaching is there to in some way reveal the greatness and glory of God in Christ – from Genesis to Revelation. And in the heart of the Bible we have four specific accounts, the gospels, that provide intimate and detailed accounts of Jesus' life, teaching, and work on this earth. In studying, observing, and admiring Jesus Christ in the gospels, you will vastly deepen your passion for the glory of God. He was and is the personification of God's glory. Consider His birth, predicted centuries in advance of its happening; the miracle of divinity taking on human flesh and limitation; the depth of humility and meekness that God would become flesh and dwell among us; the glorious revelation of His power in the miracles – the calming of a storm with a word, the feeding of 5,000 people with a prayer over a small lunch, the conversion of water into wine for a wedding celebration, the deliverance of bound people from demonic possession, the re-creation of eyes and limbs, and the calling forth of physically dead people to life. God's glory was showcased in the life of Jesus Christ.

But wonder of all wonders, the King of the universe, the very Creator Himself, the omnipotent, omniscient, ruler of all – submits Himself to the ridicule, hatred, torture, abuse, and utter disrespect of rebel sinners – for the purpose of rescuing the Father's chosen people from their depravity and wickedness and reconciling them to God; The Son of God willingly accepting the guilt and punishment due sinners in their stead. He drank the bitter cup of God's judgment for sinners to satisfy the justice and holiness of His Father, and made the way for men to be forgiven and reconciled to God. At the cross, there was a collision and explosion of God's wrath and judgment and simultaneously a pouring out of His grace and mercy. This is the ultimate display of His glory. The depth of love and mercy expressed for His people is unfathomable. As vast as the universe, as intricate and diverse the creation, as beautiful the creativity of human beings – it all pales when compared to the amazing pageant of the glory of God at Calvary. The cross is the ultimate revelation of God's glory and magnificence, for at one moment in time and in one act of merciful sacrifice we see the depth of our depravity, the fury of a Holy righteous God toward

sinners, and the amazing mercy and kindness of God toward those same sinners as He unleashes His judgment on His Son. As we ponder the cross, we sense the fear of God in judgment, and the mercy of God in forgiveness. If you want your passion for His glory to be reignited, open your Bible and meditate on the awful beauty of your Savior dying for you. Find books and writings that drive you into meditation on the depths of Calvary. And though you will be overcome with personal gratitude for what Christ did for you in saving you from eternal damnation, understand and appreciate the ultimate purpose for this amazing sacrificial act was not our wellbeing, but God's glory and praise.

Ephesians 1: ¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

His plan is all about His glory that is showcased in His expression of grace and mercy to helpless, fallen, selfish, rebels.

To appreciate God's glory, we must also understand and consider the future.

GOD WILL FULLY UNVEIL HIS GLORY TO ALL CREATION WHEN CHRIST RETURNS

Not only is God's glory revealed in creation, mankind, the incarnation, and the life, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a future day when His glory will be fully displayed to creation that will result in the full restoration and deliverance of the fallen world.

Romans 8: ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. ¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Beloved, what we can see now of the glory of God is obscured. We walk in the present time by faith and not by sight. What we see around us is marred, scarred and fallen. But when our Lord appears in His second coming, He is going to unveil to all creation His redeemed people, fully

mature and complete. Their bodies will be made alive and changed, and death, suffering, and pain will be no more. The glory that will be displayed in God's people will be so powerful, it will liberate the whole of creation and they will be ushered into the glorious freedom of the children of God. That is our hope.

So now I want to get really practical and talk about our day-to-day experience. How can we nurture a passion for the glory of God? I really think it is simple. What you feed grows. What you invest your time and think about will dominate your life. I hope this morning as we have meditated on the greatness of God that your passion for His glory was encouraged. If you want to increase your passion for the glory of God each day, you need to be with Jesus every day. When I spend time with Jesus, it shows. When you spend time around the campfire, people can smell it. When you spend time at the gym, people can see it. When you are with someone you really love, people can feel it.

There's a story in the book of Acts about Peter and John that illustrates this principle. They had been preaching, and many people were believing and following Christ. As a result they got thrown into jail. As the religious officials started to interrogate them, Peter preached the gospel in response and finished his message as recorded in Acts 4:12

¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. ¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

When the glory of God starts to shine in your life, people will notice. They won't always applaud, in fact, as the light of God's glory starts to shine through you, it will uncover and expose their need, their lack, their sin, their guilt. If they don't want to face it and deal with it, they won't like the light. But our response must be to continue to shine.

If we want to nurture and develop a passion for the glory of God, we need to spend time with Jesus, every day, and receive His instruction and light, and then walk in the light and let it shine. Again, I want to be practical. What does it look like when we walk in the light?

- We live a life of love – God first, others second
- We live a life of submission – God first, others second
- We live a life of gratitude – for those things that please you, and those things that prune you
- We live a life of sacrifice for others - we go the extra mile
- We live in community – the local church is the center of our identity
- We live a life of humility – we gladly give God the credit and glory
- It is live a life of grace – we are easy to be with
- It is live a life of joy – we bring smiles, not frowns
- It is live a life of encouragement – we build others up, not tear them down
- It is live a life of purity – we live open lives in the light and don't hide in darkness

If you have received Christ as your Lord and Savior, then He is inviting you to come and spend time with Him so that He can fill you with His teaching, wisdom, joy, and power – for the goal of displaying the glory of God. It really comes down to priorities.

Revelation 4:14-21

¹⁴ *“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:*

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. ¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶

So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

¹⁷ *You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.*

¹⁹ *Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. ²⁰ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

²¹ *To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

If the Spirit is dealing with your heart through the Word, I would encourage you to do something – today. Don’t put this off. Do it this afternoon. Get alone somewhere, and spend some time with Jesus. Open your Bible, and let Him talk to you. God has a passion for His glory, and His passion can become your passion. The door is unlocked. Open it and walk through it and get re-energized and reconnected with Christ.