

To God Alone Be The Glory (1 Chronicles 16:23-36)

- 1) Only to God
- 2) Always to God

It's been 13 weeks now that we've been looking at the times of Martin Luther and the Reformation. 13 weeks where we've looked at our great Lutheran heritage from a number of different angles. How it is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Scripture alone, that we learn what God's salvation is. What a precious gift the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are. Different ways we can serve God and spread his light in our Christian vocation. Can you believe all the theological ground we've covered since June 18th? Perhaps you're ready for a change to look at God's Word without the lenses of history. Perhaps you're sad that the only way you can get your Reformation fix at Grace Lutheran is by attending Pastor Kassulke's church history class on Wednesday. But whether you've been here all 13 Sundays or this is your first one, this morning we get to see where the entire Reformation ends up. It's giving glory to God for what he's done for us.

I'm guessing you were intrigued by our 1st Lesson from the Old Testament book of 1 Chronicles. What prompted King David to commission this lengthy song giving glory to God? Well, things were looking pretty good for the young king for the first time in a long while. 5 years before, the prophet Samuel had anointed David to be Israel's next king.ⁱ But the previous king, Saul, wasn't willing to hand the reins over to young David. Instead he chased after David trying to kill him. But after Saul committed suicide,ⁱⁱ David finally took the throne he was promised 5 years earlier.ⁱⁱⁱ He raised up a mighty army, captured Jerusalem, and beat back Israel's enemies with God's divine help.^{iv} Things were finally going David's way. And what better way to celebrate than by bringing the Ark of the Covenant to the capital city Jerusalem? For 400+ years, God's presence and favor was shown through the Ark of the Covenant. To bring the Ark into Jerusalem was a reason for great celebration! So what better way could David give glory to God than with this song from 1 Chronicles chapter 16?

But you know, it would have been easy for David to give himself some of the credit when the Ark of the Covenant came into Jerusalem. Who was it that twice declined to kill Saul while on the run for his life?^v David. Who was it that organized the troops and gave the orders? King David. Who was it that commissioned the temple musicians to sing this impressive song we're looking

at?^{vi} Again King David. As the crowds gathered to celebrate the Ark of the Covenant's arrival in Jerusalem, would you blame David if he kept some of the glory for himself?

It's human nature to glorify ourselves. Say you were wise this coming school year to put all your projects and papers on a schedule. Who gets the glory when you come to the test prepared and receive good grades? Ourselves. Even though it's God who gave us the mindset to plan ahead. Maybe you're getting ready to reach your dreams or to move up the career ladder. When the time for celebration comes, who gets the glory? Probably not God even though he's the one who gave you your job and the possibility to reach for the stars. Perhaps you puff out your chest when you look at all the times Satan has tempted you and you've turned him down. The Apostle Peter calls Satan a roaring lion.^{vii} But to you, he seems more like a whimpering kitty. Whether it's the successes of this life or the one to come, we don't like giving glory to God alone. Because the more God gets the glory, the less there is for us.

But this life isn't about glorifying ourselves. It's about glorifying God and living according to his will as our Savior did. Jesus, who is God and has all the glory and power of God, humbled himself to walk upon this earth. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Jesus to give up the full and frequent use of his divine power so he could be our substitute? I remember how difficult it was for me when I sprained my ankle back in college. Whenever I went up or down steps, I winced in pain. I couldn't walk fast enough across campus to make it to class on time. It was hard enough for me to give up the full use of my ankle for a week or so. Many of you have gone through health problems far worse than my sprained ankle. You know more than I do how frustrating it is when you can't make full use of your mind or body as before. I'm guessing none of you would choose to go through these hardships. But for Jesus who gave up the full use of his divine power for 33 years? That's something you and I can't begin to understand.

But what makes Jesus' choice to humble himself so amazing is the reason why he did it. Jesus made himself like you and me, except without sin,^{viii} so that he could save us and in turn bring glory to God. Because it's through Christ that we see God's true glory. God isn't content to simply create the world and keep it running.^{ix} He loves you and me so much he sent his own Son to suffer his wrath for our sinful pride and vainglory. As we read in the Gospel this morning where Jesus prays to God the Father in John chapter 17, **"Father, the time has come. Glorify**

your Son, that your Son may glorify you....that [your believing children] may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”^x Death is God’s punishment for sin. He declares that the soul that sins is the soul that dies.^{xi} You and I have sinned with taking glory for ourselves that should have gone to God. By living life for ourselves instead of according to God’s will. But the time had come for Jesus to die on the cross for of our sins. There is now forgiveness for you and me.

