The Trouble and the Glory of Christ
John 12:27-36

If I were to ask you, 'what has been *the* greatest moment of your life so far?' what would you say? What's been your greatest achievement? Or the moment of which you are most proud, that even now you look back on with a glow of satisfaction?

But then, what if I were to ask you the opposite, 'what's been the *worst* moment of your life?' When you've felt most conflicted, or most anxious, or your heart has been in most turmoil?

I doubt those two moments - the best and the worst, the greatest and the gravest - are the same, are they? Now, sure, if you're in the final of some competition you really want to win, or you're in the delivery room and your wife is about to give birth to your first child, or you're waiting to get news on a job you've applied for and really want, it'd be totally normal to be experiencing a severe case of nerves on the verge of something great. Just like the moments before doing something truly heroic might be filled with fear. That's normal.

But for the *very* moment of your greatest triumph, or success, or glory, to also be the moment when you experience the greatest distress, or internal conflict and trouble, that would seem more odd wouldn't it? Because that would be like terror and joy, crippling anxiety and deep satisfaction co-exisiting in the same moment. It would be like a piece of music soaring to its dramatic climax, only for it to end in an out of tune, out of place chord. And you think, what's that about?

And yet, in today's passage, we see Jesus saying that's exactly what he's feeling and experiencing. The hour of his glory is coming and he is deeply troubled. Why? And what's it got to do with you? Well, we're going to look at three things: The troubled soul. The Father's glory. And from darkness to light.

The Troubled Soul
Now, two weeks ago, we were looking at Jesus entering Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. And if you were here, and if you remember, John, the author of this gospel, reworks a quote from Zechariah the prophet and says, '*Fear not*, daughter of Zion, behold, your king is coming!' But down in the City of Zion, Jerusalem, the religious leaders, the Pharisees, are doing anything but fearing-not, because they're watching the crowds celebrating Jesus' arrival and saying to one another, v19, "look, *the world* has gone after him."

But then, last week, we saw some Greeks, some people of the world, some gentile converts to Judaism, come to Philip, one of the disciples, and ask to meet Jesus. And it's as if John is holding them up as an example - look, the Pharisees are not wrong, the world is coming to Jesus. And what the Pharisees most feared, the spreading of Jesus' fame, is coming true. And these Greeks are just the first ripples before the flood. Because in response to their coming, Jesus says, v23, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." In other words, 'My greatest moment, the moment of my triumph, the pinnacle of my life, the hour of my glory, has come.'

And yet, in virtually the very next breath he says, v27, "Now is my soul troubled." And that word *troubled* is strong. It can mean revulsion, horror, recoiling, agitation. In the New Testament alone you see the range of its meaning. The disciples are in a boat in a storm on the sea, and Jesus comes to them, walking on water, and they are *terrified* - same word. In the Acts of the Apostles, a crowd is on the point of rioting, emotions are at boiling point, and they are provoked and stirred up - same word.

And so here, at the moment of his greatest glory, Jesus' soul is deeply, profoundly disturbed, agitated and recoiling from what is to come. Why?

Well, before we consider Jesus, what about you? What does that to your soul? You see in Psalm 42, the psalmist asks himself that very question, 'Why are you cast down, O my soul, *and why are you in turmoil within me?'* (42:11) And if you know the psalm you'll know that he recognises his need to confront the things that are so disturbing him, to face up to them.

So what does it for you? What leaves *your* soul cast down, troubled, agitated, and in turmoil?

Often, it's fear for the future, isn't it? Fear for that dreaded thing that might be coming round the corner - for yourself, or for those you love. Or maybe it's when you see injustice and unrighteousness seemingly winning the day, or false accusations - maybe even against you - being considered true, and it disturbs you. Or maybe it's when someone you care about makes bad choices, or you're faced with your own physical or moral weakness. Whatever it is, like the psalmist your soul can be in turmoil.

But now, go back to Jesus, and ask, what's doing it for him? And what's it got to do with his moment of glory? Well, as David showed us last week, as soon as Jesus says 'the hour of my glory has come' he follows up with, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone" (v24). And that's what so troubling him. That's what his soul is recoiling from. It's that falling, it's that dying grain of wheat. Because he is that wheat. And he knows what's coming.

Now, you know what it's like to be sat in the sun, don't you, and it's wonderful to feel it's warmth on your face. But you also know what it's like when the sun goes behind a cloud and now you're in the shade, and the temperature drops, it's not so nice anymore, is it? You feel it. And here, it's as if a shadow has passed over Jesus. And it's the shadow of the cross. And he doesn't just fear, he *knows* what's coming round the corner. As David said last week, what's coming is a death designed to humiliate. Stripped naked and exposed and slow and degrading. A death designed to strip you of glory.

And Jesus' soul recoils from it. But what does he do with those emotions? When his soul is so troubled, where does he turn?

