

**John 1: 14-16; “Beholding Christ’s Glory”, A 3rd Sermon for the Christmas Season,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on December 17th, 2023,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

This is truly the height of God’s greatness; His love, His mercy, and His goodness; that the Word would become flesh. Great is the mystery of Christ. Especially in His Incarnation. We worship and adore when we do not understand how two natures, that of God and Man, can be joined in one Blessed Person. How great is the Mystery of Christ; to come and dwell among us! When John says that He came and dwelt among us, he was speaking in both a general and a particular sense. Christ did come in that day, and He was born of the Virgin, and dwelt among that generation of people.

But when it says that He came and dwelt among us, we need to think of it as a general statement as well. Christ’s coming into the world affects all generations. Every generation of people from that time until the end of the world should think about the greatness and glory of His becoming a Man. This is what I want to speak to you about at this time.

When a believer beholds the glory of Christ, by faith, what does he see? He sees 3 things. You see, 1st of all – That Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth. 2nd – You see that Jesus Christ is preferred by God, above all other men. And 3rd – You see that there is a fullness of grace which you can draw upon. This is the glory of Christ which you can behold by looking to Christ in faith, each and every day.

1st of all – In beholding Christ’s glory, the true believer beholds Him as being full of grace and truth.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” When it says, “We beheld His glory”, John is speaking here of himself and other true believers of that day who actually saw the Lord Jesus as a man living among men, in the days of His life here upon the earth. They were able to speak with Him, and to hear Him preach and teach. And they saw the way that He lived His life. The Lord Jesus was perfect humanity coupled together with His Deity, in one Blessed Person.

He was the only-begotten of the Father; God the Son who was the only One begotten. He who was the One who created all things became in His Incarnation the Son of God and Son of Man; Christ Jesus the Savior, the Lord, and Mediator of His people. These disciples beheld this glory in everything that He said and did. When John speaks of Him as “becoming flesh” it does not mean sinful flesh, but rather that He assumed a true human nature and body. It does not mean that the Lord Jesus has only a human body, and no human soul. But he assumed a real physical human body and a reasonable human soul; a soul with the ability to reason and think as a man.

There were two natures which were united in Him, in the one Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was formed there, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, by the powerful and mysterious working of the Holy Spirit, so that He was fully God and fully man when He was born into this world. The human nature was united to the Divine, and is subsisting in the Person of the Son of God.

When the disciples of that day watched and listened to Jesus, they could see a Man who was distinctly different from other men. He was far more noble and excellent than other men because His thoughts were perfectly right and perfectly pure. He was without sin. And yet the glory of His Deity was veiled by His humanity, so that it could truly be said of Him in Isaiah 53: 2 – “He has no stately form or splendor that when we see Him; there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” The text says that He dwelt among us.

The original Greek shows it to mean “He tabernacled among us.” He set up His tent among us. Truly this is the glory of the Incarnation, that Christ the Eternal Person, God the Son, assumed an earthly body, this tent. He assumed no human personality, or else He would be two persons. He had, when He walked upon the earth, and He has even now, a true human soul and spirit. But the glory is, that the Divine Person of the Son, assumed the human nature of a man, so that it subsisted in Him, as God. His name is Immanuel which means, “God with us”. The glory of Christ is that in

having Him become our Savior, we behold Him in our hearts as being God's one and only way of salvation given to us. I like the King James rendering of Luke 2: 11. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

This is what it means for us to behold the glory of Christ. It is pure glory that He was begotten of the Father before time began. He is the Father's "monogenous" – His "only-begotten". It is the pure and radiant glory of His Father, and yet He tabernacled with men. What astonishing love was shown in the Father's sending His Son into this fallen, dark, world of sinful men to redeem them. It makes our hearts resound with praises to God when we hear the angel's words to the shepherds: "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people." "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

Why should we no longer be afraid when we believe in the gospel? Because Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners. And suppose that you think of yourself as the chief of sinners. The Apostle Paul thought of himself in just that way. In 1st Timothy 1: 14 the Apostle Paul says, "And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." This is what Paul rested his hope upon; the fact the Christ came into the world to save sinners like him, and He had an abundance of grace to give to him to make him into a better man.

