

John 1: 14-16; “And We Beheld His Glory”, Sermon # 3 in the series – “That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on December 23rd, 2012, 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. We worship and adore when we do not understand how. We do not understand how the infinite God could take upon Himself human flesh; how the Word, the Only-Begotten of the Father in eternity past should be formed, in time and space, in the Virgin Mary’s womb; or how that light and life which are personified in the Deity should also become flesh and blood and bones; a Man-Child. 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 his day and was born of the Virgin. He was raised by Mary and Joseph, but He was God manifest in the flesh. He grew in wisdom and knowledge as a man. And then, we see here from our text, at the Father’s time, when He was 30 years of age, He began His earthly ministry. He fulfilled that ministry which culminated in His going to the cross and suffering for our sins. He died and was buried. He rose again. And He ascended into heaven, after showing Himself alive and presenting Himself to His Apostles, during that 40 day time period following His resurrection. Now He is no longer physically dwelling with us, but He is sitting at the Father’s right hand. But the glory of Christ is still beheld by all believers today. The glory of Christ is beheld in the hearts of all of His people, by faith. This is what we want to speak about this morning. When a believer beholds the glory of Christ, by faith, what does he see? He sees 3 things. He sees that Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth. He sees that Jesus Christ is preferred by God, above all other men. And he sees that there is a fullness of grace which he, the believer, can draw upon. This is the glory of Christ which every believer 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; the one Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was formed there by the powerful and mysterious working of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, 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 this morning 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 tabernacle 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 come to have life and reality which really change you into a person of faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who shines the light of Christ upon the words of truth and illumines your mind with them. You then begin to behold the greatness of the grace and truth which are found in Christ Jesus your Lord. 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. (2 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 no 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. That is how you become strong, or stronger, as a Christian.

This leads us 2ndly to say that whenever a believer beholds the glory of Christ, he recognizes that Jesus Christ 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. And we will have more to say about this in coming sermon sermons. 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 God’s Christ being seen as the only Savior and Lord of men. That, he knew, 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 truly, 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 of Christ’s grace 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. 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 word or deed that he did, should go to Jesus; the Lord of glory. He knew, more than many of his day, 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 as to raise 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 the grace of Christ has wrought it there. But by faith in Him there is purity and beauty of grace at work transforming you from sinner to saint, and from being worthless to be so very useful. Christ is to 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 – When a believer beholds the glory of Christ by faith, he comes to understand that there is something of Christ’s fullness that he has received. (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 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. Turn with me over to Matthew 13: 10. 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 sin and to receive Christ and His 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 the heart of a person, through opening the eyes of His Elect, and regenerating their heart so that they can believe and receive the truth, He never stops giving them 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 you dear believer. 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? Christ was born for you.