The Father's Glory

And in v27-28, Jesus turns to his Father and prays: "And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father glorify your name."

And so facing something so terrible that his soul trembles, does Jesus ask to be saved from it? No. Now, on the night of his betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane, he will ask the Father to take away from him the cup that he must drink - and yet immediately after praying that he prays, "but not my will but yours be done." And here, overwhelmed at the thought of what is to come, what's his prayer? Save me from this hour? No. It's for this reason, this purpose, I've come to this hour. So, Father, in this hour, glorify your name.

How do you respond when your heart is troubled? Maybe, if you're like me, you're tempted to give in to self-pity. Or maybe your heart is troubled because you are being tempted to do something you know is wrong, but you still want to do it and there's a fight going on inside you. Or maybe you're

facing some choice, some decision in life, and you're unsettled about which way to take. But whether we give in temptation or not, or what choice we make or path we take, always depends on 'what do I most want?' In this moment, in this hour, *what do I most love?*

And Jesus is clear what that is for him. And just as he will in the Garden, he places his emotional turmoil, his feelings, his desires, under His Father's. Because there is no-one he loves more, there is nothing he wants more, and there is no greater glory for him, than that God his Father be glorified.

Now, we're all living for someone's glory aren't we? I read something recently by an author who said that, admit it or not, what every author is after is glory. Recognition, praise, honour.

But not just authors. We all are, whether it's through your careers, or families or marriages, or great experiences and posting about them. All of our lives are directed to getting and giving glory to someone. And if that someone is you, you're going to struggle to take joy in the success of others, or cope with your own failures. Live for your own glory and insecurity and resentment and bitterness will eat you up, even when on the surface everything seems glorious. Just look at Hollywood.

Earlier this week I read an article about people who are called 'sober coaches' - people who come alongside the rich and the famous when they are trapped in addictions and life is spiralling out of control. And according to the article, business is booming. Why? Because if you think life is about your glory eventually you're going to need something to quiet the inner turmoil. But turn to the wrong thing and that too will destroy you.

But Jesus' greatest desire is not for his, but his Father's glory. And so rather than being eaten up by bitterness or resentment at what is to come, he faces unspeakable trouble with courage. And he does what, from Adam on, none of us have been able to do, and that's glorify God by his obedience.

But did you notice how the Father responds? Verse 28, 'Then a voice came from heaven: "I *have* glorified it, and I *will* glorify it again." And the 'it' refers to God's name, God's character. And think of the countless ways God has already glorified himself through Jesus' life. Through his birth to a virgin, through the visit of the magi and the worship of the wise, through his cleansing of lepers, and healing of the sick, and raising of the dead, through his calming of storms and casting out of demons and his transfiguration on the mount. If you and I are always at risk of leaving behind us a trail of destruction, or at least harm, as we seek our own glory, Jesus left behind him a trail of good as he sought God's glory. 'I have glorified my name through you,' the Father says.

But that trail of glory and of good is not going to end at the cross. It's the opposite, the Father says. And that execution designed to strip its victims of glory is going to be where this great trail of glory reaches its climax. That the thing that so troubles Jesus, will be the moment when the character of God is displayed in all it's glory.

Verses 30-32, 'Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."'

You see, at the cross, the world, the religious and secular powers, the crowd, thought they were judging Jesus, but in doing so they were judging and condemning themselves. And as he took our

place, as he became our substitute, as he drank the cup that was ours to drink, and God's wrath against our sin was poured out on him, sin was shown for what it is, but so too was the character of God.

Utterly holy. Utterly just. And pure and utter love. Because it's not just that if our sins were to be paid for, Jesus *had* to die, it's that he wanted to. And the cross shows the full extent of our sin and the totality of the justice of God, in the face of which Jesus was profoundly troubled. But it also shows us the height and depth and length and breadth of the love of God. And as he was lifted up, Jesus was putting on public display a love that gives his only Son to make you his son and you his daughter.

You see, in our pursuit of glory, we're willing to crush and trample on others to get there. But in his pursuit of the Father's glory, in his desire that you know his love and his grace, Jesus was willing to be crushed and trampled on for you.

But it's not just that the cross judges the world and condemns sin, it's that satan, the ruler of this world is cast out, Jesus says.

Now, imagine a country that has been ruled for far too long but a ruthless and despotic leader. But a revolution takes place and you watch on live TV as the rebels take the presidential palace and in full public view that ruler is evicted and cast out on the streets. And that's the moment you know, his rule is over, there's a new king in town.

And Jesus is saying, at the cross, that's exactly what happens to satan. All that cursing, all that spitting, all that humiliation, all that suffering, all that blood, all that death - satan thought it was him putting Christ to shame. But in Colossians, Paul tells us it's the exact opposite. That it was in Jesus being put to shame that satan was shamed. Because there, nailed to the cross, Christ 'disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them.' (Col 2:15). And by breaking the power of sin and death, that despotic ruler was evicted and thrown into the street. He thinks he's cast Christ out, when all the time God has him by the scruff of the neck and casts him out.

