

Title: Soli Deo Gloria  
Text: Matthew 22.37-40/Ephesians 1.3-14  
Theme: God alone is deserving of all glory  
Series: The 5 Solas – 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation  
Prop Stmtnt: Since God alone is truly glorious, God alone is deserving of all glory.

Read Text:

This month is the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation. The Reformation marked the rediscovery of the Bible which lead to a recovery of the gospel which, to be more precise was the recovery of the doctrine of justification. Justification is the Bible's teaching that we are declared righteous in the eyes of God, when we through faith alone, trust in Christ alone. Christ did for us, what we could not do for ourselves. Christ not only took our punishment when he died on the cross, but he provides us with his righteousness. So God not only withheld his just judgment from us, but he credits everyone with the righteousness of Christ who believes on Christ. The Bible and therefore the gospel teaches us that we cannot do anything to rescue ourselves from our sin. We need a Savior. We need someone outside of us to rescue us and God sent Christ to live in our place and die in our place. The fact that we cannot save ourselves means that we do not get the glory. No saint can do anything to save us, so no saint is to get glory. The church cannot save us, so no religious officials are to receive glory. Only by God's grace can we be saved from God's justice.

For any person to seek his own glory is like the honorary water boy claiming he was responsible for the team winning the State Championship. We did not do anything to contribute to our rescue. Jesus did it all, all to him I owe. He is the author and finisher of the faith. He will see me through and he will hold me fast. That means that God gets all the credit. God receives all the glory. The recovery of this truth (to God alone be the glory) in the area of the gospel led to a recovery of the truth that God is to receive glory in all things. Therefore, the Reformation marked the recovery of the gospel, which rightfully understood, was a recovery of the Bible's emphasis on the glory of God. My aim today is to help you see how this doctrine not only fills your soul with joy but it is designed to motivate you to live for the purpose of making much of God since he alone is worth making much of.

The idea that God is to receive all glory may not initially sound like a wonderful truth, but when you begin to understand who God is, then you can begin to understand why the doctrine of God's glory is such a soul-filling and wondrous doctrine.

## I. Attempts at understanding the glory of God.

### A. **God is the Creator and we are the creation.**

Isaiah 42.5, "Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out...I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols."

I call this, the argument of order: Because God is the Creator of all and he made you and he is Sovereign over all, then the fact that he is to receive glory and not us...well, it's just the way things are – get over it. Now, there is definitely some truth to that. God is the Creator and we are the creation, He is King and we are the subjects and he is not going to permit anything or anyone to take his glory because if he did, God would be guilty of permitting a lie to go unchallenged. Related to that is the second layer of understanding the glory of God.

### **B. God is Awesome and we are puny.**

When you observe a tornado, a hurricane, feel the sonic boom of thunder, hear and are temporarily blinded by the explosion of lightning, watch tidal waves crashing, or stand at the base of a mountain or at the top of it, or look as far as you can into the night sky, or watch the northern lights hauntingly dance in the night, you realize that the one who created all of this and sustains all of this and controls all of this has to be way beyond your ability to comprehend, then you feel intimidated, and certainly vulnerable. This is the “How Great Thou Art” response.

The argument of power: God is bigger than you and can squash you any moment he pleases. A further development of that and another layer of understanding the glory of God is the fact that ...

### **C. God is Righteous and we are sinful.**

The argument of morality: God is devastatingly pure and if we would be exposed to the unveiled brilliance of his righteousness, we would be consumed on the spot.

Have you ever talked with a psychiatrist or a psychologist? I don't mean as a patient, I mean just in normal conversation. These professionals are supposed to be able to read you and expose the secrets that you are hiding, right? So, have you ever been in a conversation and all of a sudden thought, “this person is probably reading me like a book.” It's intimidating. In fact, it's a wonder that people in those professions have any friends at all, right? We can find comfort in the fact that many of these professionals have their own issues too. But, imagine standing before God and realizing that everything that you have ever said, thought or done is immediately known and completely known to him. God not only knows everything about you, but everything about him is so holy and so righteous that he burns in brilliant holiness.

