

“Glorified”

Psalm 1: John 17:6-19; Isaiah 43:1-7

May 20, 2012

Pastor James York

Mollie was a very popular girl in school. She excelled both in academics as well as being a multi-sport athlete. As the star basketball player, it was shocking to her coach when she requested that all of the players on her team would be given the same opportunity to play. Mollie was volunteering to spend some time on the bench so every teammate would be able to take their turn. The coach denied her request. To her dismay, the coach reminded her how important she was to the team and that winning was their main objective.

Mollie’s faith enabled her to see matters differently. Mollie saw the injustice of elitism. She was able to see that by overvaluing top performers, others were left feeling insignificant, expendable and deprived of a sense of worth.

The coach and our “*winning at all cost*” culture does not purposely set out to minimize, devalue and exclude the benched players. However, by placing the ultimate value on winning, people will be affected in a negative way. It erodes values, sportsmanship, camaraderie, and joy. A singular focus on winning leads to fierce competition between teammates; destroys team and creates an environment where shortcuts and cheating flourish.

Mollie was a competitor, enjoyed competition, always strived to do her very best, played to win and enjoyed winning. However Mollie believed it would be better to spend some time on the bench and lose if it meant every player could participate, be valued and celebrated. Mollie couldn’t change her coach’s mind so she invited the whole team over to her house and celebrated the team members who never got a chance to play. She celebrated their hard work, dedication, sportsmanship and passion for the game that enabled them to remain on the team just to practice.

Jesus prays for his disciples, for us, before his death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. **John 17:6-9 "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine;**

and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

What does it mean that Jesus is glorified in us? How is God's glory revealed? Why will the world hate us for revealing God's glory?

There is a huge difference between God's glory and worldly glory. Jesus being glorified in us means that we are being united with Jesus by love as we abide in Jesus. It is all of us, we are the branches, and we are being firmly connected to Jesus, as Jesus is the vine. Jesus' prayer for us is that we become one with God and each other. Jesus prays for us all to be unified in one worldwide community; one harmonious family. Jesus prays that we would be so close to each other that we are as close as Jesus is to our God the Creator. We are glorified when love draws us together with God and each other. Just as close as Jesus, the Creator, and the Holy Spirit are, together, making them God, one in three persons, the Trinity. Godly glory is the intimate relationship between Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Creator, and the intimate relationship between our Triune God, and us, and the intimate relationship between all people, united by God's steadfast everlasting love.

Worldly glory is a sharp contrast as we separate ourselves from others, making us elite, self-sufficient, winners. Worldly glory hungers to be set apart, to be outstanding, to elevate ourselves on the backs of others. Worldly glory urges us to win the championship at all costs. Worldly glory is a farce that we cannot succeed in on our own. We are all dependent on God's grace and each other.

Deep down, we long for Godly glory, for loving relationships, and to belong. However, we are often seduced into taking glory by alienating, severing, excommunicating, or not loving. Having to win or to be better than others is what starts our judging others, and we begin to not like the weak. To protect ourselves, we make barriers, glass ceilings and ignore the unique gifts and needs of others. God's glory undoes the separation that the worldly glory system churns out.

Jesus prays for our safety because Jesus knows that the world will hate us for living Godly glory. Worldly glory has employees striving to be better than their peers, to

climb the corporate ladder, to get ahead at all costs. Godly glory has co-workers working together as a team, empowering each other, listening to each other, honoring each other, and maximizing each person's strengths. Godly glory gives you sincere love for every person in your work place, school, team and club.

Worldly glory drives politicians to fight, to demonize their opponents, to not settle for anything less than their way, including the downfall of their opponents. Godly glory has politicians respecting each other, really listening to each other, working together, loving each other, and working together to find the best, most loving way, for all of the people they represent.

Worldly glory drives churches to compete against each other, to fight over perspective members, to preserve the institution, to force their beliefs as the only way upon others. Godly glory inspires each church to love all other churches, to work together, to celebrate their unique beliefs while respecting, learning and celebrating each other's unique beliefs. Godly glory empowers, values and cherishes each and every person.