And satan is dethroned and God is glorified. Glorified as the One who would cover your shame by being shamed; who saves you by refusing to be saved; who lifts you up by being brought low and who gives you life by dying for you.

It's why Jesus says, v32 again, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." Because if satan is cast out, all people, all types of people, Jew and gentile, rich and poor, high and low, you and me are drawn in. And so, at the cross Jesus doesn't just glorify the holiness and justice and love and forgiveness and victory of God, but his mercy and his call to come home.

But like these people, you've got to want to come home.

From Darkness to Light

Look at v34, 'So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up. Who is this Son of Man?"

Now, think what they're asking. This is the crowd who greeted him as he rode into Jerusalem, as the messiah, the Christ, the king who's come to rid them of Roman rule. And their expectation is that that king will reign forever. So why all this talk of death and dying and being lifted up. What kind of a Son of Man, what kind of a Messiah is that? That's not the kind of Messiah we want.

Let me ask you: has God ever failed to live up to your expectations? Has he ever refused to do for you wanted, maybe even expected him to do for you? When he's not come through for you in the way you were praying, or given you what you were longing for, when the silence after you've prayed has gone on and on. Are there times when you wonder, God what kind of a God, Jesus what kind of a saviour are you?

But did you notice Jesus's answer to their question? Because there isn't one , is there. He doesn't say, 'oh, I can see you're not quite understanding, let me explain the type of king I am.' No. Instead he says, v35, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you." Now, what kind of an answer is that? Well, the answer is, it's not an answer. It's a call to trust, a call to faith. A call to step out of the darkness and into his light.

And like them we can long for answers. God why have you let this happen? Why are you not answering my prayer? Why is my loved one suffering like this? Why am *I* suffering like this? In other words, why are you not being the king I want you to be? But in place of an answer he gives us himself. Himself to trust. Verses 35-36: "The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

Now for these people, time was short. Jesus was not going to be with them much longer. But time's not endless for any of us, is it? At least not in this life. And just as he puts before them, he puts before each of us this choice between darkness and light.

And if you're not yet a Christian, Jesus is saying to you, you don't want to be overtaken by the darkness. You don't want to stumble through life like a man stumbling in the dark. And you don't need to. Come into the light.

And for all of us, Christian or non-Christian, being troubled of soul and anxious of heart, for whatever reason, can be like living life in the shadows; while living for your own glory brings its own darkness. So we all need to step into and live in the light.

The question is, how can we do it?

By trusting me, Jesus says, by believing the light. You see, look again at Jesus troubled in soul. And ask yourself again, 'why is he troubled?' He's troubled because in his love for you he is going to carry all your guilt and all your shame and all your sin and at the cross pay for it all. And he will be cast out that you might be brought in. He will be laid low that you might be lifted high. He will be forsaken that you can be welcomed. He will enter the darkness that you can come into the light, and know that you are loved and chosen and forgiven. He's troubled in soul for you.

And when you know that it will do four things for you. Firstly, when you're troubled, like him you'll pray, because you'll know that because of him you are loved and heard, and even when you don't get what you want, you know that what your Father wants is infinitely better.

Secondly, like the psalmist when you're troubled in heart, you'll hope. And you won't just speak to God but to yourself, as you confront your trouble with the truth of God and his word: Ps 42:11 again: 'Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.' And you'll speak to yourself: Christ was troubled for me. He was plunged into darkness for me. And if he was willing to die for me, he's not going to let go of me now. So with Jesus we pray, and with the psalmist we hope.

Thirdly, it will give you the strength and courage to keep following him when you're troubled. Because if Jesus knew what it was to be overwhelmed, and to sweat in the face of trouble, you're not a useless no-hoper cast on the scrap heap of life if that's how you feel when you face trouble. No, the troubled soul of Jesus tells you, he is a God full of compassion and mercy. One who has been made like us in every way, yet without sin. So see him troubled and take courage in your trouble.

But fourthly, when you see God's glory - his holiness, and justice, and love, and triumph, and grace, and mercy, and welcome put on public display at the cross, as Jesus takes your place, ask yourself, 'whose glory am I going to live for?'

You see, when the Voice spoke from heaven it seems the majority, *at least*, had no idea what it was saying: Verse 29, 'The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."'

But when *you* hear and understand that voice, that at the cross Christ has glorified his Father, and shown us his character, then spending your life on your own glory seems empty, doesn't it?

Instead, see Christ lifted up and give your life to make him look great, not yourself. Don't be overtaken by the dark, but 'come', Jesus says, 'and walk in the light.'