But, as true as these are, none of them all alone cause me to “love” God. God is Creator and God is awesome in might and God is Holy, but all of those only tell me about how unlike we are, how distant we are, and how separated we are. They don't cause me to love God. And yet, Jesus said that the greatest commandment for us is to love God with our whole being! Jesus goes for broke doesn't he? He does not settle for an action on our part, he goes for our ultimate affection. He demands the ultimate place in our hearts.

If you failed to file your taxes for several years and the IRS caught you, charged you and fined you, you might be remorseful, you might be resentful, but the fact that the IRS agent enforced a rule would not cause your heart to love him/her. If you failed to pay your taxes for several years and the IRS missed you, or simply chose not to bother with you, or simply gave you a warning, you would most likely feel relief, perhaps gratitude, but you would still most likely not love that IRS agent with your heart. *If God is simply the chief lawmaker and enforcer, and if salvation is getting off of the hook, then, as the subject who is ruled, my response is relief and gratitude, but not love.* So, for years I found this command by Christ to be a bit curious. Why does God command us to love him? And if I understand this correctly, this is the big one. This is the one from which everything else flows. And if I know anything about God at all, it is that he knows the difference between real love and pretend love. God is not about show and image. He is serious about being God and therefore he is serious about us actually loving him. So, why would Jesus say that the greatest commandment is to love God? In fact, doesn't it sound like an egotistical control freak who demands to be loved?

Is God like the crusty old cowboy who is shooting bullets at your feet? If someone is shooting bullets at your feet, you are dancing right? But you are not dancing with delight are you? You are not dancing with joy. You are dancing to keep your feet from getting shot. Is that the kind of dancing that God wants us to do for him? The medieval court jester was to make the king laugh. If the king didn't laugh, the jester would be killed. Is that what God is like? Is he so shallow, so insecure that he has to use his power to make people that he then demands them to love him? Does he command us to love him and then force us to profess affection out of fear that we will be destroyed if we don't? What kind of a love would that be? Is God that shallow? And if that were the case then what would heaven be like if God were a threatened control-freak who would only get love by demanding it? If God, who is in heaven is the control-freak kind, then heaven would be hell. To live in a castle with a tyrant who threatens to destroy you at any moment removes your freedom from being able to enjoy all of the beauty and splendor of that castle. *Either God is a threatened control-freak who will only get love by demanding it, or there is more to who God is.* So, how are we to understand this command to love God and how does this command of loving God relate to the glory of God?

## II. How are we to understand the glory of God?

I have taught you for years what I believed the glory of God to be. I have taught you that the glory of God is the sum total of all of his attributes. In other words, if you took everything that God is (omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, immutability, righteousness, holiness, justice, grace, mercy, love, infiniteness, etc.) and you added them all up, then that is the glory of God. But, I do not think that what I have taught is complete enough. Therefore I would like to amend for you my definition of the glory of God. I believe that *the glory of God is the sum total of his person and his attributes.* In fact, I think that understanding who God is, is essential to understanding the attributes he possesses. So, here is what I've had to work through: Jesus said that loving God is the greatest commandment.

**A. Since Christ said that the greatest commandment was to love God that must mean that God is worthy of and capable of arousing and drawing out our greatest love.**

According to Jesus, loving God is the greatest, the highest, the most important thing I could ever do. So, if loving God is greatest thing that I could do, then that must mean that God is capable of causing and arousing and drawing out of me a truly great love. I think that I have had a taste of love in how I respond with affection to my wife and my kids and my grandkids, but I am not commanded to love them above all. I am commanded to love God above all. So, what I need to do is look into why God is capable of arousing this kind of love and why it is right for God to command us to love him. Where did this command come from? It came from Deut. 6.

