

# God's Message to Us in John 13-21

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## **Introduction**

Last week in our sermon series in which I am preaching through all the books in the Bible, we had part one of the gospel of John.

- Mostly, I preach one sermon on each book, but with John, there was so much to cover that it is one of the books I decided to preach two sermons on.
- Last week we covered the first 12 chapters, and today I plan to cover chapter 13 through 21—the rest of the book.

I will begin with a review from last week, and then we will launch into the new content.

I mentioned to you last week that John is a bit different than the other three gospels (which are called the synoptic gospels because of their similarity)

- We saw that the synoptic gospels have their differences...
  - Matthew was written to the Jews, and stresses that Jesus is the promised Messiah and King of the Jews whom they rejected and the Gentiles are coming to.
  - Mark was written to a Roman audience, and it shows Jesus by His actions more than by His words, and presents Him as one who has all authority, yet pours out His life for others—uses His authority for the good of others.
  - Luke was written to the Greek audience, and gives us an orderly history of the life of Christ. As Greeks tended to value ideas, sometimes without action, Luke emphasises that true disciples must leave all to follow Jesus. He also emphasises that Jesus came for the lowly and the outcast.
- But these three gospels are the same in that they, for the most part, focus on Jesus' ministry in Galilee and include many of the same miracles and sayings of His there.
  - John, on the other hand, focuses on Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem...
    - Of course, all of them have a full account of His crucifixion and resurrection at Jerusalem, but John speaks of what Jesus did when He went up to Jerusalem for the feasts and such while living in Galilee.
    - John also includes an extended discourse of Jesus in the upper room on the night He was betrayed, which we will look at today...
    - After that, he has his own account of Jesus' arrest, death, burial, resurrection, and post resurrection appearances which we will also look at today.

We saw that John's purpose is clearly expressed in chapter 20, the second to last chapter of John, where he says in verse 30-31:

- **John 20:30-31: And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**
- John sticks closely to this purpose all the way through his gospel.
  - For that reason, he often refers to the testimony of God, to the testimony of people that Jesus healed, or to his own testimony.

- For example, at the end of the book he says, in John 21:24: **This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.**
- And related to this is much talk about *believing*—not just having faith, but actively believing on Jesus...
  - And he talks about light, truth, and eternal life.
  - He refers to miracles as *signs* that show who Jesus is.
  - He talks about the *authority* of Jesus and His words.
  - He speaks of the *new birth* and of Holy Spirit who enables us to believe.
  - He stresses that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, and often points to that.
  - And he includes a lot of individual personal responses of faith.
- Everything focuses on believing that Jesus is the Christ and having life by Him.
- This is helpful for unbelievers as well as believers...
  - for unbelievers, that they might believe and be saved...
  - And for believers, that they might be strengthened in their faith to live more abundantly for Jesus.

## I. What did we learn last week in the first twelve chapters?

A. We spent a good bit of time on the first chapter.

1. John presents Jesus to us as the Son of God—whom he calls **the Word**.
  - He says that **the Word was with God and that the Word was God, yet became flesh and dwelt among us.**
  - In doing so, the Word went beyond Moses, who told us what God required of us to be saved, and actually provided what God requires of us...
    - so that (John 1:12): **as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.**
2. John goes on to back up this claim:
  - Showing us John the baptiser's testimony that He is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world...
  - And the testimony of His first disciples who testify that He is the Messiah and that He is the Son of God.

B. Then in chapters 2-5, we saw how John shows us that He is the source of eternal life for all who believe...

- starting off with the sign in which He miraculously provides wine when it was needed at a wedding, a sign that shows that He provides what we need.
- In chapter 3, Jesus shows that He has been given to the world that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life...that He is like the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, that by looking to Him we might be saved.
- In chapter 4, He is the one who gives the living water which, if we drink, keeps us from ever thirsting again... He supplies us with eternal salvation.
- And in chapter 5, He shows that He has all authority as both Saviour and judge, and is the one who will judge at the last day.

