

Cross Fellowship Church
Overland Park, KS
January 5, 2020
Our Vision
Isaiah 43:1-7
John Crawford

Well, this morning we are starting a new sermon series. We finished Luke last week and had been there for a few weeks, to say the least, but really excited about the new sermon series we're starting this morning, as we start kind of this new year, some would say this new decade, together. We, as elders, have been praying and seeking the Lord's wisdom on where to go next.

We all felt impressed by the Lord to press the pause button on kind of our normal practice and our normal routine and rhythm on Sunday mornings in which we preach consecutively through books of the Bible. That will always be what we do, but felt just for a particular brief season in the life of our church to press the pause button so that we could regroup together, maybe refocus together, maybe reset together as a church. And part of the reason for that is that this coming February—February 22nd to be exact—I know it's on all of your calendars, is going to be our eighth anniversary as a church.

That's a long time. And I know not everybody has been here through all eight years. I was going to ask for a show of hands, but I'm not going to do that. But part of being together for that long, there's some temptations that come along with that. It's easy to kind of grow stagnant. It's easy to grow stale or complacent. It's easy, after a while, to maybe lose focus and forget why we're here, why we exist, what we're here for, where we're headed.

That's the last thing that we want to see happen in the life of our church, so because of that, we felt like as we begin a new year, a new decade coming up upon a new anniversary in the life of our church, I felt like it would be good to kind of press that pause button, and like I said, to regroup, refocus, reset in some ways, and to remind ourselves just of who we are, why we're here, and where in the world we're headed.

Like I said, this sermon series is going to look completely different from anything that we've probably done in the life of our church up to this point. It's going to be more topical in nature and hopefully in doing that our desire in that is to kind of regroup and refocus together as a church. Over the next few weeks, what we're going to be doing in the month of January is we're going to be looking at what we call our vision, our mission, and our goal as a church. So that's going to be January.

In February, then, what we're going to do is look at what we would call the key kind of core values which help to undergird and shape and fuel and drive our vision, mission, and goal as a church. And in the midst of all that, our hope is to get really practical, to get really specific, to kind of talk through just a vision strategy of how all of this comes individually, but also in the life of our church corporately. And our hope in doing this, we as elders would be able to provide

a little bit better direction and leadership when it comes to just where we're headed in the life of our church, but also in doing so with the church as a body to lock arms together, to unite together, to build up this church together, and impact the city and impact the nations with the gospel together as well.

So then our vision, mission, and goal is where we're going to be spending January together. Why we exist as a church. We call this a vision, mission, and goal. You can see this on the handout right there on top. Cross Fellowship Church exists to glorify God by making disciples—that's our mission—of all nations. That's our goal. So this morning, then, we're going to be talking about our vision. Next week we're going to be looking at our mission. Then after that we're going to spend two weeks on our goal.

When we initially begin to plant this church, the most common question that I was asked by people was this: What is your vision? What is your vision for this church that you're seeking to plant? What is the vision for this church that you didn't have a name for yet? What is the vision for Cross Fellowship Church? And in answering that question, it made a whole lot more sense to me that instead of running out and trying to come up with some fresh, innovative, creative vision on my own and on our own, that instead we simply come to God's Word and ask God that his vision is and then we align ourselves with that.

Like I'm not very smart. I'm not the sharpest tool in the shed. And I don't want to hear any “amen!”s, especially from my family. But if it's left up to me—I'll throw all the other elders under the bus, too—or any of the other elders to come up with some new fresh vision on our own, for our church, like go find another church to be a part of, you don't want our vision. Instead, we want to come to God's Word and to understand what God's vision is and to align ourselves with what his vision is. That then begs the question. What is God's vision? That's a great question.