**B. The source of this command (Deut 6) connects the command to love God with the person of God.**

In Deuteronomy 6, the command to love God is given as a response to the fact that God is one. This text places an enormous emphasis upon the unity of God. The LORD is one. At the very beginning of the Bible we read where God says, "Let us make man in our image." Before that we read that God spoke the world into existence and the Spirit of God hovered over and cared for the earth. These and other passages are early clues to the fact that God is one God whose essence is made up of 3 persons; Father, Son and Spirit.

Therefore...

**C. Our love for God is directly related to our understanding the Trinitarian nature of God.**

What is it about God then that excites and arouses our love for God? It is our understanding of how much God loves God. And I think that Jesus helps us immensely to see what we have missed for so long when he teaches his disciples to pray by calling God, "Our Father." It is theologically correct to call God our Sovereign Creator, Awesome and infinite in power, Holy One, Almighty Judge, All-knowing, all wise, unchanging and eternal King for He is all of this. But while Jesus could have used any of those titles, he teaches us to call God "our Father".

This is not just what we are to call him, this is what Jesus calls him. "Our Father." The fact that Jesus is the Son of God means that he has a Father. Jesus also said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." That means that before God was Creator, he was Father. Before God was Ruler, he was Father. You see, only when we see that God rules his creation as a kind and loving Father will we be moved to trust in His plans and actually delight in his providences and love him in response to the fact that he loved us first.

Does an infant love his mother and father? No! Do the mother and father love the infant? Yes! However, the infant learns to love his mother and father because the infant is loved

first by them. That is what I am saying here. From eternity past, God has been Father who has eternally loved his Son and loves us. As we, like infants learn to realize that we have a Father who loves us and has provided for us, our knowledge of God will elicit love in us in response to his love for us.

We might be grateful that the IRS agent was just and free from bribery and corruption, but we could never take delight in his authority as we could the care, protection and provision of a father. God is more than an IRS agent or a policeman or judge. He is Father. But, God as Father is not the entire story. God is not only Father, God is Son and God is Spirit. Therefore, our understanding of God is directly connected to God's relationship as God. So, then, you go back to Deut. 6.5, which is what Jesus is quoting in Matthew 22 and all of a sudden it all starts to make sense.

The Lord our God is one – connected to loving God. That phrase, “the Lord our God is one” is speaking of the Trinitarian relationship that God enjoys as God. Therefore, our love for God is directly related to our understanding of the unity that God enjoys as God.

**D. Genesis 1 and Ephesians 1 demonstrate that the Trinity was involved in our creation and our re-creation (salvation) and that God did this for his glory.**

Read Ephesians 1.3-14

Now, let's go back and look at the Father's role, the Son's role and the Spirit's role in our salvation.

The Father has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. The Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the earth and ordained our salvation so that we would one day be holy and blameless before him. The Father predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ. The Father did this in accordance to the purpose of his will to put his glorious grace on display which he has blessed us with in Christ (the Beloved).

The Son provided redemption for us by means of his death.

The Son provided forgiveness for us.

The Father made known to us the mystery of his will that he set forth in Christ to unite all things in Christ.

In Christ we have obtained an inheritance.

By means of the Spirit we have been sealed and this sealing guarantees our inheritance along with Christ.

Also notice that all of these things that God has done for us (and they are good) are done for his own glory. (v.6, 12, 14)

**E. If we can understand what God's life as God is like, then we will have a better view of the reason for our creation and re-creation (salvation).**

Before God created us and saved us, God was. If we know what God was and is then we can see more of the motivation and purpose and flavor of our creation and salvation. When you put together all of the things that the God the Father says about God, the Son and all the things that Jesus says about his Father and add to that all of the things that they say about the Spirit and all of the things that the Spirit does, you are left with the conclusion that God's enjoyment as God is the ultimate enjoyment of anyone, ever. We see evidence of this in the Scriptures in both the testimony of the Father at the baptism of Christ and at the Transfiguration of Christ (Matt 17.5). In both cases, the Father delights in the Son, not because of what the Son is doing at the moment, but the Father delights in his Son as his Son. The Father loves the Son and delights in the Son and is pleased by the Son because of the incarnation, humiliation, obedient life, sin-bearing, wrath-appeasing death, because the Father raises him from the dead and exalts him in heaven and over the earth. But, before the Father delighted in what the Son did, he delighted in the Son himself. God the Father loves his Son and has loved his Son from eternity past and delights in his Son and has delighted in his Son as his Son before his Son became man. The glue that holds the Trinity together is permanently very sticky because it is love and delight. We could also say that God's life as God is the greatest life ever and therefore greater than all other life. When you think of, "oh that must be the life, think of God. God is not only the source of life, but he is the definition and standard of life.

