**All for the Glory of God**

John 17:1-5, 20-26

***Series Introduction***

Today we start a five week sermon series called ***Evangelical and Free***. We will have the blessing of hearing from four other pastors in our denomination - the Evangelical Free Church of America - sharing about our five core convictions as a movement.

**Evangelical & Free**

* 10/14 - Our Purpose is to Glorify God
* 10/21 - Our Authority is the Bible
* 10/28 - Our Theology Unites us around the Essentials
* 11/4 - Our Focus is Making Disciples
* 11/11 - Our Message is the Gospel

I will kick things off this week by lifting our eyes to **our ultimate purpose** - as believers and as churches - ***to glorify God in all things***. All five of these topics are awesome and I would’ve been glad to preach any of them. But I do feel that I got the best one - if it’s ok to choose between the Bible, the Gospel and the glory of God…

Now, we know “the chief end of man is to GLORIFY GOD,” but can we honestly say that **all we do is for the glory of God?** Can we truly say that about our individual lives? My life is ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD? Can we say that about our church? Oakwood is entirely devoted to the glory of God. Everything we do is for His glory?

Of course not. **Everything we do is tainted by self-glorification and the worship of other things.** We give glory to so many things BESIDES GOD, primarily to ourselves. It’s like hiking out west in the Rockies - you should be taking in the beauty of the mountains but your gaze keeps coming back to your shoes. One step, then another step. And ***you lose sight of the glory of the mountains***, seeing only the roots and rocks right under your feet.

We do this with Jesus. We lose sight of His magnificent beauty and the glory of His love and grace - letting our eyes drift to the problems, challenges, desires and temptations of each day. One problem, one sinful desire, after another.

So here’s what I want to do today - I want to lead us to answer Jesus’ prayer in John 17. ***I want to GLORIFY JESUS - to lift Him up so we will see how much better He is than anything else in this broken and fallen world***.

**We glorify God by lifting up Jesus in our hearts, our lives and our words.**

My goal this morning is to be like Rafiki when he held up little Simba.

I want to lift up the Lord Jesus Christ and cry out for all to hear: “Behold Your King!” ***Jesus is the TRUE LION KING***. He is the Crown Prince of the Universe and He is coming back soon to reign as our King forever! May we lift our eyes from the things that distract us to see His supreme glory! May our hearts sing of the wonders of His grace. Oh, may we savor Him - may we delight in Him, casting aside the false promises of this world and stoking the fires of our JOY IN JESUS.

Please join me in John 17. This passage will help us see the glory of Jesus so we can trust and love and serve Him better - so we can truly live our lives ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. For He is the One who deserves all the glory - He is the God of overflowing grace. John 17 shows us **three wonderful gifts God has given us** - the gift of revelation, of redemption and of relationship.

[add these phrases to Simba slide]

**Three Gifts from God**

1. ***Revelation - to See Jesus’ Glory***
2. ***Redemption - to Speak of Jesus’ Grace***
3. ***Relationship - to Savor Jesus’ Love***

In the light of God’s revelation we are able to see Jesus’ supreme glory. Because of God’s merciful redemption we can speak and even sing of Jesus’ grace. And because Jesus has opened the way for us to have an eternal relationship with God, we can savor His love and we will bask in His wonderful presence forever.

Brothers and sisters, let’s lift our eyes from the struggles and distractions of life to see the glory of Jesus in these wonderful gifts of God’s grace.

First, God has given us the light of truth in Jesus.

**Gift #1 - Revelation - to See Jesus’ Glory**

God has given us the Light of Truth in Jesus

*“Father, the hour has come;* ***glorify your Son****, that the Son may glorify you.”* John 17:1

Here is Jesus’ prayer - that the world might see His glory. “Father, glorify your Son.” Here is the culmination of God’s unveiling of truth as Jesus is about to go to the cross and be lifted up so that all people might see His the abundance of His grace.

***Think of the patience of Jesus in this moment.*** He waited thirty years - working quietly as a carpenter in an obscure village in Judea. Even in his public ministry he directed attention constantly away from himself and to his heavenly father, saying things like, “I can do nothing on my own but only what I see my Father doing.” Jesus’ whole life was devoted to the glory of His Father.

And now Jesus faces the ultimate test. “The hour has come.” The whole plan has been moving to this moment in time. Will the Son of God follow through and give up his life for this messy, wicked, self-glorifying, idol-worshiping world of sinners?

