Missive to Columbus – Glorious Day

I really enjoy Contemporary Christian Music. It is one reason I chose the church that I did. I like listening to books on CD when I drive, but I am playing worship music at work and in the car almost every day.

Now, I grew up Catholic and I had heard of Amy Grant, but that was pretty much the extent of my Christian music knowledge. It was a big deal when once in a great while we had had an electric guitar accompanying the music. That was the contemporary service.

Then, a few years ago I saw Matt Redman live at my current church and I was absolutely floored. I can still remember tearing up as he played *You Never Let Go*. The music absolutely washed over me and he remains one of my favorite recording artists. There is an unbelievable amount of great worship music out there. I can be seen doing the car dance on the freeways all over town when the Newsboys *I am Free* comes on. I could just keep rattling off favorite bands and songs, but there is one particular tune we are going to talk about today.

I have mentioned Casting Crowns before. I very much enjoy listening to their songs, but something that really stands out for me is the quality of the lyrics. The band is mostly, if not entirely, made up of worship pastors or spouses of pastors and the song writing really speaks to me. *Glorious Day* is a song that says a great deal.

One day when Heaven was filled with His praises
One day when sin was as black as could be
Jesus came forth to be born of a virgin

You know how it is when you have to go do something not that enjoyable. Work comes to mind...Sometimes it is a rainy Sunday morning and you can smell the coffee brewing. You would rather stay home or go somewhere else: someplace other than church. It is cold, or wet, or otherwise unpleasant. You know church will not be the definition of fun. Compare that to being the Lord of the heavenly hosts. You are perfect, made of the Spirit, both with and of God. I mean, if you think things are awesome when you are burrowed under your blankets on a cold morning and you do not want to move even a muscle because you are in THAT spot...what must Jesus have been feeling?

God sends Jesus, of whom He will soon say, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy" out from Heaven and to the sin-filled world. And it is not just that he is trading divinity for mortality, or Heaven for earth, but He who is without sin is going to be sacrificed in agony for our transgressions. Truly, worthy is the Lamb.

Dwelt among men, my example is He

Something that I find incredibly profound but frankly, spend little time pondering, is Jesus being both fully human and fully God. 'Dwelt among men.' In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus says that even he does not know the time of his own Second Coming. While he was fully of God, in order to live among us and carry our sins to the cross, he gave up that omnipotence and omniscience. He still did miracles and wonders

through the power of the Holy Spirit, but as part of God's will, not his own. 'Dwelt among men' reminds me that he was more than just God's son and our savior. He was God incarnate as well.

'My example is He,' indeed. When a car passes me in an exit lane and then wants to cut over in front of me, I do not even like to let them in as I direct very un-Christian terms at them. And Jesus came down from Heaven for us.

Word became flesh and the light shined among us His glory revealed

John starts his gospel by telling us about the Word becoming flesh. In verses 1 through 5 we read,

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

I think we almost constantly forget that we live in darkness. We go through our days thinking we know what is going on and things are, generally, okay. We are sinners, living in a sin-filled world, in need of a savior. At my house, we have deer that occasionally wander into our backyard. They do not do any harm and they are kind of pretty. Now, I do not approve of hunting and I would never fire a gun at them. But do you realize that it is illegal for me to shoot a deer in my backyard but a woman can legally go to an abortion clinic and murder her unborn baby? Think about that. I mean, REALLY think about that. We live in such a darkness that the human condition is sin. And it has so saturated every moment that we sin is the norm, not the exception to be stamped out.

And Jesus came to shine a light for us. A light that burns brightly and cuts through the darkness for us. Some close their eyes and ignore the light. But the light does not go away. If we accept the light and follow it, it will lead us to salvation.

I love this analogy of light and darkness. Jesus shines this light on us and we see ourselves as we truly are: sinners. But when we see that Jesus is the LIGHT, we can follow Him and avoid blindly falling into sin. He lights the way ahead of us. We can see how to live and the light removes the darkness of sin from our lives. Hmm, I think I have a future sermon topic.

Then he tells us that John the Baptist is coming and in verse 9 we read, ⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world...

Jesus is the 'true light.' We are reflectors of that light. So, we do emit a light, but it is His, not of our own origin. We are to shine Jesus' light throughout the world, so that unbelievers might come out of the darkness. In Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus tells the disciples, ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Verse 16 hits it right there! Reminds me of *Shine*, by Newsboys. Shine that light that we get from Jesus. Then, when others recognize the real source of our good deeds, they will give praise to God.

Back to John 1, and we get the payoff in verse 14, ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

For 'just a song', that is a pretty nice basis in the Bible. The NLV, instead of 'full of grace and truth,' says 'He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.' Same idea, but I like that wording a little better. The world today would be something entirely different if we tried to live each day as if we were full of unfailing love and faithfulness. I could have worked harder to model that as I yelled profanities at multiple drivers on my way in to work this morning.

Read John's verses again. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. That is the greatest event/thing/miracle/concept/insert whatever word you want here in history. God became man. Can you fathom this? If we really, truly grasped this, every living moment would be a prayer to God. As Casting Crowns sings, 'Let my lifesong sing to you.'

