# God’s GloryPsalm 66:1-2, Luke 2:1-14

What was the most exciting thing you ever saw? What was that time when something took your breath away? It may have forced you to say Wow, or it may have made you speechless.

[Audience Response]

Have you ever seen the crowds when their favorite team pulls out an upset victory or wins a national championship? A couple weeks ago, a friend of mine posted a video of his son wrestling in the state championships and pinning his opponent in under 12 seconds. He was so excited that he dropped the camera and then as he was cheering kicked the camera across the gym. I was impressed by his enthusiasm, I was also impressed that the camera never stopped filming as it whirled out of the bleachers and across the gym floor.

In my life, sports really aren’t my thing, I have never gotten that excited about a game, but that doesn’t mean I haven’t been excited. Thinking about this, a few things come to mind. The first time I looked out at Colorado from the top of Pikes Peak, on a clear day you can see parts of New Mexico, which is 111 miles away, Wyoming which is 127 miles away, Nebraska, which is 138 miles away and Kansas which is 139 miles away. Another instance was when I watched the sun rise over the Grand Canyon, with the floor of the canyon a full mile below. I also thought of my first trip to Niagara Falls, feeling the rumble as each second enough water goes over the falls to fill an Olympic sized swimming pool. But the memory that tops all of these is standing at the front of the church and looking back to see Amy walk in on the day she married me.

There have also been times of spiritual elation. Last Wednesday night I left our time of prayer filled with more hope than I have experienced in many weeks, knowing that in spite of the difficulties, God is in control. There have been musical worship services where I could imagine being in heaven. There have been sermons that inspired me with awe at God’s wisdom. There were the times I go to lead people to Jesus, the best of which were the days I introduced my own kids to Jesus.

Unfortunately, most people get more excited about the sports victories and great views than they do about the one that created the universe. In Psalm 66, the Psalmist proclaimed:

Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious! (Psalm 66:1-2)

While this is addressed to God’s people as a command, it also is descriptive of the way that His people and His creation react as they recognize what He has done. In Luke 2:1-14, we see that God uses the world for His glory, people glorify God by obedience, God’s Glory is not always Obvious, and God’s Name is Glorified in Heaven.

## God Uses the World for His Glory. Luke 2:1-4

**1** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. **2** (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3** And everyone went to his own town to register. **4** So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

Caesar Augustus loved to have Censuses, in 28 B.C., 8 B.C. and 14 A.D. he called for Censuses of the entire Roman empire for purposes of taxes. There were other censuses in 8 B.C., 2 B.C. and 6 A.D. to have people register their loyalty to Caesar. Even the text here testifies to there being multiple censuses by pointing out that it was the first one while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

The people of Israel were likely not fans of the censuses. Imagine if every ten years my family and I had to go to Huntington Beach, California to register because that was where I was born. Meanwhile my dad and mom have to go to Raton, NM and my brother and his wife have to go to Newport Beach, California. As everyone travels, there are more travelers on the road than there are hotel rooms available.

And yet, in all this inconvenience, God was using it for His glory. By forcing Joseph to go to Bethlehem, the prophecy of Micah 5:2 is fulfilled.

“"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."” (Mic 5:2 NIVUS)

God was glorified in the fulfillment of prophecy because a Roman Emperor loved to make ridiculous demands.

## People Glorify God by Obedience. Luke 2:4-5

**4** So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. **5** He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

If Joseph had wanted, he probably could have avoided the census, or at least avoided traveling to Bethlehem. The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem was about 100 miles. It would have been relatively easy to pretend that he needed to register in Nazareth. After all, the government demands are meaningless and unreasonable. It also would have been easy for Joseph to end his engagement to Mary, after all, she was pregnant out of wedlock. But God is glorified in Joseph’s life. God is glorified by Joseph’s obedience to God’s command, through Gabriel, to marry Mary. God is also glorified by Joseph’s obedience to unreasonable demands of the government.

There are many types of authority and the Biblical principle is that you obey all of them, unless a lower authority contradicts a higher authority. The Biblical hierarchy includes God, the Government, the Family and the Church. It is important to note that each of these has realms in which they are authoritative.

God is the ultimate authority over all realms. If God makes a command, we are obligated to follow it.

The Government is less authoritative than God, but more authoritative than the family or church, but only within the realm that God has defined. The government is called to promote the good and punish the evil (Romans 13:3-4, 1 Peter 2:13-14). The government is also keep peace (1 Timothy 2:2). This means that the government should establish laws, and also collect taxes to pay for the enforcement of those laws (Matthew 22:20-22). If the Government tries to contradict God, or operate in areas such as how your family is structured, it has stepped out of authority and does not need to be obeyed. As Peter said, “We must obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29).

The realm of the family is defined by what happens in your household and between the people of your household. Family is to train, care for and support its members. Family is to have understanding. So long as the relationships don’t cross into evil (such as abuse) the Government does not have a role in their family. If the government passed a law saying men always have to do the dishes, while some women might initially rejoice, that is outside the legitimate realm of Government. (And the women would probably stop rejoicing as the dishes began to pile up.)

