

Zoom in with me and take a glimpse with me of my life. Sometimes when I'm talking to people, I can be tempted to tell the best things about me and leave out the no-so-good, because I don't want anyone to think poorly of me. Sometimes I can battle saying the hard things I need to say as a pastor, as I know people will often get mad and leave. It's common for me to end up acting stiff and awkward when I'm around some of my fellow Acts 29 pastors, because, ironically, I want to look cool enough. I can sit at lunches with new people or even close friends and babble over my words, not wanting to seem like I don't know what I'm talking about. Before I get up to give to preach, I often battle more with not wanting to look stupid than wanting to proclaim truth. Yes, I can some times stand in front of the mirror and ask my wife if my shirt makes me look overweight.

Now, why do I live like this? What causes it? I know it's not right. It's certainly not fun. What can I do about it? Can I really change? How? We're in our second week in a series here entitled, "God is... four realities and how they change everything." Right after that, we'll launch into a new series on 1 Peter. First, we'll look at four Gs. A.W. Tozer once said, "What comes to mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us." That's our main thesis in this series. What we truly believe about the Lord will come out in our life. Last week, we saw that God is great, so we do not have to be in control. **This week, we'll see that God is glorious, so we do not have to fear others.**

Let me recap first some key ideas from last week. **First, we are by nature idolaters.** We were created to worship God, but due to the fall, we now go elsewhere. **Romans 1** says that we have traded worship of our Creator and Lord for the worship of His creation. Primarily this means we've put ourselves in the center. We worship ourselves.

Second, our worship results in conduct. We believe in someone or something in our head and cherish it in our heart and then it flows out in what we do with our hands. This applies, whether we believe in God or something else.

Third, our outward sins are driven by inward core idols. Those things we do on the outside - overeating, overworking, oversexing - they all flow from something deeper. They come from idolatry, from a desire to be God. We can speak of four key, main idols that we all have to fight. But most of us battle one or two more than the others. They're power, control, approval, and comfort. We saw last week that the way to fight control is to see God as great. He alone is on the throne and truly in control. This week we're going to see that the way to fight our desire for approval is to see God as glorious. He is the only one worthy of glory and honor and praise. And it's His approval only that we should be worried about.

British Philosopher Roger Scruton writes, "God is defined in the act of worship far more precisely than he is defined by any theology." We affirm here at Karis that worship isn't just something that happens on Sundays.

It's something that happens in all of life - as we work, play, sleep, eat, and drink. That's worship. And we show what we truly believe about God there. Regardless of what theology we may affirm with our mouths, we define who God is to each other and to our city by *how we live*. And I would argue that most of us say, "God is not glorious. I am." The prophet Isaiah was a part of a people Judah who definitely were living in the same way. Let's see a portrait of the glory of God in **Isaiah 6**. It's on page 571. Let's first pray.

See with me here in **Isaiah 6:1-13** a picture of glory. **Verse 1** says that it was in the year King Uzziah died. God's people had experienced a long period of prosperity. Now there was uncertainty. The prophet Isaiah is given a glimpse that reassures him. He sees the Lord. And He is glorious. Look with me at a vision of glory.

See first the vision Isaiah is given. Here Isaiah is commissioned as God's prophet. He is given a special theophany or vision of God. **Verse 1 reads, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple."** The Lord is on His throne. He is truly in charge, even when it seems the nation is headed toward chaos. He is judge. He is Lord. And the throne is high and lifted up. It's raised up higher than any other thrones. He is the only true Sovereign of the universe. This is what we considered last week. He is great. And that means far greater than any earthly kings. Also see His clothes. King's royal robes would have long, glorious trains that would show their glory. The Lord's filled the entire temple in Isaiah's vision, meaning that He was still among His people, even in their disobedience, and that He was far more glorious than any earthly kings.

