

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 48 Sunday 02 December_2018.

The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

(Psalm 19:1). Written by David who as a shepherd would have spent many nights in the fields looking up to the stars, with his back resting against a stone or on the hard earth.

READ LUKE 2: 1 – 20.

It's appropriate in the season of Advent – the season at the darkest time of the year that we reflect on the GLORY of GOD and *GIVING GLORY*.

Agreement across a range of Christians that human beings are made in the image of God with a primary purpose:

Presbyterian foundational belief: Chief end of man (a human being) is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Ignatian Society of Jesus: AMDG - all or everything for the greater glory of God.

At the birth of Jesus when the angels of the LORD God appeared to the shepherds in the fields ***the glory of the LORD shone around them, and they were terrified. V9.***

They literally feared fear. That which was invisible ordinarily to the human eye became visible.

At the announcement of the birth of the Saviour and Christ the Lord...al heaven (a heavenly army) broke out in praise of God and were saying ***v14 GLORY to God in the highest (places), and on earth peace to those with whom he is pleased (people of goodwill).***

We need to look at and consider what it means for the “heavens” to speak and sing out praises and glory to God.

I hope that through the teaching on the Sundays of this year I have developed and laid out the foundation of the conviction that it is in “becoming fully human” we bring glory to God.

To glorify (DOXAZO) comes from the Greek word for glory – DOXA which means to extol, to praise and magnify (not so much to enlarge the reality of God but to enable us to see God more clearly and so sing God).

GOD is glorious, and we can bring glory to God: that's 2 different but linked things.

Jesus teaches his disciples that they can bring glory to God by living intimately in him and bearing much fruit. (*John 15:8*)

But even if we did nothing God would still be glorious – God emanates glory by virtue of his being. *V9 the glory of the LORD shone over them.*

God's glory is the self-manifestation and revelation of all that God IS and DOES (God's being and doing).

God manifests all his goodness supremely in JESUS CHRIST and not just in creation.

John in his Gospel takes particular care on several occasions to spell out this truth. Jesus himself is aware that in his life, death and resurrection he is doing everything for God's glory. Facing his suffering and death he prays, ***Father, bring glory to your Name. (John 12: 28)*** The Father's voice replies, ***I have brought glory to it, and I will do so again.***

John says that various miracles performed by Jesus are on order to bring glory to God and the Son of God. E.g. the miracle of the raising of Lazarus (*John 11: 4*) and of course in the resurrection, glorification and ascension of Jesus to glory. (*John 12:16, 23; 13:31; 17: 1,5 Jesus shared the Father's glory BEFORE the world began*).

John is not the only writer to feature the glory that Jesus shares with the Father God. The *writer to the Hebrews* says, ***He (Jesus) reflects the brightness of God's GLORY and is the exact likeness of God's own being, sustaining the universe with his powerful word (RHEMA).***

After achieving forgiveness for human sins, he sat down in heaven at the right-hand side of God, the Supreme Power. (Hebrews 1:3)

The OT and NT writers tell us that: *The heavens declare the glory of God...*

The Gospel writers, the writers of the Epistles including Hebrews and John who recorded the Revelation of Jesus Christ are all aware of a world/ a universe which includes many things that are invisible to the human eye apart from great tools of magnification like telescopes and things that we will not see without supernatural revelation of God. In a strange often cross-over of descriptions of angels (heavenly beings) with heavenly bodies – stars, fire, wind and angels are used almost interchangeably in Scripture as messengers of God.

Job 38: 7 While the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted together... (creation)

Do the stars sing? Well if they do – we do not hear them because of the vacuum of space but now NASA tells us that they do “sing” – emitting pulses of light and vibrations from their surfaces. This was something the writers of the Bible told us thousands of years ago.

Psalms 104: 4 You use the wind as your messengers and flashes of lightning as your servants. The writer to the Hebrews echoes the Psalmist: ***But about the angels God said, God makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire. (1;7)***

The heavens do declare the glory of God – whether that is either or both heavenly beings or heavenly bodies.

Paul writes to the Corinthian church about the resurrection of the New Earth 1 Corinthians 15: 41 The sun, moon and stars each have their distinctive and different type of glory.

The heavenly beings and the heavenly bodies declare the GLORY of GOD and we were also created to glorify God and enjoy God forever. Left alone like the shepherds we would probably just get on with life: working, sleeping, eating, working, sleeping, relating and occasionally staring into the stars. BUT God wants to reveal to us that there is so much more than simply “meets the eye”.

Therefore, on the night over Bethlehem – “the people who walked in darkness saw a great light”.

All the heavenly beings and heavenly bodies too I’m sure were involved in singing and declaring the GLORY of GOD in the birth of the Saviour of the World. They attributed honour to GOD in the HIGHEST PLACES and in the lowliest places too. They pronounced PEACE on planet Earth. (The Earth also orbited and brought some glory to God in part). The GLORY of God manifests itself in the heights and now even the depths and everything in between.

Having seen the baby placed in a manger (Luke 2: 20) the Shepherds – those tough, marginalised, lonely men returned to the fields singing praises and GLORIFYING GOD for everything they had seen and heard. Everything the heavens had declared that night was true – and it was glorious.