He will - for this purpose: “Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you.” Jesus was completely devoted to the Father’s glory and he knew the best way to showcase the Father’s glory was to be lifted up Himself.

Hebrews tells us that Jesus:

**Gift #1 - Revelation - to See Jesus’ Glory**

God has given us the Light of Truth in Jesus

“***He is the radiance of the glory of God*** *and the exact imprint of his nature.*” (Heb. 1:3).

God has made Himself known in Jesus. This is one of God’s greatest gifts to the world - the gift of KNOWLEDGE, ***the gift of LIGHT***. Into a world of darkness God shined a beacon of light in the PERSON of Jesus Christ who IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

If you’ve ever been in the dark - really in the dark - you know how valuable light really is. Jesus brought the fullness of light into the world.

Listen to verse 6:

**Gift #1 - Revelation - to See Jesus’ Glory**

God has given us the Light of Truth in Jesus

*“****I have manifested your name*** *to the people whom you gave me out of the world…”* John 17:6

Throughout salvation history God was gradually and steadily making Himself known. That is the whole story of the Old Testament - the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The prophets Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and the others. The kings like David and Solomon. ***Each of these was like a candle***, shining a little more light onto the goodness, grace and glory of God. God was giving a little more light, then a little more light.

***Then Jesus was the ultimate revelation*** - **the blazing comet of God’s revelation**. The NAME - the only Name by which people can be saved - the Name above all names! This is why Jesus prays to be glorified - so that God the Father might be more fully known and more widely praised - ***so that more people might see the light of truth*** and step into the radiance of His glory. Look at verse 23:

**Gift #1 - Revelation - to See Jesus’ Glory**

God has given us the Light of Truth in Jesus

*“That they may become perfectly one* ***so that the world may know*** *that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”* John 17:23

This was Jesus’ prayer - that the revelation of His glory would spread to the ends of the earth so the whole world would know the goodness, grace, mercy and love of the Father.

***Do you see the GLORY of God in His Self-revelation*** - making Himself known in the Bible and ultimately in Jesus?

***Apart from Scripture people are blindly groping around*** for some little spark of truth, some little flicker of hope. But all they can find are the broken matches of a million false promises. But when Jesus is lifted up so people can see His glory, the light of truth suddenly shines into the darkest places. May this be our prayer: “Father, glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you.” May Jesus be lifted up in our lives, in our churches, through our missionaries - so more and more people will see the glory of Jesus!

**Gift #1 - Revelation - to See Jesus’ Glory**

God has given us the Light of Truth in Jesus

*“Father, the hour has come;* ***glorify your Son****, that the Son may glorify you.”* John 17:1

***This is what each one of us needs - to see Jesus’ glory more clearly***. To have Him exalted and lifted up in our hearts and lives. To allow the light of God’s truth to illumine the darkness of our hearts - exposing the earthly things we worship as tiny matches next to the blazing glory of Jesus.

* ***Don’t trust in money*** - it cannot save you, it cannot give you life and love. Trust in Jesus - He alone can save you; he alone can protect you and meet your every need.
* ***Don’t serve the god of achievement and applause.*** Yes, people may cheer for you for a few minutes or a few days, but what is that next to the smile of God? Live for His approval and take in the wonderful truth that in Jesus, you HAVE that approval!
* ***Don’t worship your own comforts and pleasures.*** Yes, they burn for a few minutes but how quickly they burn out. Jesus’ glory never burns out. He never disappoints. We can glimpse His majesty now but for all of eternity we will more and more taste and see that the Lord is GOOD!

**Adoniram Judson** was raised in a Christian home but as a young college student in the America of the early 1800s he met a Deist names Jacob Eames. Eames led Judson to abandon his childhood faith and embrace the “freedom” and happiness of escaping the restrictions of Christianity.

Adoniram turned prodigal, riding to New York City on his father’s horse where he lived “a reckless, vagabond life.” Writing for the theater proved a flickering match as did the “free and happy” life in the city. Having searched for light, he had found only darkness.

So Judson went to visit an uncle where he ran into a Christian young man who reminded him of the truth of his childhood faith. The next night in an inn Judson heard the wails of a dying man and struggled to sleep as he contemplated his own death. In the morning he asked the innkeeper what had happened and came to find the one who had died was his Deist friend, Jacob Eames.

The one who had promised life and freedom had himself been swallowed by death. ***The prodigal life was truly a burned out match***. And oh, how quickly it burned out...