The realm of the church is in regards to how we worship God, how we make decisions and who we choose to fellowship with. The government has no authority in the realm of the church, but the government does have authority over the church in items such as public safety. If the government and church both have authority in an area, the government is the higher authority.

God is glorified when we submit to authority, even when it doesn’t make sense. If the Church tries to interfere with the family realm, it is not proper. If the family tries to disregard God’s laws it is not proper. But to the extent that they are in their realms and not contradicting God, God is pleased and glorified when we submit to them, even if the rules seem arbitrary.

## God’s Glory is not always Obvious. Luke 2:6-8

**6** While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, **7** and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

**8** And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

The birth of a baby always is a glory to God, but it often goes unnoticed. For this couple in a town far away from their home, it was less noticed than usual. Sure, Joseph and Mary noticed. Perhaps some of the local women noticed and even came to help Mary with the birth, but for most of Bethlehem, life went on as normal. Nothing special to see.

Likewise, the shepherds were nothing special. They lived with the sheep, they smelled like sheep. Not knowing about the Middle East we miss the greater story. Shepherds were not allowed to graze their flocks near towns and cities, they were not allowed “nearby”, but there was one exception to this rule. The shepherds who watched the flocks used for temple sacrifices were allowed to, and required to, keep their flocks near to Jerusalem, within 5 miles. Bethlehem is just under 5 miles from Jerusalem.

On the road from Jerusalem is a place called “Migdal Edar”, a watchtower where the temple shepherds would literally watch over the very large herds of sheep used for temple sacrifice. With 260,000 sheep killed at Passover alone each year, the number of sheep raised was tremendous, some shepherds would be among the flocks, but the lead shepherds would be keeping watch over the flocks from the top of Migdal Edar. And this is probably where the shepherds were while Jesus was born in Jerusalem.

It was easy for the people of that time to miss that Jesus wasn’t just an ordinary baby. It is easy in our time to miss that the shepherds weren’t the normal shepherds, but the ones appointed to recognize the Passover lambs. And it was these shepherds that first recognized Jesus.

## God’s Name is Glorified in Heaven. Luke 2:9-14

**9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." **13** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, **14** "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:1-14)

The shepherds weren’t just nervous, they were terrified. It is not every day that an angel of the Lord appears, but this was more than that, because the angel of the Lord was accompanied by His glory around them. It is my belief that the presence of the Holy Spirit was made so real that they could sense God’s Glory.

God’s glory is not to be taken lightly. When Moses asked to see God’s Glory, he was told that if He saw God’s full glory he would not live, so God only showed him the back side of His glory (Exodus 33:18-23). Later, when coming down from seeing God’s glory, Moses’s face shown so brightly that the other people forced him to cover it, the residual effect of the back side of God’s glory on Moses’s face was enough to make the people of Israel afraid.

The shepherds were terrified. The Greek phrase is φοβον μέγαν. Φοβος is the word that gives us phobia, it is an overwhelming fear that controls your actions. Μéγας is the word we get mega, meaning huge or humongous. These shepherds experienced a humongous overwhelming fear that controlled their actions.

But the angels calmed their fears, saying they were bringing good news. It is like being unexpectedly called to the principles’ office and then finding out that it is not for something you did wrong, but to congratulate you on winning an award. There bodies could feel the relief.

The angel announced, to the shepherds in charge of identifying Passover lambs, that the savior, the last Passover lamb, was born in an animal stall and was lying in a manger. And then the angel was suddenly accompanied by a great heavenly host of angels saying “Glory to God in the Highest, and peace on earth to men on whom his favor rests.”

Jesus did not come as an example of peace between men, but as proof of peace from God on those He has chosen. The focus is not horizontal from one man to another, but vertical between God and man, between heaven and earth.

The things of heaven are terrifying, but the peace from God calms all our fears. God is glorified in the heavens, and yet some people still refuse to glorify Him in their hearts. What about you?

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## God Uses the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for His Glory. Luke 2:1-4

By forcing Joseph to go to Bethlehem, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is fulfilled. Micah 5:2

God was glorified because a Roman Emperor loved to make \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ demands.

## People Glorify God by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Luke 2:4-5

God is glorified by Joseph’s obedience to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ command.

God is also glorified by Joseph’s obedience to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ demands of the government.

The government is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to promote the good and punish the evil. Romans 13:3-4, 1 Peter 2:13-14

The government is to keep \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. 1 Timothy 2:2

Τhe government should collect \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to pay for the enforcement of those laws. Matthew 22:20-22

We must obey \_\_\_\_\_\_ rather than men. Acts 5:29

To the extent that they are in their realms and not contradicting God, God is pleased and glorified when we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to government.

## God’s Glory is not always \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Luke 2:6-8

For most of Bethlehem, life went on as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

 The shepherds were the ones appointed to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the Passover lambs.

## God’s Name is Glorified in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Luke 2:9-14

Moses was told that if he saw God’s full glory he would not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Exodus 33:18-23.

Jesus did not come as an example of peace between men, but as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of peace from God on those He has chosen.

The things of heaven are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but the peace from God calms all our fears.