Go to your Lord in repentance for what you’ve done. He will wash your sins away and declare you not guilty. Give glory to God alone for he is the only one who makes your spiritual status clean. When good things happen to you, give glory to God by saying a prayer of thanksgiving. When you achieve your goals or pass the big test, give glory to God for giving you the mind and abilities to get what you were gunning for. As you wait for your home in heaven, give glory to God by coming to his Word and strengthening your faith so you can fight off the roaring lion that is Satan. To God alone be the glory. To him alone and always to him.

It can be difficult to remember to always give God the glory. Just because we start off on the right foot doesn’t mean we’re guaranteed to stay on the path. King David started off on the right foot by commissioning the glorious song in 1 Chronicles chapter 16. But he has his low moments in the 40 years^{xii} he ruled over the nation of Israel. He took credit for what God had done and people suffered for it.^{xiii} It’s also a challenge for us to always give God the glory. Our sinful nature will tell us to take pride in what we do at the expense of God’s glory. Satan will tempt us to build ourselves up. Or when we feel the law’s attack, Satan will accuse us of not being good enough for God’s forgiveness. But the glory is always God’s.

In David’s song from 1 Chronicles chapter 16, he lists 4 reasons why we give glory to God. First because there is no god like our God.^{xiv} Every other power and force in this world pales in comparison to his power, wisdom, and love. Second because not only has God created the world, but nothing can shake it unless he allows it.^{xv} Third because he will come to the help of those who cry out to him.^{xvi} When something is pressing you down or your sins terrify you, God will be there with you. To give you the strength to endure the hardship and bring you to the safety of his loving arms. Fourth because God will make all things right when he comes to judge the living and the dead.^{xvii} Those who believe that Jesus is their Savior from sin will enter heaven. Those who believe anything else will suffer in hell. But there’s a fifth reason today’s believers know about. The cross that Christ

died on. What David looked forward to, we walk in the shadow of. For God's loving power culminated on the cross. The forgiveness that Christ won on that cross is what we live in every day of our lives.

Always give God the glory he's due. He created and preserves all things in this world. He gave us Jesus and faith in him so that we don't have to worry if heaven is ours. He forgives us every time we withhold God's glory for ourselves. He reassures us that he loves stumbling sinners like you and me.

Martin Luther knew that the glory goes to God. He and the other Reformers did a great deal of good for all of Christendom by bringing back the pure teaching of the gospel. The new Lutheran church body which gives the Bible the authority and respect it deserves as God's Word. The common people of Luther's time were able to read the Bible in their own language and learn what God promises to sinners. But through it all, these men and women knew to give the glory to God. For it wasn't their words and actions that made the difference. It was God and him alone. In a sermon from 1522, Luther said, **"In short, I will preach [the gospel, teach it, write it, but I will constrain no one by force, for faith must come freely without compulsion. Take myself as an example. I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never with force. I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept (cf. Mark 4:26-29), or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything."**^{xviii} It's been a blessing these past 13 weeks to look at the times of the Reformation and study the truths brought back to light 500 years ago. I pray that we have the same thankful hearts the Reformers had by giving God the glory he deserves. Amen.

End Notes

ⁱ 1 Samuel 16.

ⁱⁱ 1 Chronicles 10.

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 Chronicles 11:1-3.

^{iv} 1 Chronicles 11:4-14:17.

^v 1 Samuel 24,26.

^{vi} 1 Chronicles 16:23-36.

^{vii} 1 Peter 5:8.

^{viii} Hebrews 4:14,15.

^{ix} Theistic evolution and deism limit God's power to this point. Theistic evolution is a vain attempt to harmonize evolution and creation which teaches that God created the building blocks of the world and then stepped aside. Evolution came into play to bring things to where they are today. Deism is the false teaching that God is like an aloof watchmaker. He got everything going and occasionally steps in to correct things. But he doesn't have any personal interactions with people.

^x John 17:1b,3b. All biblical quotations are from the 1984 New International Version unless otherwise stated.

^{xi} Ezekiel 18:20.

^{xii} 2 Samuel 5:4.

^{xiii} 2 Samuel 24 is one such example.

^{xiv} 1 Chronicles 16:25b-27.

^{xv} 1 Chronicles 16:30.

^{xvi} 1 Chronicles 16:35.

^{xvii} 1 Chronicles 16:33b.

^{xviii} Martin Luther *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN: 2012), 293,294.