God as human: Jesus. Jesus is the:

Perfect Teacher – We now can see how God thinks; and how we should think; Perfect Example – We now can see how to live; and He gives us the power to live that way; Perfect Sacrifice – His death satisfied God's requirements for the removal of sin.

I have heard it said that Christ is the perfect expression of God in human form. John 1:16 says ...He has revealed God to us. I often urge people to 'Think God.' Focusing on Jesus as the perfect teacher, perfect example and perfect sacrifice is perhaps THE way to Think God.

Living, He loved me
Dying, He saved me
Buried, He carried my sins far away
Rising, He justified freely forever
One day He's coming
Oh glorious day, oh glorious day

Read that again. I mean, really read it. This is not a Bible verse, folks. It is a song. A finger tapping, make you smile, song. I am a big Beach Boys fan and Brian Wilson wrote some of my favorite songs, but "I'm pickin up good vibrations, she's giving me excitations" is not exactly profound.

Living, dying, buried, rising – The action...

He - He took...

Loved, saved, carried my sins, justified – to benefit...

Me, my – Us.

You could do a lot worse than reciting this chorus every day.

Living, He loved me.

Jesus is love. For God so loved the world, he gave his one and only Son, so that all who believe might not perish but have eternal life. You have probably heard that one before, eh?

Jesus loved us as no one else could. He was the incarnation of God's love for us.

In Mark 12, Jesus tells us which the two greatest Commandments are.

³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

Love God and love others. Jesus, a symbol of God's love for us, tells us we should exhibit such love. If you have a child, you would probably make any sacrifice for them. How amazing that God was willing to sacrifice his Son for us! Jesus represented the greatest love ever known.

Dying, he saved me.

We were lost in sin. In the Old Testament, the blood of a sacrificial animal was required for God's forgiveness. In Leviticus 17, we read, ¹¹ For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

Atonement is referring to reconciling with God. Old Testament believers sacrificed animals such as sheep and fatted calves on altars to beg God for forgiveness. But the New Testament tells us there was a new sacrifice of atonement for all of us. Here is Romans 3:25-26, ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—

26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Jesus did not just shed his blood for us. He was taking all the sins of humanity upon himself: more than merely blood was needed. He went to the Cross to pay the debt in full. And we, who lived in sin, were granted God's unconditional forgiveness. That is what is 'saved' truly means. You might remember an old hymn that goes, 'Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow. Jesus. Paid. It. All.

Buried, He carried my sins far away.

Having died, Jesus was taken down from the cross and placed in a borrowed tomb. *As Far as the East is From the West* is another Casting Crowns song we will mention when we talk about forgiveness. Psalm 103 is about God's love for us. Verse 12 reads, ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

God did not have to forgive us our wickedness and unfaithfulness. But he did. He sent Jesus down from heaven for us. The east and the west never meet. They are as far apart as we can imagine. God does not just forgive, he forgets. We need not remember all our wrongs: they have been forgiven. Thus, we are separated so far from our sins, it as far as the east is from the west. We literally could not have been more forgiven. Do you forgive others this way? Do you forget? Do you forgive yourself the same way God forgives you?

Rising, He justified freely forever.

Paul lectures the Galatians, telling them they did not receive the Spirit by the works of the laws of Moses. We are not justified before God based on what we do or how well we obey the Ten Commandments. It is through faith, for as Paul tells us in verse 16, ¹⁶ know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Jesus rose up from the tomb, conquering death. Not by the works of the law, through which NO ONE is justified, but through faith in Christ. Paul adds in verse 21 that "...if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" Christ died not die for nothing. He died for us. Paul expounds on this in Romans 3:21-31, part of which says, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Justified by Jesus' sacrifice. Wow!

One day He's coming. Oh glorious day, oh glorious day.

Not only did God become human for us. Not only did Jesus love us. Not only did Jesus save us from our sins. Not only did Jesus justify our unworthy selves before God. The story could end there. It is already far more than we deserve. But there is more. And not just a little more. HE is coming BACK! I am not going to delve into the various Rapture/Glorious Appearing/end of days beliefs here though I have and will continue to tackle Biblical prophecy in other sermons.

But pretty much all Christians agree Jesus Christ is going to come at least one more time. So, even with all that He has already done for us, He is not finished yet. I cannot imagine a better use of the word 'glorious' than to associate it with Jesus coming back to earth again. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior, you KNOW this is true.

Living, He loved me
Dying, He saved me
Buried, He carried my sins far away
Rising, He justified freely forever
One day He's coming
Oh glorious day, oh glorious day

I absolutely love listening to this song in my car, blasting out of the speakers. I am Thinking God when these lines are sung.

One day they led Him up Calvary's mountain

God became man as Jesus. He shone as a bright light in eternal darkness and showed us the way to salvation. And mankind treated him like a criminal, forcing him to walk the criminal's path to Golgatha, or Cavalry, which is usually referred to as a hill or a mountain, though the Bible merely calls it a place, with Matthew and Mark naming it 'The Place of the Skull.' The Messiah, who could have called down the heavenly hosts and ruled the world, allowed himself to be tortured and dragged to his execution. For us.

