

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Amazing Person of Christ

Scripture: Luke 9:43-45

Code: 42-129

Well, we've been listening to such magnificent music, such beautiful, beautiful music. Our hearts are lifted and certainly I'm reminded of how the music in our generation has descended along with the minds and the souls of this fallen world to the level of the inane kind of vain repetition from there down to the trashy noise that occupies our culture. Where can you go to hear music that is exalting and beautiful and magnificent and what God intended in the gift that He gave us. And then when it focuses on the Lord Jesus Christ, it takes on even greater beauty and magnificence.

Gay, who sang so beautifully, "O I want to know You more," couldn't have chosen a better song to connect with what's on my heart, nor could we have sung a more appropriate hymn together than, "More Love to Thee, O Christ." As I give you a little bit of a meditation before we have the Lord's table, I just want to maybe speak personally for a moment, and then tie it in to the Scripture text in Luke.

It was a number of years ago that I was asked to write a book on my favorite verse. It's always a challenge to identify a favorite verse, whichever one I'm preaching on this Sunday is my favorite verse. But when pressed to the wall to write this little book on my favorite verse, I ended up with a verse that perhaps is somewhat obscure, but nonetheless it is at the heart of my own life. Second Corinthians 3:18, "We all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Spirit the Lord."

Now without getting into a big explanation of the verse, what it says is those of us who live in the New Covenant, those of us who are on this side of the cross and the resurrection have the veil taken off our faces. There's nothing obscure to us as it was to those in the Old Testament. We now can look in a glass, something that's clear and see the glory of the Lord. And, of course, that glass, that post-veiled glass in which we see the glory of the Lord is the New Testament. And as we gaze into the New Testament, we see the glory of the Lord. And as we gaze at His glory, we are being transformed from one level of glory to the next, to the next, to the next, to the next by the Holy Spirit. That is essentially the heart and soul of what it means to be a Christian. You look into the New Testament, you see the majesty of Jesus Christ as the majesty of Christ fills your mind and captivates your soul, the Spirit of God uses the reality of your understanding of Christ to shape you into His image. The more you know about Christ, the more likely you are to reflect Him.

And that really is the Christian life. As I look back at my life and all the years of study and tens of thousands of hours of going through the Scripture, whether I'm writing books or preparing sermons, or writing notes in a study Bible, or whatever, all of my efforts to understand the Scripture do not end with the understanding of the Scripture. My goal has never been to know the facts of the Bible. It isn't that I want to know Bible history, or that I want to know what's in books and verses. That's not the end, that's only the means to an end. I want to know Him. Paul said, "That I may know Him." It is the joy of my life to find God in the living Christ on the pages of Scripture. The more I study the Bible, the more glorious Christ is to me. The more I understand the Scripture, the more majestic and magnificent and awesome Jesus Christ is and my worship and my service to Him is a direct reflection of that awe. A limited view of Jesus Christ produces a limited capacity to worship and limited motivation to serve. The great objective of Scripture is to know Christ so that you can love Him more, so that you can be swept away as the hymn writer put it, in wonder, love and praise. It's not about knowing the Bible, it never should be. Knowledge puffs up. It's about knowing Christ. Not some mystical knowledge, not some knowledge induced. Your lack of understanding about Christ cripples your worship and no amount of music and no amount of sort of spiritual mood-inducing is going to produce true worship which rises out of an overwhelming wonder concerning Christ.

So whenever we gather together, it is Christ who is the goal and the end of everything we learn. Everything I know about the sinfulness of man makes me love Christ more because He brought an end to all my sin. Everything I know about the glory of God makes me love Christ more because I see God fully revealed in human terms that I can comprehend in Christ. It all resolves in Him, He's the theme of all of Scripture. And so that is why it is such a privilege for me when I look back over my life, all the things I might have done with my life, and all the various and sundry careers one may have, there was within me, and it started developing when I was very young, this insatiable desire to understand in a very meager way what Paul meant when he said, "That I may know Him," and there would have been no way that I ever could have pursued the knowledge of Christ the way I have in the ministry if I had been doing something else. So I confess to you here that it's really not about preaching sermons to you that attracts me to the ministry, it's about having you pay me to pursue Christ. How's that for a career? The highest possible calling imaginable is to pursue the knowledge of Jesus Christ and you pay me to do that. And all I have to do is to show up here on Sunday and say a few things and I can get away with it. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

