

Title: Forever, Amen!
Text: Jude 24-25
Theme: The eternal glory of God
Series: Jude (conclusion)
Prop Stmtnt: The glory of God is from everlasting and is to everlasting and that is incredible news.

Read Text:

The benediction of Jude is an expression of worship to God, but it's like the ultimate cracker jack box. There is an incredible surprise inside. Even as we express our worship to God, even as we seek to give to him the adoration that he is due, even as we seek to bless him, we are the ones who are blessed. We are the ones who are filled with joy. We are the ones who are overwhelmed so that we want to praise him even more. This glorious, all-powerful, eternal God has promised to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy. In other words, keeping you from stumbling and presenting you blameless before the presence of his glory is not a bother. It is a joy! Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come, tis grace that brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home. Therefore, I believe that in this benediction we get a taste of glory. So, oh yea, God is glorious but God's glory is not a trend or passing fad. God's glory is more fixed than the universe because it outlasts it. When we diagrammed this benediction, we saw that the very core of it is an expression of praise to God. Now to him be glory, majesty, dominion and authority. This is right because of what God does: keeps us from stumbling and presents us blameless before him. Worshiping God is also right because of who God is. In fact, what God does is always an expression of who God is. And God the only God. God is our Savior and God is our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. So, we praise God for his works, for his essence so therefore, we should praise him with everything we have because he is the ultimate being of glory, the ultimate majestic one, the one with ultimate dominion and authority. And, this will never end. God will never stop being God because there was never a time when he wasn't God. All of this glory to God is God's. It belongs to him and has belonged to him from before all time and it belongs to him now and it will belong to him forever.

We all wonder what eternity is going to be like. After all, our experience on this earth is marked by anticipation, excitement, hype, initial enjoyment and then a slow fade. Think about that truck, that vacation, that job, that game, that relationship, those shoes, ha, that church. After a while, routine sets in, newness wears off and you are still you and people are still people. Will eternity be like that? Will the excitement of reunion fade while reality sets in and we become used to it? Seriously, what if you died and went to heaven and you were met by Peter at the gate, like all the jokes say and you are blown away by it all, but he isn't? And you are like, "Wow! Look at these walls, these gates, these streets! Listen to this music! Look at these angels..." And Peter is yawning and not even trying to cover the fact that he is not impressed. After all, what would you expect? He's been there for 2,000 years. Wouldn't it get a little old? If that was true, then that would take a little bit of the shine off of it wouldn't it? But, how do we know that this will not be the case? Because of the conclusion of this doxology!

I. **God is glorious from eternity past.** – "*before all time*"

God is good and he knows what is good and he enjoys and delights in what is good. Therefore, from eternity past God has delighted in himself. God's enjoyment as God is the ultimate enjoyment of anyone, ever. God's enjoyment as God is seen in the enjoyment of the Father and the Son. The prayer that Jesus taught us to pray is so informative, helpful and delightful. Jesus calls God, "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.*" Before God was Creator, he was Father. Before God was Ruler, he was Father. This means that God, before all his ways, is gloriously and wondrously fatherly. He is Father through and through, inside and out. Everything that he does, he does as a Father. Jesus said, (John 17.24) "*You loved me before the creation of the world.*" The Son, (Colossians 1.16) was the one through whom all things were created, meaning that Jesus is (also) the uncreated One. Therefore, Jesus is not only eternal, but from eternity past, he has been processing from the Father and being loved by the Father. There never was a time when Jesus did not exist. If there was a time that Jesus did not exist then there was a time when God was not loving and was not the Father. But, the Son (Heb. 1.3) is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being. What makes God, Father? Jesus does! Jesus is the Son of the Father. The Father is never without the Son but, like a lamp, it is the very nature of the Father to shine out of his Son. And likewise, it is the very nature of the Son to be the one who shines out from his Father. See John 3.35; 5.20 and 14.31. The Son and the Father have a relationship that is so full of joy that (Jn.4.34) the Father's pleasure is as food to the Son. It really is his sheer delight to do as his Father says. This relationship has form to it. The Father is portrayed as the lover and the Son is called the Beloved. While we know that the Son loves the Father, the emphasis in the Bible is on the Father's love for his Son. Before all time, the Father has received glory and majesty from the Son and has in given glory and majesty to the Son.

Now, I have just described a little bit of what God was doing before all time. But, the very phrase that Jude uses, "before all time" not only takes us back to the time before creation when God was delighting in God, but it also reminds us that before all time is the time before time. But, before time, there was no time. But, for people like us born into time, we do not have any other way to refer to that other than before all time. This is one of the reasons why we stand in awe of God. In order to create the world and everything in it, God created time and space. God created time but he is everlasting. God cannot be measured by time. "*With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*" 2 Peter 3.8

Time is a real thing because God created it. Time is in God, but God is above time. Time is a tool that God uses to carry out his plan, but God is at all times in eternity. "*For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:*" (Isaiah 57.15) "*From everlasting to everlasting you are God.*" (Psalm 90.2) Any illustration that I come up with is going to come up short, but I want to try. Let's say that on Thanksgiving Day, you get a great seat on Woodward from which to watch the Detroit parade. At any given moment during the parade, you can see what is in front of you (now) and you can see some of what has already passed by (past) and you can see a little bit of what is coming (the future). But, let's say that you were given a ride in one of the local traffic copters. Now, elevated far above the streets of Detroit, you could see the beginning of the parade, the entire parade and the end of the parade. I

think that is something akin to the perspective of God. He sits above time. He sees time. He sees the beginning of time, he sees what happens in time and he sees beyond time. And from before all time, God has been glorious and majestic. In fact, it is because God's glory as God is so good and so delightful and so wonderful and so satisfying, that it is worth sharing. It is worth spreading. It is worth creating a universe so that others can share in and delight in the God who is glorious and majestic and whose dominion is an eternal dominion.

We have to change our oil, replace our batteries and get new tires for our car. We have to get new knees, new hips, new shoulders and other parts because we wear out. God is the ancient of days but he is not old, like we are old. He is eternally young, strong, robust, and engaged. God is not like the old dude who every time he sits in the chair (or the pew) for more than 5 minutes, he starts dozing. God is glorious before all time because he is above all time which means that God is glorious now!

II. **God is glorious now.** – *“and now”*

Right now, God is glorious. Creation (that includes you) is the expression of the glory of God. We live surrounded by all sorts of evidences of God's glory. Psalm 19.1 says that, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” These are the obvious things that put God's glory on display and from time to time I tell you about cosmic events like supernovas and black holes that are way beyond us. But it is not just the big stuff that displays God's glory. Have you ever heard of a tardigrade? Tardigrades are microscopic animals that look like bears that live in water. They are also called moss piglets but they are reputed to be the most difficult animal in the world to kill. In fact, if some cataclysmic event wiped out all human life, it is likely that the tardigrade would survive. There are about 1,300 known species and these little guys have survived radiation, dehydration, starvation and even exposure to outer space. Fully grown they get to about .02 of an inch. The earth is full of tiny instruments in the Creator's orchestra as well as monstrous ones. This Creation plays a majestic symphony on the glory of God. But, the greatest act of God's creation is us. Psalm 8 says that God has crowned us with glory and honor and has put all things under our feet.” But the amazing thing is that God did not have to create you. God did not need you and he does not need you. But, that does not mean that you do not matter to God. Oh no! In this world when you are not needed, you feel dispensable, right? Why is that? Well, this is what many of us have experienced. People walk out of our lives and do not even say good-bye. It really stinks to feel like a commodity. But, this is what life seems to teach us. Am I really disposable? Is that it?

Therefore, we tend to think that we matter only if we have something to contribute. And feeling useless, or worse, being useless is like the worst thing ever. You pour your life into your kids. You feed them, clothe them, pray for them, counsel them, weep with them, encourage them, correct them, stay up all night with them when they are sick, you can't sleep until they get home or get to where they are going, you live and die on whether or not they make the team, or if the team wins, or if they do well on a test or if someone else likes them. You plan their birthday parties and drive old cars so you can take them on a nice vacation. You help them with career choices or college and then – bam! They're gone. The piano they practiced doesn't play itself. You only pull two plates maybe one out of the cupboard for dinner. And you wonder, will the phone ring? Will they call? Do they need me? In a sense, you worked yourself out of a job. You

raised them and they don't need you like they used to need you. Now, what if your kid calls just because. Not because they need a loan, or need advice, or need a hand or need an ear, but just because they wanted to hear your voice and tell you, I love you, thanks! What if? Oh, that is gold! Right? What is that? That is love! I love you even though I don't need you.

So, what was God thinking when he made you? He did not need you. You do not contribute to his worth. You are not a tool to help him get a job done and then he will discard you after he's done. How are we to think of this? What happens when someone gives you a gift that is completely unexpected or is much bigger than you imagined? You say, "Oh, you did not have to do that!" When someone gives you something that you did not deserve, you just experienced grace. If God, being perfectly satisfied as God, decided to create the world (and you) and he did not have to do that, then what is that? That is grace! If this glorious God, chose you in Christ before the foundation of the world that you should be holy and blameless before him and if in love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, then we can understand, perhaps a wee bit of why Paul said in Ephesians 1 that all of this is to the praise of his glorious grace. God is glorious before all time and God is glorious now. God is glorious now in saving us through Jesus. God is glorious now in keeping us in Christ Jesus. God is glorious now in working all things according to the counsel of his will. God is glorious now in keeping his promises and in finishing what he starts.

God demonstrates his glory now by creating you when he didn't need to but he did because he wanted to you to know love, his love. God demonstrates his glory now by saving you when didn't have to because he wanted you to know him not only as Creator, but as Father who is Savior. From eternity past he has been Father and now you get to see that and experience that through his Son Jesus. One of the most amazing statements in all of Scripture is the opening of the prayer that Jesus gave us to use as a pattern for prayer. When you pray, say, "Our Father." Our Father is not just the Father of us as followers of Jesus. Jesus told us to say this with him. God the Father is the Father of Jesus and our Father. That is what we have now! Isn't that what John was getting at when he said, "*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so, we are.*" (1 John 3.1) We are in an incredible relationship with God. God's enjoyment as God is the highest enjoyment and highest good. God's enjoyment of us is an expression of his enjoyment of himself and never at the expense of it. Our enjoyment of God is never at the expense of God's enjoyment of himself. Our true enjoyment of each other is never at the expense of our enjoyment of God. It is God's enjoyment of himself and therefore us, that enables us to truly enjoy each other. And God demonstrates that he is worthy of glory, majesty, dominion and authority now because he is keeping you and will keep you from stumbling and will present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy because he is the one and only God and this God is Savior and therefore, your enjoyment of God will only grow and your enjoyment of one another will one day have no strings attached and no hurts.

III. **God is glorious forever.** – "*and forever*"

Have you ever heard the expression, "*He is so heavenly minded that he is no earthly good.*"? I've never met anyone like that. I know many people who are so earthly minded that they are no heavenly good. In fact, I know a good number of people who are so earthly minded that they are

no earthly good either. And the people I know who are the most heavenly minded are the ones who are the most earthly good. Get your eyes up. Look up. Get on your tiptoes and look as far as you can into the future. It is full, forever of God. God is glorious forever which means that we will enjoy God's relationship as God and God's relationship with us and our relationship with one another – forever.

God is a three-person God. Therefore, when he made us in his image he made us to be in relationships. We do not do well disconnected from God and from one another. But, our experience with that is checkered. Every one of us has had people who have walked into our lives whom we initially thought were wonderful and exciting, and funny and helpful and promising, only to have them move on, die, change, take advantage of us, hurt us in some way. We learn to put up walls, layer our hearts, protect our emotions and temper our expectations. We are guarded, maybe even jaded. We change. Others change. God does not change. He will love you forever because his love endures forever. You will be in awe of him and will love him and worship him forever because glory, majesty, dominion and authority are his and therefore is due him forever. And what is more, God is not stingy with his glory. We are caught up into it.

I think that we are right to imagine the opening moments in time, when the plans of the Father for the universe came into being through the word of the Son. God spoke and galaxies appeared. Don't you think that they looked at each other and smiled? The plan is in happening. Don't you think they delighted in the thunderous awe and applause of millions of angels who stood in amazement? It was like they imagined. It was, in that moment, what they planned and what the Son said. It was. If this was God's response to the first creation, what do you think his and our response will be to the new creation? We will witness the new creation.

Revelation 21.1-4

C.S. Lewis wrote, *“The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us ... shall please God. To please God ... to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness ... to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son – it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.”*

That we can forever be a source of joy, of glory, of majesty to God is a gift to us. We, who are so often a disappointment to ourselves and others, will be nothing but a delight to God is surreal. But, that is what salvation is. We who are rebels and sinners, who are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, are no longer polluted sinners, but redeemed saints, who will be trophies of God's grace that he delights in, that he celebrates with, that he enjoys is glorious and it is glorious – forever. What do we say to this?

IV. **Amen!**

Oh yea! That's right! I agree! This is true! Amen!

Romans 11.36, *“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”*

Romans 16.27, *“to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.”*

2 Corinthians 1.20, *“For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.”*

Ephesians 3.20-21, *“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”*

Philippians 4.20, *“To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

1 Timothy 1.17, *“To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

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.”*

2 Timothy 4.18, *“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”