One day they nailed Him to die on a tree

Max Lucado wrote a book entitled *He Chose the Nails*. And that is absolutely what He did. Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane that he might be spared this agonizing ordeal but humbly submitted himself to God's will, as Matthew writes in 26:39 ... "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

When people deny the crucifixion, or refuse to enter into a personal relationship with Christ, they are failing to accept that He allowed them to nail Him to die on a tree, for us. The hubris required to say "No thank you" is far more than I can possibly summon up.

Suffering anguish, despised and rejected

What a powerful line. Jesus Christ, he who was without sin, was despised and rejected by the very people he came to save. And he was not just rejected, but he was killed in an agonizing way. These words remind us of Isaiah, greatest of the prophets, who foretold of the Messiah. In 53:3, he says, ³ He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. I do not want to beat dead horse, so I will kill another one and start on it: all of this was for US!!!!

Bearing our sins, my Redeemer is He

Still in Isaiah 53, verse 4, ⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, and verse 12, ... For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah predicted this about seven hundred years before Jesus. God had promised a Messiah, a deliverer. Jesus was that pledge redeemed.

Hands that healed nations, stretched out on a tree And took the nails for me

In *Blessed Redeemer*, Casting Crowns sings, *Facing for sinners, death on the cross, that He might save them from endless loss*. Jesus did nothing wrong. Ever. He chose the nails for you and I. Jesus healed the afflicted, cast out demons, and performed miracles not seen before or since. And He allowed those hands to be nailed to a tree so that we might not live and die in darkness. To deny that: the arrogance

and chutzpah of man!

One day the grave could conceal Him no longer One day the stone rolled away from the door Then He arose, over death He had conquered

Versions vary slightly in the numbers, but Matthew tells us that two women had come to visit Jesus' tomb when an earthquake struck and an angel appeared, saying, ^{6"}He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead..."

1 Corinthians 55 always makes me smile when I read it, ⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" You know what they say: the only sure things in life are death and taxes. Jesus said we are to give to Caesar what is Caesar's. So you can still count on taxes. But He conquered death!

The Resurrection is the cornerstone to our faith. I will talk about this more in another missive, but Jesus promised He would rise from the dead, and he did. We can fully trust in all the promises He made to us. God and Jesus conquered death and Satan. Jesus has promised that we too will rise up and spend eternity with him. That promise will be kept! And before that, by accepting Him as our savior, we rise up from the spiritual death of sin. Jesus was not a prophet, he was, and is, the Son of God.

Now is ascended, my Lord evermore

Death could not hold Him, the grave could not keep Him

From rising again

of God. Matthew and Mark end their gospels with Jesus' ascension into heaven. The Nicene Creed includes "...and His kingdom will have no end." Truly, He is our Lord forever. Jesus died as all men do, but he rose as only the Son of God can. The debt was paid, the promises were fulfilled and the hope for eternity was offered. It is truly amazing that we have been given the privilege, by God's grace, to be a part of this story.

One day the trumpet will sound for His coming One day the skies with His glories will shine

Jesus' second coming is associated with a trumpet sounding, either by himself or an angel. It will be pretty clear when Jesus is coming. Verse 30 from the Olivet Discourse is appropriate for that second line, the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. Jesus will come again, and it will be a glorious time for us faithful. That's my second mention of the Olivet Discourse in two sermons. You'll get the whole thing in the next one.

Wonderful day, my Beloved One bringing My Savior Jesus is mine What a marvelous song. My savior Jesus is mine. Yes, he is. *Oh Glorious Day* is a beautiful song that is wonderful to listen to, but it is also composed of profound lyrics that are worth really hearing. I have found that several of the songs by Casting Crowns make me Think God. One day this week, while you are driving in your car, or sitting in your room at home, or your office at work, put in a CD of worship music. Or find your local Christian radio station. You may well find that the turmoil of the world around you lessens. And you might even find a few seconds where the Spirit touches you. It happened to me this week listening to Sanctus Real singing *Lead Me*.

FURTHER LISTENING

I could list a hundred songs here with merit of different kinds. But here are some songs with lyrics I feel are appropriate for today's missive.

Casting Crowns – The Altar and the Door

This will be prominently featured in a missive. Every one of us likely lives this every weekend.

Casting Crowns - The Word is Alive Indeed it is.

Chris Tomlin/Newsboys – Amazing Love Beautiful song, deeply meaningful lyrics

Downhere - How Many Kings

How many fathers gave up their sons for me? Only one did that for me.

Matt Maher – Christ is Risen

Catholic contemporary music artists are a rare breed. Matt Maher is simply outstanding.

Mercy Me w/London Symphony Orchestra – I Can Only Imagine

The original of this is a great song. Adding the LSO makes it simply gorgeous. Think God.

Newsboys- Glorious

And though the battles come, this much is known: The victory's won by You alone. Hear my song, my savior and my king.

Matt Redman - Undignified

I love the lyrics, "I will dance, I will sing, to be mad for my king. Let nothing, Lord hinder the passion in my soul." If David could be undignified before God, we certainly can.