He didn't just think this way when he was first saved. He thought this way when he was an old established Christian. When you behold the glory of God in Christ, in your heart, you do so because you are believing in the words of His written word the Bible. Those words came to have life and a reality which really changed you into a person of faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit shines the light of Christ upon the words of truth and illuminates your mind with them. From the time that you first had faith in Christ, you behold the greatness of the grace and truth which are found in Him.

But the wondrous thing is; that this beholding the glory of Christ never ceases. It continues on and it grows, because of God's faithfulness to you, in His purpose to give you all the blessings of salvation. He will never cease giving you those blessings. Even when you are faithless, He is faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. (2nd Timothy 2: 13) This glory in your heart, therefore, will grow as you exercise your faith, because Christ is in you and Christ is for you. Now you see the greatness of the Father's love in sending Him into the world. It was for you. He is full of grace and truth. He full of grace to give you power to do what is right.

He is full of truth in the Bible to guide you on the path of righteousness all the way to glory where you will see Him face to face. If He is so full of grace and truth, then will you not exercise faith in Him whenever you are troubled? It is not good to doubt such a great and faithful Savior as Christ is to your soul. The exercise of faith begins with your soul beholding the glory of Christ in His Word. It is not looking at yourself to see whether you are strong enough, or brave enough, or determined enough to live out the truths and principles of the Bible.

Faith and love are found in Christ Jesus. They come from Him through the Holy Spirit's working in your heart as you behold His glory. It is that He is the Perfectly Righteous One in every respect. And by your beholding His glory, He is transforming you by His Spirit from one degree of glory to another, so that you become more righteous and holy in all of your behavior. That is how you become strong, or stronger, as a Christian. It is by beholding His glory, and learning to live that grace and glory out in your life.

2nd – When you behold the glory of Christ, you see that He is preferred by God, above all other men. (verse 15)

John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, ‘This was He whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’” Many persons of that day thought that John might be the Messiah. But John knew what his ministry was all about. It was not about him being recognized by men for being the great and powerful preacher that he was. It was all about his setting forth Christ as being the only Savior and Lord of men. John knew, that was the whole reason for his mighty ministry. He was to be a witness to the One who was “preferred” before him. Not preferred by men, for Jesus would be despised and rejected by men. But preferred by God Himself, over all other men. This John would declare with all of his strength.

In his ministry, John would declare that God cannot prefer, or really honor, any other man than Christ. For there is no man who is perfect like Christ is. All other men whom God honors are honored because Christ’s grace is working in them. And there is no one else who can save men like Christ does. In the margin it reads – “He who comes after me is ranked above me”. In other words, he is declaring that Jesus takes the highest station among men. It is certain that God was very pleased with the ministry of John the Baptist. But John knew his place in the grand scheme of things.

Among those born of a woman, there was none greater than John the Baptist. And yet he freely and most deliberately confesses to all who would hear it, that Christ Jesus was of a higher rank in the kingdom of God than he. This was because Jesus was also God, as well as being a perfect man. He was “before” John in that He always had been from all eternity, God the Son. John knew that Jesus was to be worshiped and adored, as well as respected. He knew that even though he had baptized so many, that he himself needed to be baptized by Jesus with the Holy Spirit.

He knew that all the glory for whatever good or righteous words that he spoke, or deeds that he did, should go to Jesus; the Lord of glory. He knew, more than many people of his day did, that God was blessing his life and ministry, for Jesus’ sake. Let me ask you whether you have understood this truth with regard to your own life and usefulness before God? Do you understand that God the Father has preferred Christ? He has preferred Him so much, that He raised Him to the highest station over men, because He knew what Christ would accomplish on His behalf.

Are you willing to let Jesus have all the glory for any good thing that you do? He most certainly deserves it. You see, He would fulfill all righteousness, but God was well-pleased with Him even before Jesus went out to accomplish this. God preferred him over all other men because He knew that Jesus had been wise and holy, and that He would continue to be wise and holy all the way through His life. With the Lord Jesus there was true humility which would lead him to become obedient unto death, the death of the cross. And thus, God would highly exalt Him and give Him a name which was above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee would bow, and every tongue confess that He was Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

If you behold Christ’s glory, do you live your life to bring glory to Him? “Look, ye saints, the sight is glorious: See the Man of Sorrows now, From the fight returned victorious: Every knee to Him shall bow.” “Crown Him, crown Him: Crowns become the Victor’s brow.” “Sinners in derision crowned Him, mocking thus the Savior’s claim; saints and angels crowd around Him, own His title, praise His name.” “Crown Him, crown Him: Spread abroad the Victor’s fame.” “Hark, those bursts of acclamation!” “Hark, those loud triumphant chords!” “Jesus takes the highest station: O what joy the sight affords!” “Crown Him, crown Him, King of kings, and Lord of lords!”

