

Soli Deo Gloria

November 26, 2017

Anyone here like jigsaw puzzles?

I don't. Not even a little bit. But I do know how jigsaw puzzles work. My wife and a few of our kids love those cardboard nuisances. Usually what happens is all contents of a puzzle are dumped out on the kitchen table and turned right side up. Next, the puzzle people study the picture on the box.

Because the picture on the box is the picture that will slowly take shape as they painstakingly fit piece into piece. And over hours and days the picture comes into focus one piece at a time.

And finally we when the the last piece is placed and the jigsaw puzzle is complete—the picture on the box matches the picture on the table.

Today we are going to take all of the pieces of the Reformation that we have been talking about and see the whole picture.

Today we talk about the fifth summary of the Reformation and all of the scriptures—Soli Deo Gloria. Glory to God alone.

If you have been here, you know that we have walked through the 5 Solas of the Reformation. They were rediscovered when they opened and studied their Bibles. I saw rediscovery because the Reformers did not wrestle these things into the scriptures, as much as they let their open Bibles speak again.

What served as a summary of the Reformation is a summary of the all of the scriptures.

According the Scriptures alone mankind is reconciled to God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for the Glory of God alone.

That has been the jigsaw puzzle we have been putting together for the past number of weeks.

Scripture Alone

Grace Alone

Faith Alone

Christ Alone

Do not make sense unless they are understood to be for the glory of God alone.

The scriptures point to God and are concerned for his glory alone. Grace to unworthy sinners is for his glory alone. The gift of faith to the faithless is for God's glory alone. Salvation is in Christ and Christ alone to the Glory of God alone.

The pieces all fit together to so that we would see the big picture that all glory must go to God alone.

PROP: All Glory must Go to God alone.

I'm going to read all of Revelation 5, but we are going to focus on verses 9 and 10—the first song. It is called a new song. I'll read it all so that we get a bit of context,

“Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed

with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴ and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

⁶ And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you
ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests
to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,

to receive power and wealth and wisdom and
might
and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and
under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them,
saying,

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might
forever and ever!”

¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the
elders fell down and worshiped.”

PRAY

Before we hear the song, I want to ask two questions—

What is glory?

I grew up in church. And the tradition I came from all the
adults would shout ‘glory’ a lot. So I thought glory was a
church word that adults said when they didn’t really know
what to say.

But it is much more.

Glory is a word that better felt than defined. You would
know glory when you felt it. It happened at the dedication
of the first temple in Solomon’s day,

“As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down
from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the
sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. [2]
And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD,
because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD’s house. [3]

When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.” 2 Chronicles 7:1–3

No one had to tell the people to bow—they did because they saw the glory of the Lord.

It happened to Paul as he was going to Damascus to get Christians and imprison them—

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. [4] And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” [5] And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Acts 9:3–5

No one had to tell Paul to fall—when he saw the glory of the Lord he fell.

How do you define such a word?

Glory is a word much like beauty. You can't really describe beauty, but you know something is beautiful when you see it.

A sunset, A song, A person, A poem can all be called beautiful.

Glory is the same way.

I think the best way to describe glory is weighty or important. When the president walks in a room—hail to the chief rings out. Everyone stops their conversation and focuses on him.

The same is true with God.

He is weighty and important. He ought not be brushed aside, thought of as ‘meh’, he is not just okay—he is glorious. He cannot be ignored.

Glory is the weightiness of God.

The second question is this—

When we say Glory to God alone—how does Jesus and the Holy Spirit fit in?

That is an important question. We must not think of glory to God alone as Glory to God the Father alone. NO. We must think of Glory to the Triune God alone. We must not put a wedge between God the father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit.

Each member of the Trinity has a different role when it comes to mankind.

God the Father planned redemption and sent his only son to earth to die. God the Son became a real man to live a perfect life and die a substitutionary death only to rise again. God the Holy Spirit works in concert with the preaching of the gospel to make sinners follow Jesus.

This is how the scriptures present the activities of the Triune God. We try and ensure that our songs speak of the Triune God the way Scripture does.

- God the Father: He loves the world. He has always loved lost sinners. He is the one who was eager to reach out and save rebellious sinners. He conceived of the way that mankind might have life. He sent his only son to earth to ransom any from the world that would come to him.

Songs/Prayer: We are going to sing about his love, how he sent his son, how he adopts us as sons and daughters, thank him for access to him. Why? Because this is the way the scriptures speak of God the father.

- God the Son: He was submitted to the Father and willingly and joyfully came to earth as a man. He laid down equality with God to become equal with lowly mankind. The creator became a creature. Jesus was simultaneously God and man, and yet he was a man like no other. He was sinless in thought, word and deed. And he died—was killed—to be a substitute for sinners like you and me.

Songs/Prayer: Going to be thankful about him taking our sin, dying in our place. We are going to thank him for giving us access to the Father and recognize he is our very life. All Christian thinking, praying and singing points and pivots on Christ. Why? Because the scriptures do too.