But this is not all that Isaiah sees. **Verse two** speaks of "**seraphim.**" It says, "**Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.**" Angelic beings are around the throne. They are special angels. Literally, they are "burning ones." They have six wings which makes them different and likely even more powerful. They are too humble to look at the Lord. They cover their faces. They are too impure to be in His presence. They cover their feet. They fly around seeking to do His will. These perfect, heavenly beings are blown away by the Lord's glory.

And they don't keep silent. They cry to each other, it says in **verse 3**, "**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.**" They proclaim His holiness. That refers to His majesty, being separate from and transcendent over His creation, as well as His purity, being different from and righteous as compared to His creation. And they say it three times. The early church said it pointed to the Trinity. It might. But it least is there for emphasis. That's how they do it in Hebrew. The point? He is very holy. The holiest. Holier than anyone else.

They sing of His glory. "**The whole earth is full of his glory!**" He is the glorious one, the angels say. Glory refers to, as Jonathan Dodson puts it, His "consummate worth, beauty, virtue, and excellence." The Hebrew word has the idea of weight or heaviness.

He is the glorious one, the heavy one, the one who is the most beautiful and carries the most weight in the universe. Beauty and gravity. And that glory, they say, doesn't just fill that temple, but the whole earth. The seraphs proclaim that and they do so loudly, says **verse 4**, that the temple is shaking at its foundation. There is smoke everywhere. This is what the prophet Isaiah sees.

When we talk about angels today, we speak of chute, chubby ceramic figurines on our momma's shelf. In Scripture, people saw them and wetted their pants. When we talk about seeing God today, we speak as if we're walking up and chatting to our buddy. In Scripture, it was a frightening, life-altering thing. It is a staggering vision of glory that Isaiah sees here. I remember standing atop Sugar Loaf Mountain in Rio, being blown away by the beauty around. But that beauty reflects a greater beauty, the Lord. Do we, Karis, have this kind of a vision of God? This is key to seeing the world rightly, friends.

But it's also fundamental in understanding ourselves. This vision blows Isaiah away. **Look second at the response of the prophet.** He says, in **verse 5**, ***“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”*** He speaks here and curses himself. He pronounces woe upon His own head. He calls himself lost. He's not fit to be a prophet. He has a dirty mouth. So does his whole nation. He maybe could have compared himself to them previously, and thought he was better, but now he's seen the Lord. Everything's changed. Nothing's pure in relationship to Him. He sees glory and now he's humbled. Now he identifies himself as a sinner among sinful people.

This past year someone wanted to put a pig farm right next to beautiful Arrow Rock State Park just to the west of us. People went nuts. This is why Isaiah goes nuts here. He is able to see that he's a mess in front of great glory. This vision of God lets him see himself how he truly is. Do we see ourselves in relation to God in this way, Karis? There is nothing glorious about us as we stand in the presence of God. Isaiah is broken and hopeless here.

But this isn't where the Lord leaves him. **See third the healing of the prophet.** God sends one of the seraphim to cleanse him. **Verses 6 and 7** read,

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

It's hard to know exactly what's going on here, but the coal here probably represents all of the sacrificial system of Israel which points forward to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. The point is that through nothing of his own doing, Isaiah is cleansed. He gets his mouth cleaned out with soap. He's ready now to do God's work.

But more than that, he is forgiven. It's all by grace. This is a picture of our gospel. It's completely by grace so that it will be all about His glory. We have nothing to boast about.

We can only turn and praise Him. Once we see God in His glory and ourselves in our sin, grace is our only hope. And He gets all the glory. Karis, do we see salvation in this way? That's how the Lord works.

See then fourth the calling of the prophet. Verse 8: “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” Here Isaiah moves from saying, “*Woe is me*” to “*here am I.*” Now he's ready to be the Lord's prophet. This is what God's salvation does. It propels us immediately into mission. We see the glory of God and are humbled. He then saves us. We then go out and tell others about that glory. We tell people, “He is glorious! Humble yourself. Rejoice in Him!” Our motivation isn't finally about love for other people. It's about love for Him. We want those people to see God as He is and give God the glory He deserves.

