

OAK HILLS MISSION

Part 1 - *By the Grace of God and for His Glory*

TEXT: REVELATION 1:5b-6 (ESV)



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Oak Hills' Mission

Oak Hills' mission is to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole person in our community and throughout the whole world, equipping individuals and families to:

- learn to know and enjoy God;
- respond to Him through authentic worship and godly living; and
- lead others to do the same

—all by the grace of God and all for His glory.

Our Power and Our Reason

For seven weeks now we have been working our way through this study of Oak Hills' Mission Statement. We've talked about our call to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole person in our community and throughout the world, equipping individuals and families to learn to know and enjoy God, to respond to Him through authentic worship and godly living and to lead others to do the same. Throughout this series, we've returned over and over again to the authoritative place of the Word of God as our rule of faith and practice. Today, as we come to the end of this study, we conclude by addressing the questions of the power behind and the reason for our call, and once again we look to God's Word for our answer. By what power shall we ultimately carry out this mission, and for what ultimate reason? Our text today from the book of Revelation tells us.

Revelation 1:5b-6

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

God's Grace - Our Power

If I wanted to oversee the safety inspections of NASA's next shuttle launch, what would I need? Would a love for space exploration be enough? Or would watching Tom Hanks in Apollo 13 fifty times get me ready? No. Nothing short of years of education in rocket science along with years of apprenticeship under other safety inspectors plus much more I can't even guess at would be required if I were to even be allowed anywhere near the most intricate machine ever built by human hands.

The difference between overseeing the safety inspection of the shuttle and being a witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that if I work hard enough, I could possibly acquire the necessary credentials to work for NASA. But no amount of my own effort could ever qualify me for the call to bear witness to Christ. I can't earn my position before Him. What's more, the message Christians are called to proclaim is, at its core, the message of being redeemed when we were otherwise hopelessly lost.

The core theme of this series has been that as Christians, we have a holy purpose in this world to live our lives as witnesses to the grace we have freely received in Christ—that we are called to know and enjoy God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture, that we are to respond to Him through authentic worship and Godly living and that we are to lead others to do the same. But how can we lead others to know and enjoy God and respond to Him through authentic worship and godly living?

All we do as Christ's church on earth we do by the power of the grace of God at work within us. But what do we mean by "grace?" That word can mean a lot of things. People talk of athletes having graceful abilities. Or grace can mean undeserved kindness. Our temptation is to think of grace in nebulous terms, as though it is some sort of indefinite positive energy which enables us to get it right more than we get it wrong. This is not what we mean when we talk of God's empowering grace. Grace is definite both in what it is for us *and* what it yields in us.

WHAT GRACE IS: When Paul wrote to the Ephesians about his call to proclaim Christ, he said, "Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of His power." (Eph 3:7) Grace is a gift from God, given by the working of God's power. It makes His people witnesses. But how? Our text from Revelation, which turns its focus specifically on Jesus, elaborates. Hear the Gospel of Grace again.

Apart from Christ, we are slaves to sin, (Rom 6:17) dead in our trespasses. (Eph 2:1) Our best acts, apart from Christ, are as filthy rags to God. (Isa 64:6) To say we have a mission to proclaim God's Gospel, we must first be qualified to do so. Otherwise we are no more credible as His mouthpiece than I would be as a NASA safety inspector. The good news of the Gospel is that God does, in fact, qualify His people to proclaim His Gospel—and how He does this magnifies the glory of the specificity of grace.

He doesn't just make us students of an ancient text, or salespeople toting around a product door to door. What does Jesus say we will be until He returns? Witnesses. (Acts 1:8) Think of what that means. We speak of what we know—what we've seen with our own eyes. It means when we take the stand, we tell not of a relationship we've only heard about, but of one we are intimately involved in personally. Our testimony is that of those who don't just know about Christ, we know Christ Himself.

And what has He done to us former slaves to sin? Our text highlights three particularities of grace: **1)** He has loved us **2)** freed us from our sins by His blood and **3)** made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father. These first two specify what grace is—the work of Christ to lovingly come into this world to live the life of perfect righteousness we have all failed to live, to die the sinners death we all deserve and then to conquer the grave, freeing us from the wage of our sin—death. (Rom 6:23)

WHAT GRACE YIELDS IN US: Third, he has not just saved us from our former identity as slaves. He has saved us unto our new identity as a kingdom of priests—which means we are called in this life to minister to this world, magnifying His glory among the nations. The Apostle John opened I John with these words: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.” (1 Jn 1:1-4)

Grace yields in us a call to proclaim Christ—and to live this out is for God’s glory and our joy. We’ll focus on His glory next, but let’s not miss what John tells us about God’s grace in our call to testify to Christ—it is for our **joy**. When we proclaim the Gospel, we are telling the story of how our very souls were saved from eternal torment, how we were once blind, but now we see, how we once were lost, but now we are found, we once were dead, but now we live. We have fellowship with God because of what Christ has specifically done. Grace is anything but nebulous. It is the story and the fruit of Christ’s atoning work on the cross for those who would believe.