So we're going to spend the rest of our time together, 75 percent of the rest of our time together looking at Scripture, not exhaustively, we don't have time for that, but just in in specific places but the redemptive story of history to consummation, looking at the high points, high, important events throughout redemptive history, looking at what God's motivation, his vision is in those specific instances. And then we're going to spend 25 percent of the rest of our time together thinking about, okay, if this is what God's vision is, if this is what God's ultimate motivation is, if this is what God's preeminent passion is, if this is what God is after, his chief end, his vision, then what in the world does that mean for us as a church?

As we look at this Word from cover to cover and ask the question, God, what is your vision? What is your chief? What are you ultimately after? The answer that we are given is this. You can see it on your handout. The vision of God is the glory of God. It's that the chief end of God is God. Sam Storms, he's a pastor in Oklahoma City. He once wrote this: “What is the preeminent passion in God's heart? What is God's greatest pleasure? How does the happiness of God manifest itself? In what does God take supreme delight? I want to suggest that the

preeminent passion in God's heart is his own glory. God is at the center of his own affections. The supreme love of God's life is God. God is preeminently committed to the fame of his name. God is, himself, the end for which God created the world. Better still, God's immediate goal in all he does is his own glory. God relentlessly creates rules, orders, directs, speaks, judges, saves, destroys, and delivers in order to make known who he is and to secure from the whole of the universe the praise, honor, and glory of which he and he alone is ultimately and infinitely worthy."

John Piper in his book, "Desiring God," says, "God's own glory is uppermost informs own affections. In it everything he does, his purpose is to preserve and display that glory. To say his glory is uppermost in his own affections means that he puts a greater value on it than on anything else. He delights in his glory above all things. God's overwhelming passion is to exalt the value of his glory. As I look at God's purposes, then what I find is that the most God-centered person in the universe is God. I find that the person who is uppermost in God's affections is God, not me."

So here's the question. It's nice to hear some quotes from some pastors, but the question is, is that true? Is what they're saying true? Is what they're saying biblical? Is it true that God's chief and preeminent passion, ultimate vision in all he does is himself and the display of his glory? Well, that's exactly what I believe the Bible teaches, and during the rest of my time together I hope to convince you the same.

What we're going to do is we're going to take, like, this massive sprint through this book, beginning from the very beginning and kind of toward the end, and we're sprinting. What that means is you need to get your fingers exercised, stretch them out real quick, because we're going to be flipping and we're going to be flipping like really, really fast, so you're going to need to stay up with me along the way.

But what I want us to do is kind of take the sprint throughout the Bible and to be able to make the case and to show that everything that God is doing throughout this book, his ultimate end and chief purpose for it all, his ultimate motivation is himself and the display of his beauty and worth and greatness and majesty and power for all the world to see. So here's what we're going to see first. Put this in your outline there, so you can kind of follow along there. The first thing we're going to see, and we're going to kind of jump ahead in the story, but we're going to see the fact that God created Israel for the sake of his glory.

It's what Stephanie just read in Isaiah 43. If you remember, the first 11 chapters in the book of Genesis are pretty eventful. Right? You have creation, you have the fall, you have the flood, you have mankind then living in wickedness and rebellion against the creator God of the universe. In the midst of their wickedness, in the midst of their rebellion, then, God extends his mercy and shows his mercy to one man among all the people on the face of the earth, and this one man is a man by the name of Abraham, and there within this man Abraham, God promises to make a special nation. And the special nation is the nation of Israel.

God is going to bless this nation by providing for them, by protecting them, by blessing them in all of these different ways, which then begs the question, why? What is God's motivation for creating Israel? What is God's motivation for blessing Israel? What is God's motivation for protecting and providing for the kingdom of Israel and making them his special people? Well, his motivation is specifically and explicitly synched in Isaiah chapter 43. Look there in verses 5 through 7. God is speaking to Israel and he tells them explicitly why he created and formed them. Look at verse 5. **“Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”**

So then again, do you see why the motivation for why God created Israel, why God formed Israel, why God made them into a great nation, why he's going to bless them and provide for them and protect them, he's not going to do it simply for their sake. He's going to do it for his sake. He's going to do it so that he can display his great worth, his great power, and his great glory for all the world to see.