But here's the interesting thing: the act of proclaiming His salvation is just like salvation itself. It humbles us. Isaiah doesn't get a glorious job here as the Lord's prophet. In **verses 9-13**, we see Isaiah becoming an instrument of judgment. God had said He would judge His people, and then as Isaiah proclaims them the message, they ignore it, and that cements it. He gets to help harden hearts, plug ears, blind eyes. What a job! God would still be glorified, but only through judgment. Isaiah wouldn't get anything but humiliation. Karis, do we see ourselves called to proclaim the Lord's glory? And do we see it will bring suffering, as it did for Isaiah, for Jesus, and for the early church? It is not a glorious path for us.

It's all about His glory, friends. God shows the prophet Isaiah His glory. And He wants us to see it today. Now there are so many things I could say about God's glory, but here's just a few quick things. His creation is meant to reflect His glory. “***The heavens declare the glory of God,***” it says in **Psalm 19:1**. Look at the mountains. Look at the oceans. It all screams of God's glory.

The pinnacle of His creation, human beings, are meant to reflect His glory. We were made in His image, Scripture says. We, too, were meant to put God's glory on display, but even in a way that rivers and redwoods and rhinoceroses can't. However, in the fall, that image was marred. We haven't imaged His glory as we were made to do. God has always been about taking a people and remaking them into His divine image that they could display His glory again. Throughout the Old Testament the Lord chooses and preserves a people, it says, “***for His name's sake,***” “***for His glory.***” They can't boast. It's all His doing. This is the same way in the New Testament. He's building a church that screams, “God is glorious!” And He is doing it through His Son Jesus, who Scripture **Colossians 1:15** calls “***the image of the invisible God***” who displays His glory perfectly and beautifully.

We see His people in His earth together finally at the end, in **Revelation 21 and 22**, in a new heavens and new earth. There we who are His people and all His creation will fully reflect His glory, and only through the perfect life and death of the One who most images that glory, Jesus.

Habakkuk 2:14 promises this: ***“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”*** God is zealous for His glory to be proclaimed. He will ensure it is fully and finally realized. And He is also jealous for it. In other words, He won't let it go to anyone else. As the only Creator and Lord and true God, He won't tolerate idolatry. Hear **Isaiah 48:9-11**:

Isaiah 48:9 “For my name’s sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. 10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. 11 For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

This is our glorious God, and He wants us to see it and delight in it. Now with all of that glory in front of us, we somehow still live for ours. We confess one thing with our mouths and show another thing with our lives. We try to revolve the world around us in a way that brings us honor. We are zealous for people to think well of us. We can be jealous when they don't. We have this intense desire for approval; we have this deep fear of rejection.

When people approve of us, we're proud; we think highly of ourselves and feel good. When we don't, we're humbled; we have low self-esteem and get depressed. John Piper says, "Boasting is the voice of pride in the heart of the strong. Self-pity is the voice of pride in the heart of the weak."

We live most of the time in what **Proverbs 29:25** calls ***“the fear of man.”*** This is the way of the Pharisee. Jesus hammers them in the gospels for trying to put on a show with their prayers and fasting and giving. But **John 12:43** speaks of people who heard Christ's message during his time on earth and feared the Pharisees' reaction to them. It says they ***“loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.”*** They wanted approval. They feared rejection. They lived for their glory. We can bash the Pharisees, but we, too, can live just like them. Let me give a few examples.