God’s Glory – Our Reason

The grace of God empowers us to live as a kingdom of priests unto the Lord. Next our text tells us why the priests of the Lord work—for the glory of God. When we talk about the call to live our lives for His glory, see from God’s word why this, above all else, is to be our reason for why we do what we do as His people. It isn’t as though God made us for no reason, and then when we messed it all up, glorifying His name became the least we could do to make it up to Him. God isn’t fishing for compliments, as though He needs us to boost His self-esteem.

Bringing glory to His name is the call to respond to and delight in God as He is. We don’t seek to glorify His name to influence His mood. We glorify His name because He is worthy of all glory and honor. Few in recent years have written more helpfully, extensively or passionately on the subject of God’s glory than Pastor John Piper. It is no secret that I am very thankful for Piper’s ministry. And I happily confess my words in this portion of the sermon on God’s glory as our reason for being have been adapted from an article he wrote on this subject in November 2007. Why should God’s glory be our reason for existence as a people and as a local church? Because His glory is the reason for these other things as well:

- **GOD CREATED US FOR HIS GLORY:** “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.**” (Isa 43:6-7)
- **GOD CHOSE HIS PEOPLE FOR HIS GLORY:** “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we’d be holy & blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, **to the praise of the glory of His grace.**” (Eph 1:4-6)
- **WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE REBELLED AGAINST HIM, IT WAS FOR THE GLORY OF HIS NAME THAT HE DID NOT CAST THEM AWAY:** “Do not turn aside from following the Lord... For the Lord will not forsake his people, **for his great name’s sake.**” (1 Sam 12:20, 22)

- **GOD SENT HIS SON TO VINDICATE THE GLORY OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS:** “God put [Christ] forward as a propitiation by his blood... **to show God’s righteousness...** It was to show his righteousness at the present time.” (Rom 3:25-26)
- **JESUS CAME IN AGREEMENT TO BRING GLORY TO HIS FATHER:** “The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but **the one who seeks the glory of Him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.**” (Jn 7:18)
- **JESUS ANSWERS PRAYER SO THAT GOD WOULD BE GLORIFIED:** “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, **that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**” (Jn 14:13)
- **JESUS ENDURED HIS FINAL HOURS OF SUFFERING FOR GOD’S GLORY:** “My soul is now troubled. What shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I have come to this hour. **Father, glorify your name.**’ Then a voice came from heaven, ‘**I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.**’” (Jn 12:27-28)
- **GOD FORGIVES OUR SINS FOR HIS OWN GLORY:** “I am He who blots out your transgressions **for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.**” (Isa 43:25)
- **THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIVES OF BELIEVERS IS TO GLORIFY THE SON OF GOD:** Jesus said “**He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.**” (Jn 16:14)

The creation, calling, keeping, atonement and forgiveness of man was all for the glory of God’s Holy name. If God’s passion is for the glory of His name, this must be our passion as well. So Jesus instructs us to do everything so as to display God’s glory: “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and **give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**” (Matt 5:16) The Apostle Paul echoes this: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.**” (1 Cor 10:31)

God’s purpose in this is to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the **glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.**” (Hab 2:14) We even see that our Lord Jesus’ return is for the glory of God: “They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when He comes on that day **to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed.**” (2 Thes 1:9-10)

Christians, You are Priests to God

By the grace of Christ, we not only have the call, but the power of His Holy Spirit within us, giving us what we need to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole person in our community and throughout the whole world, equipping individuals and families to learn to know and enjoy God, to respond to Him through authentic worship and godly living and to lead others to do the same. Our Savior has freed us from our sin and has made us a Kingdom of priests to His God for the glory of His name.

It is for our joy and His glory that we would take this call in earnest. To take the call to proclaim Christ in earnest is the only appropriate response to taking the name of Christ in earnest. Pray that we as a church would grow in excellence and humility in our call. Pray that you and your family would love the church and her Bridegroom Christ. Pray that we would never shrug off what our text says Christ has made us. We are a kingdom, priests to Christ Jesus’ God and Father. Christians, you are priests to God, to whom be glory and dominion forever and ever. For this we have a mission. His grace is our power, His glory our reason, His Gospel our message.