- C. And in chapters 6-12, Jesus presents Himself under a number of different figures, showing us that we must have Him if we are to have eternal life...
- In chapter 6, He miraculously provides food for 5000 people, and then says, **“I am the bread of life.”**
  - In chapter 7, He presents Himself as the One who speaks heavenly truth and gives us the Holy Spirit.
  - In chapter 8, He presents Himself as the One who speaks truth as God, the Son of the Father, and who was before Abraham, claiming, **“Before Abraham was, I am.”**
  - In chapter 9, after healing a blind man, He is claims to be **the light of the world.**
  - In chapter 10, He claims to be **the Good Shepherd** who lays down His life for the sheep and gathers them in to Him for eternal life, and then preserves them.
  - In chapter 11, He raises Lazarus from the dead and then declares Himself to be **the resurrection and the life**, so that those who believe in Him will never die.
  - In chapter 12, He claims to be the king who dies to give life to the world.
    - You remember in chapter 12, where we ended last week, that some Greeks came looking for Jesus, and when His disciples told Him about this, He said that the hour had come for Him to be glorified and die to produce more life...
      - He says (John 12:23-24): **“The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.”**
      - And in verse 32, He says, **“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”**
        - In other words, when He dies for sin, the nations will come and be saved.

Last week I concluded with these words:

- How beautifully Jesus is presented to us in the Gospel of John as the object of our faith... as the one who connects us to the Father in salvation.
  - This book is just packed with reasons to believe and comforts for those who do.
  - In Christ, we have all that we need for eternal life.

But John does not stop at chapter 12.

- Today we get to move one to see the upper room discourse, which is unique to John, and then John’s account of Jesus’ arrest, trial, sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection.

## **II. In chapters 13-17, Jesus tells His disciples how He will look after them after He returns to His Father in heaven.**

A. Do I need to tell you how relevant this is for us?

1. Jesus’ active ministry was only for about three years...
  - Three years in the history of the entire world!
  - That was how long a few select men were able to see the Word-made-flesh.
  - While He was in the world, as He said, He was the light of the world.
    - Our salvation depends entirely on what He did during those three years.
2. But now we cannot go to see Him—not to Him in the flesh dwelling among us—because He is not here.

- Nevertheless, by showing His disciples how He would still minister to them from heaven, He shows us much about how He will minister to us now.
    - He is still in heaven today, He is still gathering His church, and is still the indispensable provision for our salvation.
      - Without Him, there is no eternal life for anyone.
      - So it is essential for us to understand how He connects with us who are still on earth now that He is in heaven.
3. The things Jesus said in the upper room are very dear to all who love Christ.
- These were His parting instructions on that memorable night when He was betrayed and then taken away to be crucified.
- B. The first lesson is in John 13 and it is that His kingdom is to be a kingdom of humble service.
1. In all honesty, when His disciples first followed Him, they were looking for exalted positions in the world—as courtiers to a great king.
    - They had no idea that the rather than being elevated on earth to a great throne, their Master was going to be elevated on a cross to die a shameful death for them.
  2. So in John 13, Jesus, observing that there was no servant at the Passover meal to wash their feet, girds Himself with a towel and performs that duty.
    - This was something that only very lowly servants were called to do—washing the dirty feet that had been walking around with sandals on streets where horses and donkeys and other animals were about.
      - It is a striking lesson, and Jesus applies it like this in verse 13-15:
        - **John 13:13-15: “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”**
      - His is a kingdom in which those who are leaders lay down their lives in love for others—especially for the lowly.
        - He drives this home even further in verse 33-35:
          - **John 13:33-35: “Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you. <sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**
          - How striking these words were when they saw after this how He loved them so much that He was crucified for them.
  3. What a difference it would have made in the church over the years if all the leaders in the church had remembered this lesson!
    - Then, instead of exalting themselves, and creating new church offices that Jesus never intended, they would have been busy serving in humility and love, ministering the precious gospel of grace to sinners... washing dirty feet.