How far should the Apostle Paul's vision of the church, being a body made up of unique yet essential members, be extended? Was Paul talking about just one particular church? Was he speaking of all the churches in a denomination? Or was he including all churches? Should Paul's way of working together, loving each other, and glorifying each other, be lived by us in our families, at work, in politics and in every aspect of life? Recall that in Paul's metaphor the inferior and weakest members were just as valuable and needed for the wellbeing of the body as the superior and strongest members. If one member suffered, all suffered. If one member celebrated, all celebrated.

Jesus prays for us to not be intimidated by the hate we will encounter. There will be those that will not receive us well when they see us love each other, trying to unite in love with everyone, and promoting Godly glory. Jesus prays for us to have courage to go out into all the world and spread God's love, to be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. Jesus prays for our safety. Praying that we will not give into division, elitism, worldly glory, and praying for our safety that comes from God's steadfast everlasting love for us.

The prophet Isaiah declared. **Isaiah 43:1-7** “But now, God's Message, the God who made you in the first place, Jacob, the One who got you started, Israel: "Don't be afraid, I have redeemed you. I have called your name. You are mine. When you are in over your head, I will be there with you. When you are in rough waters, you will not go down. When you are between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end—Because I am God, your personal God, The Holy of Israel, your Savior. I paid a huge price for you: all of Egypt, with rich Cush and Seba thrown in! That's how much you mean to me! That's how much I love you! I would sell off the whole world to get you back, trade the creation just for you. So do not be afraid: I'm with you. I'll round up all your scattered children, pull them in from east and west. I will send

orders north and south: 'Send them back. Return my sons from distant lands, my daughters from faraway places. I want them back, every last one who bears my name, every man, woman, and child Whom I created for my glory, yes, personally formed and made each one.'"

Jesus spoke of the power of God's love, abiding in love, loving one another, loving God so that we may enjoy God's joy. The very first psalm contrast the two ways of living. Psalm 1 "Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Meditating on the law of the Lord is a little like marinating something. Glory is given to the chef when all the flavors come together and permeate the food making it all delicious. The law of the Lord explains to us how to love in every situation and how we are loved by God. Glory is given to God when people come together in love, when love permeates us and we love everyone and God.

Jesus gave us two symbols, two sacraments of Godly glory; the Lord's Supper and baptism. In the Lord's Supper we unite together in love and celebrate our unity with God. We all become one in Holy Communion by Agape love. We celebrate one baptism, for we all belong to God. Once baptized we all share the name Christian. A Christian is to be different from the world in those respects in which Jesus was different. Jesus was always inviting everyone, even outsiders, enemies, and notorious sinners into a loving community.

Does striving for Godly glory and for a loving community with everyone mean we do not compete and do our best? The Apostle Paul said he runs the race of life to win. It has been said that the glory of God is a person being fully alive. Jesus prayed for us to be sanctified, that is, to grow into the likeness of Jesus. It means to grow into and live our full potential, to fully love.

In high school I had the privilege of playing football for head coach Reed Welch. Right from the start he was a different coach. He promised that every player who practiced and fully participated while striving to do their best for three years, would play when they were a senior. This created a very different team atmosphere. Instead of competing against your teammates for playing time, we played together, encouraged and pushed each other as we helped each other get better. When a mistake was made such as a missed tackle, a weak block or penalty, the whole team, even those on the sidelines, would run the dreaded burners. When a play was executed correctly we all celebrated and were recognized together. Coach Welch adjusted the plays to match our strengths. He

created a play that featured, at some point, every one of us, even Mark who was just 112 pounds. The result was that we came together as a team. I will admit that in my selfish moments as a senior, I did not like the “everyone plays rule” because it restricted my playing time. However it made me a better player and teammate. It deepened my bond with Greg and Glen for together we shared a position. We became better communicators sharing effective strategies. We were each others biggest cheerleaders. Coach Welch, along with all of us, played to win, however we were not just playing for ourselves we wanted to win for everyone on the team. I have played on several teams, a few had more victories with one of them being a championship team. I realized that none were more fun, none caused more growth, more character development, more camaraderie, more teamwork or a more loving community than that football team. Jesus prays for us to be glorified, to be one with each other and God, as the Holy Trinity are one. Amen