Many years later, if it you remember, this nation that he creates and forms, they find themselves enslaved in Egypt. They're living in bondage and in captivity in Egypt, and as they're enslaved in Egypt, God, out of his mercy, out of his grace, out of his love for this people that he's formed and created, he comes and rescues them and saves them and delivers them out of bondage and captivity in Egypt. Obviously the question, then, is why? What prompted God to do this? What motivated God to deliver his people out of Egypt? Did he ultimately do it for them and for their shake? Or did he ultimately do it for his sake and for his glory and to display his great worth and honor and power for all the world to see?

Well, turn four books. We're flipping. Four books to the left, to the book of Psalms. Look at Psalm 106:7-8. the Psalmist writes this: **“Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.”** So these people of Israel, in Egypt, being delivered out of Egypt, but as they're being delivered out of Egypt, they're living in rebellion against the God who is delivering them out of Egypt. Look at verse 8, then. **“Yet he saved them”**—the obvious question is why did he save them? Why did he rescue them?—**“for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power.”**

Why did he save them? Why did he rescue them? For their sake? No. Not ultimately. For his sake, so he could display his greatness and his mighty power. You see it on your handout there. God delivered Israel out of safety for the sake of his glory. He delivers them out

of Egypt. He brings them into the promised land of Canaan where David ultimately becomes king and rules and reigns. While David is there in Israel, reigning and ruling, he writes a number of different psalms, and all throughout the Psalms that David writes, we see the same theme of God acting and God doing everything that he's doing for the sake of his honor and for the sake of his glory. So turn to the left to one of the most well-known Psalms, Psalm 23. Look at what David writes in verses 1 through 3. Psalm 23:1-3: **“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness.”** Why? Why is God doing all this for David? End of verse 3. **“For his name's sake.”** Why is God restoring David's soul? Why is God leading David in paths of righteousness? Is it for David's sake? No, it's ultimately for God's sake. He's doing it for the sake of his own name.

See the same motivation, turn two chapters to the right to Psalm chapter 25. And look specifically at verse 11. Look what David writes there. David writes, **“For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great.”** Like that's a really God-centered way and God-centered motivation for asking for forgiveness. God, forgive me, not for me, but for you. Like pardon my guilt, not only because I desperately need my guilt to be pardoned. But that's not the ultimate purpose. That's not the ultimate motivation. The chief end is that I can get my guilt pardoned, no. The chief end is your name's sake, your honor, your glory, your greatness to be displayed and seen. That's what David says there. So God blessed David, God blessed Israel for the sake of his glory.

Fast forward a couple hundred years later. We see, then, the kingdom of Israel is split in two and the northern kingdom and then to a southern kingdom, and during this time, King Hezekiah was the king of the southern kingdom, and they're on the verge of being attacked by the Syrians, and because of that, Hezekiah does what anybody would do when you're about to be attacked by the Syrians. Hezekiah prays and pleads with the Lord to come and protect them and to rescue them and to deliver them from the impending destruction and invasion of the Syrians.

So then listen to how God responded to Hezekiah's prayer for protection and deliverance. We see it turned to the left a little bit more, to second kings chapter 19. Starting in verse 34. Here's God's response to Hezekiah's prayer for protection from the Syrians. God says, in 2 Kings 19:34, **“For I will defend the city to save it.”** Again, the question is why. Why? **“For my own sake.”** Look at chapter 20, then, starting in verse 6. See the same exact thing? God again says to Hezekiah, **“and I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city”**—Why?—**“For my own sake and for my servant David's sake.”**

So why is God protecting Israel? Why is he delivering them? Why is he defending them? Why is he fighting for them? It's not ultimately for their sake. It's ultimately for God's sake,

for God's reputation, for his honor and for his glory. God protected Israel for the sake of his glory. Fast forward again. A couple hundred years later we see Israel finally fell to the Babylonians. Again, that was for God's sake, for God's glory. They're led off into exile to the land of Babylon. There they are, God's people in exile in Babylon. God's plan isn't for them to live in exile in Babylon forever. Instead, he promises that he's going to come and rescue his people out of Babylon. He's going to bring them back to the promised land and bring them back to Jerusalem. Again, the obvious question is why? Why in the world is God going to go through all this trouble to rescue his people out of exile and bring them back to the promised land, bring them back to Jerusalem?