Judson eventually re-committed his life to Christ and devoted his whole life to bringing the Gospel and the Word of God to Burma, what we now call Myanmar. ***The man who had run away from the light of truth became the light-bearer to a people lost in darkness.***

Everyone said he was crazy to go to Burma. Even William Carey in India told him not to go to those heathen savages. But Judson and his wife felt that was exactly why they HAD TO GO - these savages were lost in the darkness. Someone had to bring the the light of Jesus.

The greatest legacy of Judson’s ministry in Burma was ***his translation of the Bible which brought the light of God’s truth*** to a people who were playing with matches. Eventually the gospel raced through Burma and the whole region in wonderful answer to Jesus’ prayer - Jesus was glorified and through Him God the Father was honored as the giver of light and the giver of LIFE in Jesus.

As a young man Judson turned away from the light of Jesus’ glory in pursuit of other things. But then he gave himself to the great commission, lifting up the name of Jesus so that people could abandon the false hope of trusting and worshiping other things and come to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The first gift is Revelation - to see the glory of Jesus. The second is Redemption: God has given us LIFE in Jesus.

**Gift #2 - Redemption - to Speak of Jesus’ Grace**

God has given us Eternal Life in Jesus

*“Since you have given him authority* ***to give eternal life*** *to all whom you have given him.”* John 17:2

Three times in one verse we see the word “GIVE.” ***God is a profoundly GENEROUS God.*** He has given us the gift of truth by sending prophets and then sending His own Son. Then, in Jesus, God has given us LIFE through the death of His Son.

Listen to the phrasing here - God has GIVEN eternal life to all whom He has GIVEN to Jesus. Each of us who has put our faith in Jesus - each one of us is A GIFT from God the Father to God the Son. Have you ever realized that? **You are a GIFT for Jesus**.

Jesus is, of course, the very best gift to YOU. The Father gave Him authority to give eternal life to sinners like us who repent. But those sinners who repent are, in turn, a gift from the Father to the Son.

You probably know Ephesians 2:8-9 - “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not of yourselves - **IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD** - not by works so that no one may boast.” Salvation is the centerpiece of God’s grace and generosity. Redemption. Deliverance. Forgiveness. Justification. Reconciliation. This is the gift of God.

**It is a GIFT** – so it is ***entirely undeserved*** and not based on anything good or impressive in us – it is entirely by God’s grace that we are saved.

In response to the light of God’s revelation in Jesus we are able to SEE His glory. In response to the grace of God’s redemption in Jesus we are invited to SPEAK and even SING of His grace. Salvation, you know, begins with a verbal CONFESSION. Romans 10:

**Speak of Jesus’ Grace**

*“If you* ***confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord*** *and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and* ***with the mouth one confesses and is saved****.” Rom. 10:9-10*

**Once you see the glory of Jesus you have to SAY IT** - you have to express it out loud. Yes, you have to also believe he died for you and rose again - that is real and sincere faith. But real and sincere faith SPEAKS. As faith grows it continues to speak of the grace and glory of Jesus but it grows in that expression until your heart and life SING of the wonders of Jesus’ love and mercy.

This is ***the natural way we honor or glorify anything*** or anyone: we talk about them. When we experience something amazing our hearts are bursting to share that.

* **A baby** is born - you call your friends and family. You post a million pictures.
* A big **success at work** - you close the deal or finish the project - you want to share the significance of that with your co-workers, your family and friends.
* A big event at church - like our **Fall Festival** - you are excited about it so you talk about it, you invite your friends and neighbors. It’s the natural thing to do.
* A **major milestone of life** - you get married, get your first job, get a major promotion, get pregnant with your first child…

When we are excited about something we **TALK ABOUT IT**. C.S. Lewis said it this way:

“I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but ***completes the enjoyment***; it is its appointed consummation.” C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*

***What does it look like for us to glorify God in all things?*** We say that is our ultimate purpose. We know it is “the chief end of man.” This is very clear and practical. If we want to glorify God in our lives and in our church we first need to SEE the glory of Jesus and then **we need to SPEAK of His glory and grace**. This needs to become the natural overflow and pattern of our lives and our meetings.

As we gather Sunday after Sunday the worship team, the Bible readers and the preacher are trying to lift our eyes from our struggles, distractions and flickering matches to SEE JESUS in all of His glory. Biblical preaching really is as simple as that: we try to lift Jesus up, Simba style, ***so we can all see and remember that He truly is our all-glorious King***.

