

FCCstudy

The Gospel in One Word: One Word Changes Everything
June 4, 2026

“Theology of Glory vs Theology of the Cross”

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that **TIMES OF REFRESHING** may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.”
(Acts 3:19-20)

“I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection **and participation in his sufferings**, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:10-11)

“I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” **Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**” (2 Corinthians 12:5-10)

IF THERE ARE ONLY TIMES OF REFRESHING (now)...what are the other times?

Theology of glory Vs Theology of the cross
God is most clearly revealed in the opposite.

Jesus frequently describes the kingdom of God in ways that overturn normal human expectations. The kingdom often works through what appears to be the opposite of worldly wisdom, power, and success. This theme is one of the central paradoxes of the New Testament. Here are some of the clearest examples:

1. The First Are Last

“But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” — Gospel of Matthew 19:30 (also 20:16; cf. Gospel of Mark 10:31)

The kingdom reverses earthly rankings. Prestige and status count for little before God.

2. Whoever Loses His Life Will Save It

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.” — Gospel of Mark 8:35

The path to true life is not self-preservation but self-surrender.

3. The Greatest Must Become the Servant

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.” — Gospel of Matthew 20:26-27

In worldly kingdoms, greatness comes through authority. In Christ’s kingdom, it comes through humble service.

4. The Exalted Will Be Humbled

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”— Gospel of Luke 14:11; 18:14

Humility is the highway to honor in God’s economy.

5. Blessed Are the Poor, the Mourning, and the Persecuted

The Beatitudes are perhaps Jesus’ most concentrated description of the kingdom through opposites.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit... those who mourn... the meek... those who are persecuted...” — Gospel of Matthew 5:3-10

The very people the world often considers unfortunate are declared blessed by God.

6. A Child Is the Model Citizen

“Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Gospel of Matthew 18:3-4

The kingdom belongs not to the self-sufficient, but to the dependent and trusting.

7. The Rich Have Difficulty Entering

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”— Gospel of Matthew 19:24

What appears to be advantage in the world can become a spiritual hindrance.

8. The Kingdom Begins Small but Becomes Great

Jesus compares the kingdom to:

1. a mustard seed (tiny yet enormous),
2. leaven (hidden yet transformative),
3. a buried treasure,
4. a pearl found unexpectedly.

See Gospel of Matthew 13.

The kingdom’s power is often concealed before it is revealed.

9. In Giving you Receive

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.””

Luke 6:38 This is exemplified in Jesus, who gave His life as a ransom for many.

10. In Dying you produce life -many seeds.

“Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. John 12:24

The Theology Behind These Opposites

Jesus' teaching consistently contrasts two kingdoms:

World's Way	Christ's Kingdom
Exalt yourself	Humble yourself
Rule over others	Serve others
Save your life	Lose your life
Seek wealth	Treasure God
Be first	Be last
Strength is power	Weakness depends on God
Win by force	Conquer by love and sacrifice

This is why many theologians, especially Martin Luther, saw the kingdom as operating according to a “theology of the cross” rather than a “theology of glory.” God often accomplishes His greatest work through what appears weak, foolish, small, and even defeated.

Perhaps the single verse that captures this kingdom of opposites is:

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”— Gospel of Matthew 16:25

In one sentence, Jesus declares that in God's kingdom, the way up is down, the way to greatness is service, and the way to life is through death to self.

The **theology of glory** and the **theology of the cross** are two fundamentally opposed ways of viewing God, faith, and human suffering. [1]

Theology of Glory: Seeks God in human power, success, wisdom, and visible strength. It assumes that faith should yield worldly blessings and that suffering indicates a lack of faith. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

Theology of the Cross: Finds God in the unexpected places of human weakness, suffering, and the scandal of the crucifixion. It acknowledges that in a broken world, Christians will face adversity, and God's saving grace is hidden beneath suffering. [1, 2, 3]

These concepts were most famously distinguished by Martin Luther during the

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Heidelberg Disputation in 1518, where he contrasted how humans want God to be versus how God actually revealed Himself. [1, 2]


Core Distinctions

Feature [1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11]	Theology of Glory (<i>Theologia Gloriam</i>)	Theology of the Cross (<i>Theologia Crucis</i>)
Where to Find God	Looks for God in majesty, triumph, power, and human achievements.	Finds God where He placed Himself: hidden in the weakness and humility of Christ.
View of Suffering	Views suffering as a sign of weak faith, divine displeasure, or a problem to be fixed.	Accepts suffering and trials as a normal part of living in a fallen world, sustained by grace.
Human Effort	Believes humans contribute to their salvation or spiritual progress through good works and willpower.	Recognizes human spiritual bankruptcy; salvation is entirely a gift of God's grace, not human effort.
Focus	Self-exaltation, upward mobility, and victorious living in the present.	Christ-centered; focuses on the reality of \sin and the ultimate triumph of the resurrection.
Defining Statement	"Calls evil good, and good evil."	"Calls the thing what it actually is."

Practical Examples

- **Theology of Glory:** A church leader who measures spiritual maturity by the size of the congregation, wealth, or political influence. An individual who believes that if they are "good enough" or pray hard enough, they will never get sick or experience hardship.
- **Theology of the Cross:** Recognizing that the ultimate revelation of God is not an invincible earthly king, but a man dying on a Roman cross. It is trusting God's love even when life is chaotic, painful, or difficult. [[1](#), [2](#)]

For a deeper dive into Martin Luther's original framework and how these concepts apply to daily life, explore the

 [1517 Academy Course on Cross vs. Glory](#) or resources available on

 [Ligonier Ministries](#). [[1](#), [2](#)]

<https://mbird.com/theology/a-theology-of-the-cross-vs-a-theology-about-the-cross/>