- We have trouble saying no, because we don't want to disappoint others.
- We obsess about our body image, about our weight, clothes, etc.
- We shy away from reaching out to others, because we're concerned they'll reject us.
- We please parents or family members when what they tell us goes against Scripture.
- We walk away from conversations, rehashing them, pondering how we misspoke.
- We stretch the truth when we talk to others, making ourselves look good.
- We think more about what others think of us in worship than praising God.
- We respond to criticism with much defensiveness and depression.
- We compare ourselves to others and get down and discouraged.
- We find ourselves doing what others do or affirming what others affirm.
- We remain silent when we could speak up for the weak and oppressed.
- We hide our sins and weaknesses from others out of fear.
- We don't speak up about our faith as we should, because we don't want to be rejected.

In the presence of the Lord of glory, in a world that displays His glory, among a people who are meant to praise His glory, before a Savior who perfectly images His glory and has died and lives to restore us to the image of that glory, we can be consumed with our glory.

Now this is a terrible way to live. **It's amusing.** Think about it. Me? You? That glorious? Really? It's laughable. Look at a desert sunset. Stand by Niagara Falls. Even the biggest, handsomest movie star, one TMZ might call glorious, is still no match. It's crazy. It's sad.

It's exhausting. You can never keep up. This is what could be called the Constanza complex. You put a tip in the tip jar and the barista doesn't see it, so you go back and try to put in another one, so he sees it. You even risk getting arrested to take it back out of the jar and put it back in again. You can't stand the thought of anyone not liking you (except girlfriends, that is), so you go to great lengths and do big cartwheels to get people to affirm you. You tell lie upon lie upon lie to try to craft a great image and you never can keep up. It never works for George. It won't work for us. It's exhausting. It will kill us.

It's enslaving. What's the main way to fight peer pressure, to not care what others think? Most people today say that it's to increase self-esteem. If you find ways to like yourself more, then you'll be confident and fine, and you won't be dependent upon what people think. But the problem is that you end up becoming dependent upon whatever brings you self-esteem, which most of the time involves people. It makes things worse. You're a slave to whatever or whomever makes you feel approved and not rejected. My plan in high school had to do with basketball. I was a total gym rat and chained myself up in there. I invested all my time in playing hoops. My self-esteem depended upon how much I played and how much I scored. It depended upon what the coach thought and what the ladies who were watching might think. The answer isn't to find ways to feel better about yourself. That's just more slavery. It's to glorify God more. Then you'll have joy. Then you'll see your value.

It's unloving. Think about it. If you're living to get approval and fear rejection then you'll almost *never* tell anyone anything hard. You won't speak truth to people - Christians or non-Christians. Otherwise, they may not like you. They won't think you're glorious anymore. We're called to be a part of a family where we can truly know and love those around us. And that always involves saying hard things. If the Christian life calls us to love God and love others, people-pleasing will almost completely keep us from truly loving those around us. We won't really minister to our brothers and sisters.

And we certainly won't share our faith with those around us. Hadley asked me a week ago, "Dad, are you sometimes scared to tell people about Jesus? They might hurt you, right?" I had to tell him yes, but explained that mainly the struggle has more to do with being rejected and not well-approved. I had to repent before him and say that we both needed to be more concerned about what God thought. And that will allow us to love those around us well.

It's isolating. Think of it the other way around. We all deeply want to be known and loved. In one sense, we were made for approval. We were made for a family where we could be loved just as we are. But in our sin and idolatry, we want people to see us *other* than we truly are. We keep ourselves from being known and then loved by putting up walls and putting on masks.

We're so concerned about them liking us, we so fear them turning their backs on us, that we don't really let them see us and know us. The beauty of the church is that we can be ourselves, like family, and still be wanted and loved. Yes, we strive to help each other grow and change, but we're committed to each other regardless. That's family, right? When we live for approval, we rob ourselves of this joy. We isolate ourselves.

It's debilitating. It keeps us from growing and thriving and being all God created us to be. Think about these MAP tests that students take all over the state every year. Teachers are required to get their kids to score well on them. So they end up teaching for the sake of the test and not for the sake of learning. Kids end up learning for the test and not for the sake of growing. In trying to impress "the man", teachers and students don't explore and grow. This is the way it is with living for approval. You live for the wrong things. It's not that we don't have any standards or goals. We set the right one. It's the Lord of glory.