If you behold the glory of Christ, this is your desire; to give Him the highest station, the highest place there in your thoughts. You learn to confess Him as the One who God prefers to you. There is nothing of purity or beauty to be seen in your soul, except what the grace of Christ has wrought there. But by faith in Him there is a purity and beauty of grace at work in you, transforming you from sinner to saint. And His grace takes you from being very worthless to becoming so very useful in service to Him. Let us all remember – Christ should have all the glory you can give Him from your words and your life. See to it that you learn to confess Him in this holy way.

3rd – You see in Christ, that there is a fullness of grace which you can draw upon. (verse 16)

"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace." (or "grace upon grace") By now you should surely see that when John says, "We" have all received of Christ's fullness, he is not speaking of each and every man in the world. For if this were so, all men would be saved. But not all men are saved, for not all have received of His fullness, which is defined for us here as being "grace upon grace". No, it is only those who have savingly believed in the Lord Jesus who receive "grace upon grace". Let me turn you to another passage of Scripture to prove this important truth. Matthew 13: 10. Here Jesus has been speaking to the multitudes and to His disciples the parable of the sower and the seed.

He had not given the interpretation of the parable yet, but it says in verse 10 – "And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' " He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.' "For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him." Jesus here does not explicitly tell his disciples, what it is that those who hear need to be given, in order for them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. But it can be deduced. It is saving grace.

It is light from heaven to the mind, and grace to change the direction of the heart, away from the love of sin. It is learning to receive Christ and the truth of His blessed word. Many of the people of Israel of that day had become spiritually dull of heart and hard of hearing. And this was willful on their part. They had received much common grace in all the privileges of hearing the word of God, but they had not improved upon it. They rejected Jesus as being their Messiah, even though He had given them many mighty proofs of it by the miracles that He performed.

Therefore, even though Jesus manifested his glory, only some of the Jews believed. Many of them had been placed by God under a judicial hardness of heart. "Hearing they would not hear and would not understand, and seeing they would not see or perceive; for the hearts of this people had grown dull." But in verse 16, Jesus has some very good words for those who had believed in Him, "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear." In other words, they, his disciples, had received saving grace to hear and receive the truth of the word of God, even from the lips of Christ Himself.

They had received of His fullness. And that was due to the unmerited favor of God upon them. And now, because they had this understanding of the grace of salvation, they would continue to receive grace upon grace; more and more grace. This is because when God begins a work in your heart, He opens your eyes, and He regenerates your heart. He does this so that you can believe and receive the truth. And He never stops giving you grace. Oh what a precious truth this is. Grace upon Grace; each and every day receiving of the fullness which is in Christ. "Grace in the place of grace", or "grace answering to grace" it reads in the original.

Grace is not only God's unmerited favor. It is His enablement to go about to keep the commandments of God by faith in Him. This is truly what glorifies God. We ought to rejoice this Christmas season that we have received the Gift Who keeps on giving. Christ was born for all who will believe in Him. He came and tabernacled among men. He came to give His life for you; to die on the cross for you, so that you could continue to receive of all His fullness; grace upon grace every day. The giving of Himself and His grace will never stop for all who believe in Jesus. He will keep on giving to you throughout all eternity; from this time forth and forever.

Yesterday's grace is continually being replaced by fresh supplies of grace which come to you, new, as His gifts, each and every day. As it says in Lamentations 3: 22 in the NAS – "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail." "They are new every morning, great is Your faithfulness." Believers in Jesus Christ ought always to be hopeful and expectant people because of their faith in the faithfulness of Christ, to supply them with grace. "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4: 19) Do you behold the glory of Christ this morning in your heart? If so, Christ was born for you.