So, how does this inform our understanding of what God was up to in our creation and salvation? The story of the gospel starts with God. God is. Then God is designing, then electing, then creating, then sending his Son, then saving, and now God keeping. Before God was with us (Immanuel) God was (and is and will be) in relationship as Trinity. Before God was for us, God was (and is and will be) in relationship as Trinity. Before God could offer us eternal life, he had to be eternal (infinite) life. Before God could offer us a perfect eternity, God had to be perfect. Before God could offer us eternal enjoyment, God had to be and enjoy perfect enjoyment. *In order for heaven to be perfect enjoyment, God has to be perfectly enjoyable. God's enjoyment as God is the trust fund from which he gives enjoyment to his children.*

**F. Since understanding the Trinity is to understand the glory of God, and the glory of God is the ultimate reason for our love, and the Trinity is fully engaged in our life and salvation, then that must mean that God's glory and our ultimate good are eternally bound together.**

When you pursue your true good and the true good of others, you will be pursuing the glory of God and you cannot pursue the glory of God without pursuing the good of others.

**III. How does the glory of God motivate us?**

**A. Love God with all your heart, soul and mind. – Matt 22**

God's enjoyment as God motivates us to love him and enjoy him and pursue him.

**B. Love your neighbor. – Matt 22**

God's delight as God is the basis for God's delight in me and that gives me motivation to delight in others. Loving others means to enjoy them and pursue their good.

**C. Pray for other believers. – Eph. 1.15-23**

Loving others and pursuing their good means that I will pray for them. This is certainly reflected in Eph. 1.15-23, which is Paul's response to the fact that the Trinity is involved in our salvation.

In fact, the second half of Ephesians is all about how God's glory demonstrated in our salvation drives our lives as believers in that we:

**D. Help others follow Jesus better. – Eph. 4**

**E. Help your family reflect God. – Eph. 5-6**

**F. Never stop fighting sin. – Eph. 6**

When I was in high school and college, I enjoyed some modest success in basketball, volleyball and track. Years later I did some coaching. In fact, when Chad was our youth intern, we coached a girls' basketball team. I found out in a hurry that there was so much more joy in coaching than in playing because in coaching I was committed to the success of those kids and to see them learn something and then do it and be successful at it, was so much more delightful than any accomplishment I had as a player.

Because God delights in us, we can delight in God by delighting in others. When we pursue their delight it motivates us to love God, love them, pray for them, help them follow Jesus better, help our family reflect the delight that God enjoys as God and never stop fighting sin because sin is always the enemy of delight.

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**B. The source of this command (Deut 6) connects the command to love God with the person of God.**

In Deuteronomy 6, the command to love God is given as a response to the fact that God is one. This text places an enormous emphasis upon the unity of God. The LORD is one. At the very beginning of the Bible we read where God says, "Let us make man in our image." Before that we read that God spoke the world into existence and the Spirit of God hovered over and cared for the earth. These and other passages are early clues to the fact that God is one God whose essence is made up of 3 persons; Father, Son and Spirit.

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**D. Genesis 1 and Ephesians 1 demonstrate that the Trinity was involved in our creation and our re-creation (salvation) and that God did this for his glory.**

Read Ephesians 1.3-14

Now, let's go back and look at the Father's role, the Son's role and the Spirit's role in our salvation.