It's dishonoring. Think of what this says to God! It's my approval that matters. I'm glorious. I am the center. Again, we were made for His glory, not the other way around. It's blasphemy. This is the most serious problem with fear of others. Again, God is zealous that He alone be glorified. As Creator and Lord, He's the only one who can demand this. And, if He is the only place joy is found, then it's loving for Him to do this. Also, He is jealous for Him and Him alone to be glorified. This isn't sinful jealousy that we experience. It's more like a loving husband when others hit on his wife. He would be sinning *not* to get angry. When she looks around it dishonors him and their covenant. We're made for our Lord. When we're about the glory of another or ourselves, we blaspheme Him and anger Him.

It's dissatisfying. We were made to find our joy in His glory, not ours. Think about my hoops career again. What I did didn't lead to self-esteem. I had about a 9 inch vertical jump. I could run the 40 in probably 10 seconds. I didn't have it in me. Plus the coach didn't like me. So I was crushed. I wasn't satisfied. And even if we can manage things for awhile where people honor us and we feel proud, it'll still one day come to an end. George Harrison once said, "When you've had all the experiences - met all the famous people, made some money, toured the world and got all the acclaim - you still think 'is that it?' We were made for Him, for His sake. That's where joy is found. John Owen said, ""Only a sight of His glory . . . will truly satisfy God's people. The hearts of believers are like a magnetized needle which cannot rest until it is pointing north. So also, a believer . . . will always be restless until he or she comes to Christ and beholds his glory."

It's destroying. If we were made for His glory, then living for ours ruins us. That's what happened to King Uzziah. That's the background for **Isaiah 6**. He started thinking he was something great and ended up trying to offer a sacrifice in the temple. This was only for the priests, not the kings. He broke God's law. So he ended up with leprosy. He went from being the most glorious person in the kingdom to being the lowliest outcast. It destroyed him. But it's God who did it to him. The Lord will judge such pride in us, too. He won't accept rivals. He'll judge those that don't glorify Him. That's what hell is, friends.

This is part of our sin nature. We may affirm He's glorious. But we seek our praise. What do we do about it? How do we bridge the gap between what we saw we believe about God and how we live? Like last week, I want to give you some verbs that summarize a way that we can fight this. **First, explore.** If we want to get over ourselves and see God's glory, then we ought to get outside. The heavens declare His glory. The earth is filled with His glory. We need to see what the seraphs see in **Isaiah 6**. One of the best things we can do is look at mountains, to look closely at trees, to sit by a bubbling brook, to take a long hike in the woods. One of my favorite musicians, Rich Mullins once said this:

...so much pressure is put on us to esteem ourselves. I don't know how anyone can wake up with morning breath and pillow head and feel any self-esteem. That is not the sort of thing that I want to put my faith in. And in the church—it's unbelievable to me that this whole foolishness about esteeming yourself has leaked into the church. I kinda go, 'Christ didn't ask us to esteem ourselves.'

I think if Christ would have asked, I think He would probably say, "Look, buddy, you'd be lucky if you could forget yourself. If you could lose yourself, you'd be luckier than if you found yourself." It would be wonderful if you knew the names of the trees between your house and where you work, between your house and your church. If you knew that was a tulip tree and that was a redbud. It would be great if you knew the names of the constellations. It would be great if you knew something about your neighbors. It would be a lucky thing for you if you forgot yourself, if you lost yourself.

Learn the names of trees, he says. Spend a week in the forest, and you'll go a long way in realizing that you're not too big and beautiful.