Well, turn to the book of Ezekiel. Don't spend a whole lot of time. Go to the right. Isaiah, Jeremiah, laments, and then we've seen yell. Ezekiel chapter 36, starting in verse 22. The prophet Ezekiel is going to explain God's motivation for why God is going to deliver them out of exile and bring them back to the promised land: **“Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.”** Then fast forward. Look down to verse 32, then. **“It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.”**

Like he's trying to be as explicitly clear as possible what his motivation is. I'm about to rescue and deliver you out of exile in Babylon, but make no mistake about it. I'm not doing this ultimately for you. I'm doing it for me, for my name's sake, for my honor displayed, my greatness and glory and power for all the world to see. God rescued Israel out of exile for his glory. This is a common theme we see in the Old Testament and in the New Testament it's repeated over and over again as well. Obviously we don't have time to look at all the instances and all the verses and all the passages and you all are thinking I'm glad we don't, but we're all over the place.

I want to see a couple instances in which we see the same motivation. First is in the life and ministry of Jesus, that Jesus' ministry, Jesus' life was for the sake of God's glory. Turn to John real quick. John 17:4. This is the night before Jesus' crucifixion. He looks back on the entirety of his life, on the entirety of his ministry. This is what he says as he looks back. He says, **“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”** So then the work that God the Father gave Jesus the Son, to do that he's looking back on, his life, his ministry, about to be his death, that was all for you, Father. It was all for the Father's glory. He healed a bunch of people. He rescued a bunch of people. He helped a bunch of

people. He taught a bunch of people. That wasn't the end goal. The end goal that all of that work that he did was for the glory of the Father.

We see the same thing when it comes to Jesus' death, so turn to the book of Romans real quick. Go to the right from John, a couple books. Go to Romans 15:8. Paul writes this. He says, **“For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised”**—“the circumcised” here is specifically a reference to the Jews. When he says Christ became a servant, he specifically is talking about Jesus' death within the context here—**“to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs.”**

Here's another reason that Jesus became a servant or another reason that Jesus died. Verse 9, **“And in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”** So again, why did Jesus die? Did Jesus die for you? Did Jesus die for me? Yes. Make no mistake about it. That's not the ultimate reason Jesus died. That wasn't God's ultimate motivation for Jesus' death. It wasn't just to save people. His ultimate motivation for Jesus' death is that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. He saved people so that those people who were saved would glorify him for his mercy. That's the chief motivation. That's the chief and ultimate aim for Jesus' death.

You don't believe me? Go back to the left to Romans 3:23-25. Paul explains here another reason why Jesus died. For verse 23, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”** The rest of verse 25 is going to explain why God put Jesus forward as a propitiation. In other words, why Jesus died as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins.

“This”— meaning Jesus' death on the cross—**“was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”** So do you catch that? Jesus didn't die just for the sake of saving sinners. Jesus died for God. Jesus died so that through his death, God could demonstrate and reveal and display his righteousness and his justice and to show that he doesn't let sin go unpunished. That's why Jesus died. He died for the sake of God's glory.