Jesus is the Lion of Judah - the King who will come back soon to defeat all of His enemies and reign on David’s throne forever. But He is also the Lamb that was slain for us. Jesus represents the fullness of God’s glory and the limitless nature of His grace. ***The Lion of Judah was slain as a Lamb.***

One of the signs of true faith in Jesus is that we TALK about Him. Our praise not only “expresses but completes the enjoyment.” ***And speaking about Jesus should grow into SINGING ABOUT JESUS.***

**Gift #2 - Redemption - to Sing of Jesus’ Grace**

God has given us Eternal Life in Jesus

*“Since you have given him authority* ***to give eternal life*** *to all whom you have given him.”* John 17:2

Jesus has purchased our redemption. He paid the full price for your sin and mind so that He could give us the ultimate gift of eternal life. King Jesus - to whom all authority in heaven and on earth was given - did not use that limitless power and all surpassing sovereignty to destroy sinners. He chose to save sinners by submitting all of that power to the Jews and the Romans. The Almighty Creator of all things who sustains the universe with the Word of His power stretched out his hands on a rough wooden cross so that He could give us a gift - the gift of eternal life.

***Oh may our hearts sing for Joy at the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ***. May we delight to speak of His glorious grace at our dinner tables, in our small groups and Bible studies. May our lives overflow with the song of our redemption. Jesus has given us LIFE. We were like Lazarus - dead in the tomb. And Jesus used His authority to raise us to life.

Let’s lift Jesus up to each other in the church and to others outside the church.

Now, sometimes we need to ***lift people up to Jesus*** before we can show them the glory and goodness of Jesus. The light of Jesus’ glory and grace can be blinding to people in pain. Rom 8:28 - yes, God works all things together for good, but when you have just lost a loved one you need people to BE JESUS FOR YOU before they PREACH JESUS TO YOU. Love people and lift them up to Jesus. He is the all glorious light of the world. He is the all sufficient savior. He is the all sovereign King.

The same thing is often true in evangelism. Before you can lift Jesus up to non-believers you first have to lift them up to Jesus by getting to know them and showing them what Jesus’ love looks like. Again, it’s possible to blind people with the light of Jesus’ glory instead of using that light to help them see.

The Gospel is good news, amen? God has given us the light of revelation in Jesus. He has given us eternal life through the redemption of Jesus. And the third gift; the one in which all the others are wrapped up: RELATIONSHIP.

**Gift #3 - Relationship - to Savor Jesus’ Love**

God has given us Infinite Love in Jesus

*“And this is eternal life,* ***that they know you****, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”* John 17:3

***We have a foretaste of eternity right now*** as we get to know God through Jesus Christ. This IS eternal life, right now, as we experience the love of God for us – how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ for us. This is what we will do for the endless ages of forever – we will KNOW GOD and we will savor Jesus’ love - basking in the radiance of His mercy and goodness forever and forever.

“This IS eternal life”: to know God. It starts with seeing the glory of Jesus. Until Jesus is lifted up in your mind and heart and life you cannot know God. Until you bow the knee to King Jesus and confess Him as your personal Savior and Lord you cannot experience the eternal life He offers. But once you do - ***once you say “Yes” to Jesus, His life and grace and mercy and goodness and power come flooding into your soul.***

God’s invitation into relationship is an invitation to enter the eternal relationship within the Godhead – the Triune connection between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We glimpse that here throughout John 17.

**Glimpses of the Trinity**

“Father, glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.” (v. 1)

“Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.” (v. 5)

**Glimpses of the Trinity**

“That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, ***that they may also be in us***…” John 17:21

“That they may be with me where I am, ***to see my glory*** that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:24

***Father, Son and Holy Spirit*** – God in three persons – eternally existing in a loving exchange of glory, honor, love and joy. **The Trinity is like a triple fountain**, constantly overflowing with life and love and goodness and power. The Father loving and praising the Son. The Son, in turn, praising the Father – praying for glory only so He can reflect that glory back to the Father. The Spirit in the midst of it all – delivering glory from Father to Son and back again, mediating that glory to US now so that the Risen Christ lives in us by His Spirit.

God is the pulsating center of the universe. ***The Trinity is the fountain of life*** and the wonder of the Gospel is that through Jesus we are invited to enter into that overflowing, never-ending, all-satisfying LIFE. The way has been opened not only for us to SEE the glory of Jesus, but to STEP INTO IT.