- God the Spirit: He was sent by the Father and the Son to comfort and minister to Christians. The Spirit makes dead sinners live again and takes up residence in his people. He works in concert with his word to encourage, empower and point to Christ. The Spirit lives to highlight the person and work of Jesus.

Songs/Prayer: We will ask the Spirit to work in us and empower us to serve in this world. Because the Spirit lives to highlight Jesus that is how our songs and prayers work in our church.

So when we say Soli Deo Gloria we are thinking Glory to the Triune God alone and not just Glory to the Father alone. The picture on the box doesn't make sense if we do not understand what each member of the Trinity does.

Glory: Weightiness of the Triune God.

Glory be to the Triune God alone.

Now that we know what Glory is and what we mean by glory to God alone—we can look at the new song. Let's look again at this song,

“And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,

for you were slain, and by your blood you
ransomed people for God

from every tribe and language and people and nation,

¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests
to our God,

and they shall reign on the earth.”

This throneroom is raucous and loud. There is music bumping and thumping day and night. There are no quiet corners for contemplation or desk to do a little pen and ink sketching.

Everyone is focused on the throne.

And this song is sung because of what happens right in front of the throne. John tells us that a loud voiced challenged all creation to find one worthy to open the scroll. None came forth.

But the elder who was standing with John says,

“Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

And John picks up his eyes and sees NOT a lion but—

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain...

Of course we know that Jesus is both the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb that was slain. The method of Jesus' conquering like a lion was being slain like a lamb.

Jesus as led away like a lamb and slaughtered. And yet as a lion he used his death to defeat sin and death forever. Christ overcame our enemies by being slaughtered as a lamb. And with that—the whole throneroom exploded in a new song—those songs that are sung when God delivers his people.

A Celebration

A Creation

A Commission

1. What Heaven Celebrates—

“And they sang a new song, saying,
In the pages of the Old Testament, new songs were sung to celebrate dramatic Jewish events. Moses sang one at the shore of the Red Sea.

But the 24 elders and 4 creatures around the throne of God sing a new song. They regale God the son with this song—why?

“Worthy are you to take the scroll

(The only one worthy so far in this book is God the Father. Here they say God the son is. Jesus is God.)

They celebrate Christ's work—what did he do?

and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you
ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,

Instead of singing of a victory only for Israel we hear a new song sung for people of every tribe, language, people and nation. The victory of the lamb is for all, not just Israel. Heaven's chorus rightly understood that a great victory had been won by the lion/lamb.

What did he do?

He ransomed a people for God.

In other words, the lamb was slain and by this death and life he purchased a people for God out of every corner of the earth. They were singing of a new Exodus—God the Son had ransomed people from the slavery to sin and the sentence of death.

The Lamb paid the full price for these people by giving his full life. He gave his life so that people from every tribe, language, people and nation might have life in his name. He paid the ransom price in full so that death might no longer hold them hostage.

Make no mistake, there is no ransom price paid without that bloody cross. There is no freedom without the lamb's

death. The death of the lamb is celebrated—no one shrinks back from it—but instead they sing songs about it. Jesus himself does not put the death in the past preferring not to call to mind what happened. Rather, he appears as a lamb with a mortal wound.

Why?

There would be no life without this death.

There would be no glory that goes to God alone without the death of the lamb alone. The author of life died to purchase men and women back from beyond the brink of death. Soli Deo Gloria.

Of course, his death is not the end of the story, but without his death we do not have a story worth telling. He died and lives again.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Before we leave this heavenly refrain, hear two little words that we might not notice,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you
ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,

The two words? ‘for God’

Typically, when a ransom note is paid, the hostage is set free to go off and do whatever. But not in this case—the

song does not say that the people are ransomed and set free but they were ransomed 'for God.'

Strictly speaking we Christians are not free. We are owned by God. He bought us decisively and eternally. We are freed from the peril and punishment of sin to belong to God.

You are for God and not for yourself.

This is why Christianity is not merely about making a decision and living however you want. You are to live to become more and more like God. We usually say to become godlier.

You can't add a little God to your life to spice things up. It is all or nothing. If you want to better yourself without giving all of yourself to him, watch Dr. Phil.

When you are saved you go from being for yourself to for God.

You are owned. Completely and fully. You are quite frankly, NOT free to act in a way that seems right to you. You have been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ and are called to live according his will alone.

The glory—the weight—of God ought to impact who we are at the most fundamental level. How do we bring Glory to the Triune God alone?

Thoughts: We are not going to think too highly of ourselves. We are fight NOT to trust ourselves too much. Take thoughts captive and meditate on the scriptures.

For his glory alone.

Speech: We are only going to speak the truth but more than that we are not just going to say true words but necessary words. We not going to speak as to draw attention to ourselves. We will not be contentious spreading rumors or bad reports.

For His glory alone.

Actions: We are to do right especially when no one is looking. We will refuse to use people and then throw them away when we are done. We will look for opportunities to serve and give of our time for others.