I accidentally left this last one off here, so you can just write it in here. Revelation 21:22. You can turn there with me if you want. At the very end of the Bible, the very end of redemptive history, the culmination, consummation of all things, the new heavens and the new earth, even that's going to be for the sake of God's glory. Look what John writes in Revelation 21:22. He says, **“And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it,”**—and here's why—**“for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.”** It's where everything is headed. Everything is headed to restore earth and which God's people dwell with Jesus and God here on earth. And God's glory manifests itself and fills everything perfectly. It's just not his glory being demonstrated in this event and that event. Instead, its glory is going to fill

it all.

So we skipped a whole lot. A whole lot, but just put all that together. He creates, he redeems, he delivers, he forgives, he provides, he protects, he restores. Everything culminates in himself. The motivation in all of this is himself. It's to show himself off. It's to display, to show how beautiful he is, how magnificent and wonderful and majestic. It's to take all of his perfections, all of his attributes, the fullness of them all, and he just used all these different events throughout redemptive history to display who he is so that as a result, the people who see who he is will praise him for it and honor him for it and treasure him for it. That's his vision. That's what he's ultimately after. His preeminent passion is himself.

You hear that, especially if you're hearing this for the first time and you're thinking, God seems like an egomaniac. If I lived like that, I'd be put in my place. Why can God live like that? And that's a great question. But one of the reasons he can live like that is because he's God and you're not and I'm not and the reality is if God pursued the glory of anybody or anybody above himself, he would be in idolatry, and whatever that anything or anybody was, it means that whatever that is, is preeminent and supreme and bigger than God and greater than God. And God would cease to be God, and we don't want that.

Secondly, it's important to realize that God is just not jealous for his own glory. He's also really good. He's also really kind. He's also really merciful and gracious. And so what that means is God's pursuit of his glory and your good and my good, they're not at odds with one another. His pursuit and his glory and what's best for us, they're not at odds with one another. And so what's good and what's best for us is his glory. We see that all throughout Scripture. And so it's important for us to come to grips with.

So that's the vision of God. Then let's put all this together again. Since the vision of God is the glory of God and we, as a church, then, want to align ourselves with God's mission, then if the vision of God is the glory of God, then it is vision of Cross Fellowship Church is the glory of God. And again, that just makes sense. Like why in the world would we pursue anything else? Like I think about all these other visions that are out there. They're all puny. No matter how good they are, they're all tiny. They're all really small compared to this ultimate vision that we see all throughout this Word.

Not only that, but if this is God's vision, think about this. In light of everything we see, why should this be our vision? If God's vision and all he does is himself and his own glory, then here's a question. Why, then, did he plant this church? What was his end goal in planting this church? Why did he create this church? Why did he form us? Why did he create Cross Fellowship Church? Why did he plant this church? He created this church for the same reason that he rescued Israel out of Egypt. For the same reason he delivered them out of exile. For the same reason he pardoned David's guilt. For the same reason he blessed the nation of Israel. For the same reason he protected Jerusalem and Hezekiah from being destroyed. It's all the same reason. He created us so that he could use these people, known as Cross Fellowship

Church, to display his glory, to use his people in this Cross Fellowship Church to showcase and to show off his beauty and wonder and majesty and power for us to see, for our neighbors to see, for the city to see, and for the nations to see.

Make no mistake about it. He didn't plant this church for you. He didn't plant this church for me. He planted this church for himself. That's the reason that we're here. It's the same vision that God has always had and the same vision that we need to have as well. When it comes to vision statements, our vision isn't to one day have a building. It's not to have 10 campuses spread throughout Kansas City. It's not to have 3,000 members. It's not to witness to 50 people this week or this month. It's not to see 3,000 people come to Christ this year. It's not to have a certain sized budget. It's not to have this program or that program or to get this initiative started or any of those things. All of those things are well and good and some of those things are good strategies and things of that nature that we can get into in the weeks to come.

But none of those things, no matter how good and well or how the biblical many of those things are, they are not the end goal. They're not the ultimate end for why we exist. That's not our ultimate vision with a big-V Vision. Instead, our ultimate vision, why we exist, is to glorify God. And as much as any of those other things serve as a means to that ultimate end, by all means, let's do it.