C. In chapter 14, we have the next lesson of Jesus about how it will be after He goes away.

1. He tells them that He is going to the Father to prepare a place for them.
  - We should not think of this so much as a physical place as a place in the family of God, before His presence in glory.
  - He says that the goal of His ministry is to bring us to the Father from whom we have been estranged by sin.
    - In John 14:6, He says, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”**
      - As *the way*, He provides the righteousness we need for pardon and acceptance by the Father.
      - As *the truth*, He reveals the Father to us, even by what He did here which He brings to our understanding.
      - As *the life*, He causes us to go from being dead in sin to alive to God.
        - All of this to bring us to the Father—that is why He came.
2. He tells His disciples that although He is going away, He is going to give them the Holy Spirit so that they can do greater works than He has done.
  - He doesn’t mean more spectacular miracles, but that they will be able to do what He was just now talking about... ***bring people to the Father.***
    - He says that their prayers (for God to be glorified and for His kingdom to come) will be answered.
  - He is going to send those who belong to Him the Holy Spirit, whom He calls *the helper... or the comforter.*
    - The word *helper* is *paraklete* and it means the one called alongside of us to speak into our lives what is needed—to speak with divine power new life into us, grace and comfort, faith, obedience, service, understanding of who Christ is and all that He is to us, reminders that we belong to God, conviction of sin.
    - In verse 15-18 He says: **“If you love Me, keep My commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— <sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”**
3. That tells us about this present time.
  - It is the time of the Holy Spirit—Jesus comes to us by the Holy Spirit who is better than having Jesus physically present.
    - The Spirit can be in more than one place at a time, and He can take Jesus’ words and bring them to life in us so that we can have true faith, love God, and walk as His children.

D. Next, in chapter 15:1-17, Jesus talks about how to be fruitful after He has gone.

1. He says, in verse 5, **“I am the vine, you are the branches.”**
  - He explains that it is by abiding in Him that we bear much fruit.
  - The kind of fruit a branch produces depends on what kind of vine it is attached to.
    - A branch does not bring forth fruit without a vine, and it has to be attached to right sort of vine to bring forth the right sort of fruit.

- Jesus also says that His Father is the vinedresser who prunes the branches so that they will bring forth more fruit... He also cuts off the branches that are attached, but that are not abiding so as to bring forth fruit.
2. But how does one abide in Christ?
- What does that mean?
    - Perhaps that best way to explain it is that you stay joined to Jesus, as one clinging to Him as your only source of life and hope.
    - And this dependence on Him comes to concrete expression by prayer—
      - When you believe that He is the source of life and fruitfulness, you come to Him in prayer—the prayer of faith. .
    - You can see how Jesus again speaks of prayer here... in verse 7—the same way He did in John 14... It is asking for the things He has promised in His word... He says, John 15:7, **“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”**
      - When He says that you ask what you desire, He doesn’t mean that you can just randomly ask God for whatever—no... it is qualified... it is when you abide in Him and His words abide in you...
        - When His words abide in you, you want the things that He has promised—a life of fruitfulness, His kingdom to come—and you get it.
3. Jesus describes the fruit that comes when you abide in Him... cling to Him in faith.
- Love and joy.
  - He is full of love and joy, and when you abide in Him or cling to Him who is the source of love and joy, you grow in love and joy.
    - He commands us to love one another again in this place, but it is He who enables us to obey the command when we pray in faith.
    - He is the One who has chosen us to be fruitful by prayer: v. 16: **“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”**
- E. And now, in the rest of chapter 15 and on into chapter 16, Jesus tells them (and us) what it will be like for us in the world after He is gone.
1. It is not going to be those earthly thrones that the disciples dreamed about.
- Jesus is on the way to the cross and in 15:18, He says, **“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.”**
  - And He gives the reason for the hatred: **“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”**
    - The world is not subject to God and Jesus is... when we come to Him in faith, we become His disciples and followers of God... the world then opposes us because they are not His disciples...
      - They do not want to be subject to God as their God, they want to live their own life as they please, without recognising their creator or submitting to Him.