Second, tremble. We must get a bigger view of God. We need to regain a healthy fear of him. This is what Isaiah experienced here. And he then wasn't thinking much about himself or about what others thought. **Proverbs 1:7** says that "***The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.***" It's where it all starts. He is the King and Judge. He's the one to whom we must give account. Now, if we're a Christian, He no longer relates to us primarily as judge, but rather as Father. But it doesn't mean that he's our buddy. It doesn't mean that he's primarily about us. In my house, my kids know without a doubt my great love for them, but they also know they're not the center of the family. And they know that I will discipline them when it's needed. There is a healthy fear of an earthly father by a child. It's the same with us and our heavenly Father. We need to open our Bibles and see glory.

Then we have to fear the Lord more than we do others. In **Matthew 10:28**, Jesus says, "***And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.***" Every time we are in front of someone and we're fearing what the person thinks, and we're tempted to disobey the Lord at that moment, we need to picture Jesus standing there right next to the person. Whose approval do we want more? Whose rejection are we the most concerned about? We need to tremble.

Third, trust. Isaiah saw God's glory and trembled. Then the Lord touched His mouth and forgave him. All by grace. Totally for His glory. This points to the work of Jesus. Jesus, who perfectly imaged God's glory, humbled himself, came to earth, and then was humiliated on the cross. He who deserves all approval allowed Himself to be rejected - not just by people on earth, and they did, but even by His heavenly Father.

On the cross, He took our judgment, if we have faith in Him. His Father turned His back on Him, so that He could fully accept us. That is Christ's amazing work. Scripture says that if we put our trust in His life and death, we can be saved.

But then we're brought into a family. We have a new identity. We don't have to earn God's approval. Jesus did that for us. We're now in God's household. So we're fully accepted in Him. And He'll never reject us. He's our Father; we're his kids. This also means that we don't have to earn the approval of others. We already have God's, right? Why be bothered by the rejection of humans? We don't have to prove anything to God, to others, or even ourselves. We're in Christ, and because of that, we have His full love and approval.

Fourth, worship. As I said last week, I want to offer you a spiritual practice or discipline each week to attack each idol. We attack approval with worship. This is what the seraphs are doing. This is what Isaiah ends up doing. We seek to give God glory in our daily personal worship times and during our times together as a church community. We strive to proclaim how amazing and glorious He is and allow that to help us forget about ourselves. The best way to fight self-worship and seeking the worship of others is to worship the only one who really deserves it, our Lord. And we generally need others to help us remember this and to tell us we're not really that great. Worship, personal or corporate, centers us down, it sets things straight, it reminds us who's really glorious.

Fifth, go. The Lord sent Isaiah out as His prophet. Jesus sends us out as His people, as well. If we want to fight our slavery to approval, we do it by calling other people to worship God. If we evangelize rightly, we'll make it all about God's glory. We won't make the message about us and how great we are. We'll tell people He's glorious. But, with Isaiah, we'll take a lot of abuse as people will want nothing to do with Him or us. People will remind us how unglorious we are. It will remind us whose glory we're really after. Sharing the gospel will go a long, long way in keeping us humble and all about boasting in Him.

Explore, tremble, trust, worship, go. Five things we can do to fight off the fear of others and seek the glory of God. But what's promised for us? God approved of Isaiah. He will also approve of us. Remember those disciples who rejected Christ, who chose the praise of men instead of the praise of God? The implication there is that if we embrace human rejection, we'll get God's affirmation. He'll praise us! Yes, Christ's suffering was followed by glory. That also applies to us. God will tell us, "Well done. I'm proud of you." As Christ said, our Father will reward us. It will be so much greater than man's reward. He won't reject us. He'll approve of us. And we'll be with Him, delighting in His glory forever. That's good news!

Take how I began again today. I'm stressed out, doing image control, damage control, making myself look good, worrying if people like me. Zoom out. What kind of world do I say I live in? What message do I send our city? It's all about me. I'm the center. I'm glorious. No wonder they say Christians are cocky! It destroys my influence. But it also hurts me. And it's fantasy. This is reality: **God is glorious, so we don't have to fear others.**