Secondly, then, since that's true, then, we can say that Cross Fellowship Church is not the end goal. Instead, we are a means to God's end. Namely, the display of his glory. This is huge right here. This is really important to remember. And the reason it's really important to remember is because it's really easy for us as Christians and for us even as a church, it's easy to think that God exists for us. It's easy to think that we're the end goal and that God is there just to help us. God is kind of a means and we're the end. And it's easy to live like that individually, personally, and it's especially easy to live like that corporately as a church.

The only problem is that's all backwards. God doesn't exist for us. We exist for God. God isn't the means to our greater end. Instead, we're simply a means to God's greater end. And that greater end is, namely, himself and his glory and the display of his glory. And since that's true, our heart as a church, our prayer as a church is literally this: God, take these people and God, use these people and this Cross Fellowship Church in whatever way you see fit. And that's the dangerous parts of that prayer—in whatever way you see fit. To display your worth and majesty and beauty and glory and greatness, the manifestation of your perfections and attributes for everyone to see. In whatever way you see fit.

Because here's the thing. When you read through the Bible, God doesn't glorify himself always through success and God doesn't glorify himself all because of joyful situations and comfort and convenience. Instead, a lot of times the way God glorifies himself is through tragedy and through suffering and through failure and through loss. And so that is our prayer. And that was the very first meeting we ever had in my center with—who was at that first meeting? Not many of you. Okay. A few of you. We were in that center. The very first

meeting, this is what we talked about. I remember saying, "I don't know if we're going to be around for five years, 50 years, five months, five weeks, or even five more days. Have no idea. I mean, there's like ten of us. Who knows? But God, our prayer, our vision is that he would take ten, whoever was there, and here we are. Make a huge, great big name for yourself. Show yourself off through us, whether that be success or failure, joy or tragedy or suffering or ease. Whatever it is, we're a means to your greater end. So we're an instrument, a vehicle to your glory, so do whatever you need to do to get glory out of this people." That was the prayer eight years ago and that's still the prayer today. Whatever that means, use us, not for ourselves, we're not the end goal, but use us for you.

Third, what that means, then, is that Cross Fellowship Church is not ultimately about us, our traditions, our desires, our comforts, our reputation, our success. Instead, Cross Fellowship Church is ultimately about God's glory. Think about that. How that perspective radically changes how we think about church and how we radically think it changes how we think about what it means to do church. In other words, if church isn't ultimately about us, and I mean us individually, but also us corporately, like us, again, your desires, your preferences, your wants, your traditions, your comforts, our success, our reputation, our being known by others, us being successful in these difference ways, if it's not ultimately about us and our glory, but if it's ultimately about God in his glory and showing off his glory, and that really does change everything. It changes everything.

If that's the heartbeat of every member of our church, then it keeps us from coming here with this consumerist sort of mindset, this passive spectator just Sunday morning attender sort of mindset. Just coming in like you would go to Wal-Mart to grab some milk. You come in to get some singing done. You get a sermon poured into you and a little bit of fellowship poured into you. Instead, you're coming, you're belonging, you're committing, you're taking ownership of one another, so it's not about you. It's his glory. And so we're remembering that, reminding ourselves of that, toward that end. I'm focused on him.

Next, since it's all about him, then, we want God, in his glory, to be the starting point and focus in all that we do. In other words, if this is God's vision, if God's glory is this chief end and ultimate purpose and chief aim, then the reality of that is going to affect everything that we do as a church. It's going to affect the songs we sing. We're not going to sing songs that are just man-centered. We're singing songs that display the glory and the worth of God. It's going to change, it's going to affect how we structure a worship service. It's going to affect how we do evangelism. It's going to affect how we put together a church budget. It's going to affect the prayers we pray together. It's going to affect how we live in community with one another, how we preach. Like it's going to affect how we do missions. It's going to affect everything.