Look at verse 21: “That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, ***that they may also BE IN US***.” Sinners like you and me - forgiven and declared righteous by the blood of Jesus - have been brought into the fountain - we have been bound together with our Triune God - we have become one with God through our faith connection with Jesus!

C.S. Lewis closes his masterful book, **Mere Christianity**, with a reflection on the Trinity and an invitation to come to the Triune God for life and love and everything else:

“If you want to get warm you must stand near a fire: if you want to be wet you must get into the water. If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, ***you must get close to, or even into, the thing that has them***. [God is] a great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at the very center of reality. If you are close to it, the spray will wet you: if you are not, you will remain dry. ***Once a man is united to God, how could he not live forever?***” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

So this is my closing invitation. If you have seen the glory of Jesus; if you have said “Yes” to Him and begun to sing of His grace; then make it your life’s ambition to SAVOR His love - to know Him, to experience his overflowing life.

**Gift #3 - Relationship - to Savor Jesus’ Love**

God has given us Infinite Love in Jesus

*“And this is eternal life,* ***that they know you****, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”* John 17:3

This is the key to the Christian life. ***To glorify God is not a burdensome command - it is a mind-blowing invitation***. We glorify God when we lift our eyes from whatever is in front of us to see who Jesus really it. We glorify God when we speak of the grace of Jesus - whether we are singing in church, sharing in a Bible study or just chatting with a friend over coffee. And we glorify God when we savor His love as the greatest treasure on earth.

I grew up in a Christian home and was raised in an Evangelical Free Church that always taught the Bible and, I’m sure, preached the Gospel. **But the command to glorify God always felt like a burdensome mandate not a wonderful invitation**. It felt to me like an impossibly heavy weight to carry. How could I glorify God? Did I even want to?

***So I learned to hide from God.*** And I found a couple of flickering matches that seemed to offer happiness. One was called “success” the other we’ll call “secret.” Publicly I devoted myself to **academic success** and anywhere else I could achieve and get noticed. I wasn’t a great athlete so I learned early on to focus on games I could win - like Bible memory. The only athletic trophies I got were the ones that went for “participation” or “teamwork.” But I got a lot of Bible trophies. The applause felt good - but it was a fickle master and the good feelings never lasted very long.

The other little match - ***the “secret” one - I kept hidden***. It promised happiness and relief but delivered only guilt and shame. I kept going back to this flickering flame - even though I knew right away it was dangerous, potentially deadly. And now the glory of God felt like a great hammer of judgment waiting to fall on me.

***I knew that God was glorious.*** I knew He was holy and powerful and all-knowing. So deep down I knew that I was in serious trouble. I was not giving God the glory He deserved - I was stealing that glory for myself whenever I could through the “success” match. And I was really devoted to myself with that “secret” book of matches.

Then at the age of 13 I worked up the courage to share my struggles with my youth leader, Andy. I fully expected judgment and anger but do you know what Andy did? He took me to Arby’s and bought me a Jamocha shake. There is still something special to me with the sweet flavor of a Jamocha shake. Over the next several weeks Andy helped me to SEE the glory of Jesus.

***Jesus had not come to condemn me for my sin. He had come to SAVE me from my sin.*** Andy led me to remember and restate my confession of faith in Jesus. I had long said I believed in Jesus but only at this point did the light of the Gospel begin to shine in my heart and break through the darkness of my confusion, selfishness and sin. I started to see the glory of Jesus as Andy first lifted me up to Jesus and then lifted Jesus up to me.

And it wasn’t long before I started speaking more about Jesus with my friends at school and even teaching about Jesus in the youth group. As I learned of Jesus’ amazing grace that saved a wretch like me, my heart began to sing.

A few years later, early in my college years, I started to learn what it means to Savor Jesus’ love: ***to glorify God BY ENJOYING HIM***; to experience the fountain of life, joy, power and purpose that God is.

And what a joyful adventure it has been since then. What a privilege we have to lift up Jesus so that others can see His glory. What a joy it is to gather with God’s people to sing of Jesus’ grace and to go into the world to share of His goodness to a world lost in darkness. And what an infinite gift it is to savor the love of Jesus for us - to experience a foretaste of eternal life right now as we begin to know God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Let’s pray that we will be a church that lifts up Jesus - that we might truly be able to say that it is ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD!