

Intro: Ch 2:1-4 the concern is that they were drifting from the gospel. Temptation to compromise their faith for the sake of comfort and to sync up with the culture. No imperatives in 2:5-18 until you get to 3:1 - consider Jesus. The best way to stay faithful to Jesus is to see Him. **Committing is the fruit of considering; Becoming is the fruit of Beholding.** If you are seeking, doubting, drifting, the best thing you could do is fix your attention on Jesus. This is why reading the Scripture is so important: the entirety of the bible points to Jesus. Don't give up on your devotional life. How do we see Jesus in this text?

Jesus fulfills God's intention for humanity. God's original intention for humanity - a little lower than the angels, but a more privileged position - to be a creature-king exercising dominion over the works of God's hand. **Commendation** – very good; **Dominion** - To rule over all creation, to have the universe at his feet and was to exercise that dominion for the flourishing of all of creation. But Adam rebelled and failed to exercise that dominion. He lost **God's commendation** and his dominion. Cosmos - order, wholeness, flourishing was turned to Chaos. And the world was plunged into sin and that brought suffering, sickness, alienation, hostility and death. We were to have dominion over the earth and now the earth becomes a grave that exercises dominion over us. So, we do not see everything in subjection to humanity. (Understatement) We've lost God's commendation; Failed in dominion. Look around; this world is a mess and we are a mess. There is chaos in us and all around us. There is weakness and brokenness everywhere. We see traces of that lost world - beauty, awe, love, but we see evil, corruption, oppression, natural disasters, sickness, suffering and death all around us to. **But, we do see Jesus** incarnate, crucified, risen, exalted crowned with glory and honor. God's commendation and Dominion. All things are under his feet. Don't just see him in his humiliation and suffering. He is risen and now ruling and reigning over all things and will one day bring about the full realization of this. He will one day usher in a new world, what is called **"the world to come."** He will bring about a new heavens and new earth and he will rule and reign of there will be no end to his Kingdom; all things will be made new. In the words of Tolkien, "he will make all the sad things come untrue." That is the point of verses 5-9. But here is the wonder of it all. **HE INCLUDES US IN IT!** He is not content to have this "world to come" all to himself. He intends to let us share in it. Jesus is not content to make it to glory. He intends to make a way for us to join him: "leading many sons to glory." Founder of our salvation - **founder, originator, Pioneer, Trail Blazer.** "He begins something that others may enter into it." It is not enough that he rule over the world to come, but that he

includes us to share in that glory and reign with him; that is why the Scriptures call us co-heirs with Christ.

Our only hope for entering glory is the suffering love and grace of Jesus. He has to blaze the trail for us. **Pioneer: Illus: Shipwreck and safety.** A line must be secured for others to make it to shore. In **2:14-17**, sin and death are the shipwreck and Jesus is the one who secures a line to save us. *Glory is ultimately the commendation of God leading to eternal life, but our sins have brought condemnation before God leading to eternal death.* That is the essence of *shame* - to be condemned before the God of the universe and to be excluded from eternal life. **Sin has shipwrecked us and we are condemned before God.** But Christ died for us as a **propitiation** - he bore our condemnation and turned away the wrath of God from all who will believe in him. Christ tasted death for us, in our place; "Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my place condemned He stood; Sealed my pardon with His blood. Hallelujah! What a Savior!" So, in Jesus, *sin is forgiven and death is robbed of its finality.* In fact, *what is ultimate loss has not become gain for all who have Christ. He is the Pioneer who has secured a way for us to be saved and is leading us away from guilt and shame and judgment to life and life eternal.*

There is a "world to come" coming and some will be included in that world and others will be excluded from that world. Only through the work of pioneer who suffers to include us. Some will trust in him and follow the trail he has blazed and they will share in the glory. Others will not and will experience shame instead. CS Lewis, *"In the end that Face which is the delight or the terror of the universe must be turned upon each of us either with one expression or with the other, either conferring glory inexpressible or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised."* Because of Christ we can have God's approval and commendation and share in Christ's dominion.

CS Lewis goes on to say, *"The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible because of the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, 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 it is so."* Christ has blazed the trail, securing the acceptance, glory that comes from God for us by his grace and suffering love. Because of him, we can be included in God's great plan for this world be affirmed, approved, included.

A basic human desire. We are glory hungry people. We desire glory (greatness, weight, significance, approval, acclaim - these are all words that surround the idea of glory.) Humanity was meant for this and lost it; and we constantly are trying to get it back (beauty, power, wealth, fame, reputation). But, we are broken people and fall short of that glory. However, Jesus has come to lead us back to a place where God bestows upon us glory (approval, acclaim, weight, significance). Very good.

Many will choose the glory that comes from man and forfeit the glory that comes from God. **John 12:42-43.** Relevance: This church is feeling insignificant in Roman empire and under the threat of persecution it is considering abandoning the trail that Jesus has blazed. Rome/Nero: Do not choose the glory that comes from men over the glory that comes from God. Nero and Rome are passing away and Jesus will reign forever and ever and his kingdom will displace all other Kingdoms; they will all be under his feet and you if you remain faithful to Jesus you will reign with him. He will include you! Not glory achieved, but glory received.

This is not just about destiny. *“Millions long for immortality who don’t know what to do with themselves on a rainy Sunday afternoon.”* Susan Ertz. This is about **identity** and **purpose**. **Identity.** Jesus makes us **sons and daughters**; God as our Father and Jesus our brother. His cross turned God’s favor toward us so that now the deepest thing about who we are is that we are sons and daughters of God, the objects of his delight. This is who we are now. Many of us will spend our entire lives to make ourselves into something. That is why many of you came to this city. **Illus: PBS Documentary** - *“People come here from all over the world to make themselves up. If you want to be who you are, you stay where you are; if you want to be someone else, if you want to be part of something anew, you come to New York City.”* The Gospel tells us that we don’t have to make ourselves up. Christ has made you a son or daughter of God and Christ is your brother. **Wonder of wonders: he is not ashamed to call you his brother or sister.** We falter and fail, but he is *merciful* and *faithful*. He is telling this little Church, **live out your identity.** Christ is not ashamed of you, he suffered and tasted death for you, **so don’t be ashamed of him.** Be faithful and true and embrace a pattern that reflects who you are as sons and daughters of God. *And, you don’t have to do this in your own strength.* He has been tempted to be unfaithful and can come to the aid of others when they are being tempted. The challenge to this little church is to be faithful as sons and daughters of God and to live unashamed of Jesus who is not ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters. (Lent: are you living in step with your identity, unashamed of Christ).

Purpose. God is a missional God. Sends Jesus to rescue us from sin and condemnation and to give us new identity and new destiny. He includes us at great cost to himself, graciously tasting death and humiliation so that we might be included and share in his glory. He is not content to have heaven alone. **John 12:24, 26...** include others in your life and invite others to this life that Jesus died to give us. He is calling us to risk loss, to taste a death to self, for the good of others. We can’t be so caught up in the details of our lives and futures that we fail to love our neighbors. Lewis is helpful to us here again, *“It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor...It’s a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations...Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.”* **Do you feel the weight of that?** For us to truly love our neighbor means we understand that our faith teaches they will live on even after they die and they will know eternal glory or eternal shame. How are you seeking to love your neighbor by helping them along to an understanding of the suffering love of Jesus and his grace? The temptation for this suffering church is just to hide in the shadows, stay off the public radar and play it safe. This is a call to come out of the shadows, to love, to seek to invite, include others in the great story of God. Who is that for you? The reality is that most of us isolate instead of include. We have become sectarian and exclusive in our relationships. Not a mission of community, but a community on mission. Sunday should not be the only day that the Gospel is being proclaimed by Apostles Church. This is your identity; This is your purpose.