We will be content to be misunderstood for his glory alone. We will be content NOT to stand up for our rights for his glory alone.

For we live for His glory alone.

We celebrate the ransom of God in Christ—now we see what he created.

2. What he created us to be—

10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,

We are made into a kingdom and priests.

Christians—the people of God—are now a kingdom because the king was enthroned. This kingdom is not

defined by land or geo-political borders but by the king's reign.

When the lamb was slain and returned to life, the kingdom of God was inaugurated. The borders of this kingdom are spread one person at a time. There can be no such thing as a Christian country. One may be a citizen of any country but citizenship in any country does not make one a Christian.

Instead, God has made his people a kingdom under the rule and reign of the lamb. The gospel is the key to the entrance into this kingdom. Believing that the lamb died in your place and trusting in him and instead of yourself gives you access to his kingdom.

When we pray—your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We are praying that his kingdom expand one person at a time until the day that Jesus returns and his kingdom will be here in fullness and all will obey.

We are not just praying that God will create this new world without sin BUT ALSO we are praying that his kingdom spread more and more in this world and that more and more people would follow him.

His will done on earth as it is in heaven.

Kingdom AND priests

Priests have access to God in a way that normal people do not. The reason NO Christian church has a priest is because NO Christian church needs a priest.

Why?

Because all Christians are already priests. This doesn't mean that all Christians are to be leaders and teachers but it does mean that all Christians have access to God on their own.

They do not need to seek out for a priest.

In the Old Testament priests sacrificed animals for the people's sins. Now, we go directly to Jesus and on the basis of his sacrifice gain forgiveness for our many sins. In the Old Testament, men and women could not pray directly to God but needed priests to go to God for them; not us. We can go directly to God because our savior is seated right next to him.

But we are called to mediate Christ to those who do not yet know him. Part of our priestly duties is to represent God on earth. One of the reasons Christians are still here on earth is so that we mediate Christ to those that don't know him.

We speak the words of life to this dying world. There is one and only message of hope and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. We bring glory to God alone as we spread the message that—

- All have fallen short and are sinners
- All have need of a savior
- All can come to Jesus the savior they need
- All can have eternal life now

We bring glory to the Triune God alone as we mediate the message of Jesus to this world.

Kingdom and priests to our God.

Soli deo Gloria

Application:

We are both a kingdom and priests. That means we need others and it is impossible for any Christian to conceive of living life without other Christians in his/her life. Why? Because God has made us a kingdom.

We are not invited to build our own kingdoms. We belong to his kingdom. We fit into God's program he does not fit into ours. We do not come to God with a list of demand for him to do in for us.

We live for the glory of the Triune God alone

Heaven celebrates our ransom—we understand how we are recreated and we are given a commission.

3. How we are commissioned—

and they shall reign on the earth.”

His people shall reign on earth. Reign is a strange word when applied to you and I. I don't feel very regal. I don't feel very Royal.

Is that only future?

No. Not really.

Yes, we will reign over the new heavens and the new earth one day, but we are reigning even today.

How?

If we go back to the beginning of creation, We read in Genesis 1: 27– 28: God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

As God’s agents in his image, he says we are to “fill the earth and subdue it.” What does this mean? God placed the man and woman on earth to care for and rule over it in his place. God’s plan was for men and women to spread his loving rule— his kingdom— around the world through them. You see, even though God graciously made us in his image to worship, enjoy him and extend his rule, to spread his amazing love to others.

But mankind has not done this. We went our own way trying to run our own lives. We’ve usurped God’s authority and have thought we knew better. That is the essence of sin.

And yet we read here that heaven sings of Christians reigning on earth.

Christians are Kings and Queens in waiting. There will be a day that we will be seen to reign with Christ over the new

creation. Now we are beginning to reign as we faithfully reflect the glory (weightiness) of God in all we do.

You can think of yourself as a mirror. What do mirrors do? They are meant to reflect—our job as future rulers begun today is to reflect the glory the Triune God alone.

One day we will rule with Christ—we see it explicitly in Revelation 22,

“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. [4] They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. [5] And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:3–5

They will reign forever and ever.

We will one day be the people we were made to be, we will be who God created us to be, finally.

But we do not have to wait. We begin to reign now as we—live to point to him.

Serve others

Give of ourselves

Sacrifice our money

Help the weak

Comfort the hurting

Hospitable

Blessing and not cursing

Bind up wounds

Fruit of the Spirit

Love our neighbor

These things are not just things to obey but our commission to reign.

Conclusion—

It could be easy to personalize the message of the scriptures to the point that you lose the point. It is simple to boil down the summary of the Reformation to be for just me. Like this—

Scripture is my guide alone

My salvation is by grace alone by my faith alone in my Christ alone.

True as far as it goes. But we need to go further. We need to go further than ourselves. If we only think about ourselves we will not put all the pieces together—we will not bring Glory to the Triune God alone.

Soli Deo Gloria—