2. In the beginning of chapter 16, Jesus explains that He is telling them about this hatred of the world so that they won't be surprised by it.
    - They had expected something else, but Jesus is telling them that when they follow Him, they will be treated the same way that He was treated when He was here... hated by all.
      - And He is not just talking about those outside the church, but that they would be hated by the church itself—He says that they will put you out of the church and say that you are evil.
  3. It will be hard, but His going away will be an advantage to them as they go out into a hostile world to bear witness to Christ... to tell people of Him and of His salvation.
    - How so? Look at verse 7 (16:7): **“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.”**
    - The Holy Spirit again!
      - Jesus explains that He will work in the world so that the people in the world will be convinced of their sin, of His righteousness, and of the His coming to judge...
      - The Spirit will work in the world to whom they preach, and He will work in them that preach and bear witness...
        - And the result will be that some will believe—and others will be haunted by the truth even though they will oppose it.
- F. In 16:16-33, Jesus tells His disciples that they will have great sorrow when He goes away from them, but that it will be turned to joy...
1. How so? Once again, it is because when He goes away, then they will pray to the Father in Jesus' name and He will answer their prayers by the Holy Spirit...
    - He will answer their prayers for the fruit of love and joy in their own lives...
      - And He will answer their prayers to make Christ known to the world.
    - Look at verse 23-24: **“And in that day [the day when Jesus goes away] you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. <sup>24</sup> Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”**
  2. The disciples think they understand, but Jesus advises them that very soon they will be scattered and will forsake Him (v. 32).
    - Yet, the Father will be with Him, and the time will come soon after when they will remember these words and will have peace and joy in Him, even in a world that is hostile to them, because Jesus has overcome the world (or will have overcome the world).
- G. John 17 is Jesus' closing prayer to the upper room discourse.
1. Chapter 17 is often rightly referred to as His high priestly prayer.
    - Because having spoken to His disciples about the blessing that His violent departure will bring to them, He now prays for that blessing.
    - It is a beautiful prayer.
  2. The contents of the prayer follow what He has been talking about since chapter 12.

- a. In 17:1-5, He prays that He will be glorified as the one who comes to this hour (the time to die on the cross) to glorify the Father.
    - He is doing what is required to bring us to the Father so that we can know Him and know Jesus.
    - Christ's glory will be to accomplish that blessing as our priest by His sacrifice on the cross.
  - b. In 17:6-19, He basically prays that God will keep the disciples so that they will indeed bear the fruit He promised them by the Holy Spirit if they abide in Him.
  - c. In 17:20-26, He prays for those who will believe out the world... the other thing that the Holy Spirit will do after Jesus is gone.
3. But what is best of all is the outcome of all of this!
- Jesus says that His disciples and those who believe on Him through their word will end up seeing the love that is in God's house—
    - the love that is between the Father and the Son;
  - And He says that they will actually participate in that love... both loving and being loved as He and the Father have been doing for all eternity.
    - This is how He glorifies the Father—which means how He makes the Father's glory known to us—by actually saving us so that we can actually live eternally with Him and with the Father, seeing all that glory and living in it!
  - This is one of the loftiest, most marvellous expectations in the whole Bible!
    - This is what Jesus' suffering will bring about. What glory it will be!

### **III. And the rest of John's gospel is about that work that Jesus did as our priest to bring all this about.**

- A. It is interesting that with his account of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, John focuses especially on Jesus' divinity.
- Remember that his desire is to show us that Jesus is the Son of God, so that, believing, we might have life through His name.
1. At His betrayal and arrest, John shows us how poised Jesus is.
    - John does not include the wrestling of Jesus in the garden where He prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me."
    - John knew that the other gospels had spoken of that, and he wants to show us that all the while, Jesus was in full control of the situation.
    - Look at how this comes out when they come to arrest Him with clubs and swords. In 18:4-7, it says: **Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?"** <sup>5</sup> **They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth."** **Jesus said to them, "I am He."** **And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them.** <sup>6</sup> **Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.** <sup>7</sup> **Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."**
  2. And with His trial before the high priest...
    - John again seems to supplement what we have in the other three gospels, showing us the dignity of Christ when asked about His doctrine...
    - He says (18:21), **"Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said."**