If the end goal is the glory of God and all of these things, then we want to do everything that we do in such a way strategically, intentionally, to showcase and manifest and display the great worth and great glory and beauty of God for all the world to see. We don't want

to do these things in a sort of man-centered sort of way that just appeals to preferences and desires and the world's or even to our church's definition of success. As we do that, then, last and finally, as we make God, in his glory, our vision, then we can take great confidence in knowing that our vision will be accomplished.

See all that? How it fits together? The reason we can know and be assured that our vision will ultimately be accomplished is because this isn't ultimately our vision. We didn't come up with it; this is God's vision. And since it's his vision, it can't be stopped. It will be accomplished. It will be fulfilled. He fulfilled it in the creation of Israel. He fulfilled it in the rescue of Israel out of Egypt. He fulfilled it in Israel's return from exile, in Jesus' life, in Jesus' death, and he will make sure that it's fulfilled in the life of our church as well. So then let's live our lives and let's live our life corporately as a church, not for our glory, but ultimately for his.

Let me pray for us. Lord, we thank you for our time together this morning, a time that we can come together and boast in you. A time that we can come together and be reminded, especially as we go in and out of just our everyday living, our everyday lives, we wake up. We go to work. We parent, live with our family, we live in the neighborhoods in which you placed us, we have routines, we have schedules, we have plans, we have New Year's resolutions, celebrate Christmas, we have New Year, we walk in here this morning for church, people have planned singing, people are praying prayers, people are preaching, people are reading Scripture, and in all of these different ways, it's so easy to just feel and to just think and to just believe that everything is just all about us and what's best for us and what's good for us and what we want and how we can make a name for ourselves and how we can display our worth and value and significance and that others will validate that. We want to be somebody. We want to do something. And it's so easy for us corporately as a church to buy into that as well.

And so God, as we start out a new year, as we pray about and consider just what it means to reset and restart and regroup and refocus together as a church, Lord, it starts by us humbling ourselves, falling on our faces and our knees before you with open hands and open arms, once again reminding ourselves that we're a means to your greater end. And whether we last one more week or ten more weeks or ten more years or however long you would have for us to be here, whether it be through triumph or tragedy or success or failure or suffering or comfort, showcase, show yourself off so that others can look and see and see their God is trustworthy. Their God is faithful. Their God is kind. Their God is gracious. Their God is worthy of our worship. Don't let them look at us and say, see that? It's not about us. You've got to use this to that ultimate end. Help us take confidence in knowing that since this is your vision, it will ultimately be fulfilled. We pray all this in the strong and precious name of Jesus, amen.

Why don't you stand with me. And as you do, we're going to conclude our time together by celebrating the Lord's Supper together. There's no better way really to conclude a sermon like that, a focused time in the Word like that of God's glory, than by celebrating the Lord's Supper. And the reason that I say that is because the place where God's glory is most

clearly and fully manifested and seen is the cross. And it's at the cross, it's at the death of Jesus as a substitute in our place for our sins that we must clearly see the attributes and the full manifestation of God's beautiful perfections clearly displayed.

At the cross, think about it, we see God's love. We see God's grace. We see God's mercy. We see God's kindness. We see God's forgiveness on one hand. But we also see his justice. We see his wrath. We see his righteousness. We see them come together and kiss and meet and be displayed together in perfect harmony and glory at the cross. That's what we remind ourselves of and reflect upon together as we take the Lord's Supper this morning.

The bread we're going to partake of is symbolic of Jesus' body and the cup is symbolic of Jesus' blood that was substituted for us by his substitutionary death on the cross for our sins. So that all those who place their faith and trust and repent and turn to Jesus and place their hope in him and him alone to be rescued from the judgment they deserve, will be rescued and saved from the wrath of God that we deserve for our sins. And we display the glory of God through our faith in Jesus on the cross. So we remind ourselves of that this morning as we celebrate and partake of the Lord's Supper.