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Also notice that all of these things that God has done for us (and they are good) are done for his own glory. (v.6, 12, 14)

**E. If we can understand what God's life as God is like, then we will have a better view of the reason for our creation and re-creation (salvation).**

Before God created us and saved us, God was. If we know what God was and is then we can see more of the motivation and purpose and flavor of our creation and salvation. When you put together all of the things that the God the Father says about God, the Son and all the things that Jesus says about his Father and add to that all of the things that they say about the Spirit and all of the things that the Spirit does, you are left with the conclusion that God's enjoyment as God is the ultimate enjoyment of anyone, ever. We see evidence of this in the Scriptures in both the testimony of the Father at the baptism of Christ and at the Transfiguration of Christ (Matt 17.5). In both cases, the Father delights in the Son, not because of what the Son is doing at the moment, but the Father delights in his Son as his Son. The Father loves the Son and delights in the Son and is pleased by the Son because of the incarnation, humiliation, obedient life, sin-bearing, wrath-appeasing death, because the Father raises him from the dead and exalts him in heaven and over the earth. But, before the Father delighted in what the Son did, he delighted in the Son himself. God the Father loves his Son and has loved his Son from eternity past and delights in his Son and has delighted in his Son as his Son before his Son became man. The glue that holds the Trinity together is permanently very sticky because it is love and delight. We could also say that God's life as God is the greatest life ever and therefore greater than all other life. When you think of, "oh that must be the life, think of God. God is not only the source of life, but he is the definition and standard of life.

So, how does this inform our understanding of what God was up to in our creation and salvation? The story of the gospel starts with God. God is. Then God is designing, then electing, then creating, then sending his Son, then saving, and now God keeping. Before God was with us (Immanuel) God was (and is and will be) in relationship as Trinity. Before God was for us, God was (and is and will be) in relationship as Trinity. Before God could offer us eternal life, he had to be eternal (infinite) life. Before God could offer us a perfect eternity, God had to be perfect. Before God could offer us eternal enjoyment, God had to be and enjoy perfect enjoyment. *In order for heaven to be perfect enjoyment, God has to be perfectly enjoyable. God's enjoyment as God is the trust fund from which he gives enjoyment to his children.*

**F. Since understanding the Trinity is to understand the glory of God, and the glory of God is the ultimate reason for our love, and the Trinity is fully engaged in our life and salvation, then that must mean that God's glory and our ultimate good are eternally bound together.**

When you pursue your true good and the true good of others, you will be pursuing the glory of God and you cannot pursue the glory of God without pursuing the good of others.

**III. How does the glory of God motivate us?**

**A. Love God with all your heart, soul and mind. – Matt 22**

God's enjoyment as God motivates us to love him and enjoy him and pursue him.

**B. Love your neighbor. – Matt 22**

God's delight as God is the basis for God's delight in me and that gives me motivation to delight in others. Loving others means to enjoy them and pursue their good.

**C. Pray for other believers. – Eph. 1.15-23**

Loving others and pursuing their good means that I will pray for them. This is certainly reflected in Eph. 1.15-23, which is Paul's response to the fact that the Trinity is involved in our salvation.

In fact, the second half of Ephesians is all about how God's glory demonstrated in our salvation drives our lives as believers in that we:

**D. Help others follow Jesus better. – Eph. 4**

**E. Help your family reflect God. – Eph. 5-6**

**F. Never stop fighting sin. – Eph. 6**

When I was in high school and college, I enjoyed some modest success in basketball, volleyball and track. Years later I did some coaching. In fact, when Chad was our youth intern, we coached a girls' basketball team. I found out in a hurry that there was so much more joy in coaching than in playing because in coaching I was committed to the success of those kids and to see them learn something and then do it and be successful at it, was so much more delightful than any accomplishment I had as a player.

Because God delights in us, we can delight in God by delighting in others. When we pursue their delight it motivates us to love God, love them, pray for them, help them follow Jesus better, help our family reflect the delight that God enjoys as God and never stop fighting sin because sin is always the enemy of delight.