- He is exposing the fact that these leaders have themselves had full access to His teaching. They had sought to catch Him in His words, but never could they find a thing. They know what He taught.
  - He is rebuked for this and slapped, but then in 18:23, He responds with regal dignity: **Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?”**
3. And with His trial before Pilate, John reveals how Jesus Himself declares that He is in full control of the whole affair.
- In 18:36-37, He says to Pilate: **“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”** <sup>37</sup> Pilate therefore said to Him, **“Are You a king then?”** Jesus answered, **“You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”**
  - Jesus tells Pilate here that He is from heaven and that His kingdom is not from this world—that this is not a matter of one earthly authority competing with another earthly authority.
    - Earthly authority cannot contend with heavenly authority—earthly authority cannot reach high enough to contend with heaven.
  - Jesus makes this even clearer after He is scourged and mocked...
    - Pilate marvels that, unlike most men in Jesus’ place, Jesus is poised, and not pleading His case, so Pilate says to Him (19:10): **“Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?”**
    - And then (v. 11): **Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”**
      - Heaven is in full control of the whole situation.
      - Hearing this, Pilate wants to let Him go, but caves in to the pressure and delivers Him up to be crucified.
4. And at the cross, John continues to show that Jesus is in full control.
- In 19:28-30, we have these words: **After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!”**[He knew when His work was done] <sup>29</sup> **Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put *it* on hyssop, and put *it* to His mouth. <sup>30</sup> So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.**
    - Even in the matter of giving up His human spirit from His body, Jesus us waits until the proper time.
  - John shows how several prophecies are fulfilled as well...
    - the dividing and casting of lots for His garments,
    - the one just mentioned—His thirst,
    - and then there is piercing of His side instead of breaking His legs to fulfill the Scripture that said that they would look on Him whom they had pierced and that not a bone of His would be broken.

- Ordinarily, they broke the legs of the crucified to ensure their death (they could not push themselves up to breathe once this was done...) but instead, since Jesus was already dead, they pierced His heart from His side.
- B. With Jesus' burial and resurrection, John returns to providing testimony about Jesus that we might believe.
1. Not to be missed is the testimony of two Jewish leaders who come to bury Jesus... men who had been secret disciples until now.
    - These men *must* have understood what happened at the cross before the disciples did... else they would never have come when He was dying—even most of Jesus' disciples were acting like they did not know Him!
    - This is powerful testimony because these men were on the council.
      - They knew the scriptures, and they come forth in public when Jesus dies on the cross—even before the resurrection, losing all to follow Him now!
      - They got what Jesus was talking about in the upper room even though they were not there to hear it!
  2. John himself also testifies to the resurrection of Christ.
    - He describes the empty tomb on the first day of the week (Sunday), Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene in the garden where Jesus' tomb was.
    - And then John tells of His appearance to ten of His disciples on that same day (John stresses that it was the first day of the week), Thomas being absent...
    - And then a week later, also on the first day of the week, with Thomas present.
    - And then to the disciples in Galilee on the beach where Jesus restored Peter who had denied Him and testified as to how He would die...
  3. But I want to highlight in these appearances, Jesus' appearance to Thomas.
    - Thomas, being absent the first time, refused to believe the testimony of the others that Jesus was risen.
      - He said, (v.25) **“Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”**
    - When Jesus appeared the following Sunday, Thomas was there, and Jesus said to him (v. 27): **“Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”**
    - 28: **And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”**
      - This is like the testimony of Nathanael in chapter 1 when he said to Jesus, “You are the Son of God.”
    - But listen to what Jesus says to Thomas in vs 29: **Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**
      - It is powerful to realise that Thomas and other 11 disciples (when Matthias is counted in place of Judas) were appointed to be eye witnesses.
        - They were blessed with seeing—for all of us—they saw and believed.
        - It was their job to be eyewitnesses... they were not meant to believe without seeing, the way Jesus says people will in the future.

- But remember what we saw in the upper room discourse... that after Jesus goes, the Holy Spirit will come and He will convince the world about Jesus so that they will believe.
    - We are they who are blessed, having not seen and yet believing.
      - We have only heard the testimony of the apostles.
    - But like Jesus said in the upper room... we actually have it better.
      - We have it better because we have the Holy Spirit who convinces us of our need to Christ and of His sufficiency for us so that we believe in Him.
      - The Spirit enables us to see that Jesus gives us life, the living water, that He is the bread we need, the light, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, and the life, and the vine who gives us much fruit.
      - Blessed are we who have not seen, but have believed that we might have everlasting life.
        - Like Thomas, we can say also to Jesus, "My Lord and My God."
4. So John concludes as he began, with testimony that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Remember again John's purpose...
    - John 20:30-31: **"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."**
  - What a Christ-honouring book this is!
    - The Son of God was made flesh in order that we might have life.
    - He is our Lord and our God... and now, if we believe, we are able to look forward to the day when we will see Him in His glory with the Father and will enter into that beautiful circle of glorious love...
      - And until then, we will be kept by the Holy Spirit so that our prayers are answered and so that as we abide in Jesus, we will bring forth much fruit.
      - Blessed be the LORD our God. Glory to His name.