It's really about knowing Christ. And so consequently you understand why that somebody would say to me, and occasionally it's been said, "You know, that this age does there ever seem to be a sameness and a commonness in your preaching?" Well not from my standpoint. I don't know how you're responding to it. But if there's any enthusiasm in my life, it's not because I'm having to crank it up. I'm telling you, the more I learn about my Lord as revealed in the pages of Scripture, the more

astonishing and wondrous He becomes to me, the higher the level of my enthusiasm for the glory of who He is. And as you well know, very often I work hard to ring out some glory of Christ in an obscure part of a verse and that's why it takes us forever to get through these books. But who am I to diminish the revealed glory of Christ. It's my responsibility to open every nook and cranny that I can find and expose every nuance that God has delivered to us about the majesty of His Son so that we can gaze into the glory of His face and be changed into His image as we move from one level of His glory to the next.

Well, that takes me back to Luke chapter 9. We are going through Luke 9 and just as a part of the meditation to prepare us for the Lord's table in which we will look at the glory of Christ again on the cross, I just want to wrap up the final three verses of our look at Luke 9 verses 37 to 45. We took it as a unit but I never was able to cover the final three verses. And as I was just thinking and meditating over these verses, there's nothing really hard to understand here. There's nothing really very new here. But it just provides for us a wonderful, wonderful summation of some of the very core astonishing realities about Christ. Everything about Him is beyond human explanation. Everything about Him is startling and astonishing and shocking and amazing. Everything about Him fills me with wonder. He is the most attractive, the most magnificent, the most beautiful, the noblest, the most wonderful person that one could ever not only know about, but imagine know personally. I am forever riveted on every detail about Jesus Christ. That becomes the purpose of all Bible study, the purpose of all preaching, and the purpose of all Christian living. And how sad is it that the evangelical church today has lost its Christ-centeredness and replaced it with man-centeredness. What a tragedy.

We ended last time, verse 43, they were all amazed at the greatness of God. You can't look at Jesus and not be astonished. You can't possibly look at Him and not be amazed. And it was true, they were amazed at the greatness of God manifest in Jesus. He was God. He is God and He manifests that deity. And they saw it. They were amazed at, essentially the word here is the majesty of God, the exaltedness of God. As I read that again where we ended last time, it became for me a transition into the next three statements. Here the majesty of God in Christ is on display. First of all, in His amazing power....His amazing power. Verse 43 then says, "While everyone was marveling at all He was doing," and we'll just take that much of it. And we know what He was doing, what was He doing? Well He had just done one really amazing and astounding miracle in delivering a young boy from a very powerful and obstinate demon who was trying to kill the boy over many, many years and not only traumatizing the boy horribly but his father and his family as well. The disciples were unable to deal with the demons so Jesus cast the demon out in a very dramatic encounter. That was only emblematic of all that He was doing. That was only one of the realm of miracles that Jesus demonstrated. In fact, there were many miracles that Jesus did beyond the demonic world.

If you go back to chapter verse 21 it says, "He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits. He granted sight to many who were blind." So He had this power over demons, He had this power over disease. The disciples of John the Baptist were told, "Go and report to John what you've seen and heard. The blind receive sight," verse 22, "the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them." He had power over disease, He had power over demons, He had power over death, He had power over nature, as we've already learned. We know all that. And they were amazed at that. This is the amazing power of Jesus. There's nothing like it...nothing like it. And everyone was marveling at it. The word for "marvel" there is a very familiar New Testament verb *thaumazo*, it's used many, many times, several dozen times in the new Testament and it means to be filled with wonder. It means to be taken outside the realm of explanation. That's what it means. It's the idea of being astonished. It's going beyond any possible human explanation. It's to be left with inscrutability, incomprehensibility. There is no explanation. His authority, His amazing sovereign authority over all things created was literally inexplicable apart from that it was the greatness of God at work.

Early in His ministry He began to demonstrate His authority in every realm and that authority began to expand as He went through His ministry. Early on His teaching had greater authority than the official teachers of Israel because He Himself was the source of truth. And then he began to demonstrate authority over all diseases. And then authority over all demons. And then authority over death. And then authority of all things to forgive sin. And then authority to delegate divine power to others, the Apostles and later the seventy. And then authority to execute judgment on every living soul and determine whether they would enter into hell or heaven. And then authority to give up His own life. And then authority to take it back. So there was this expanding expression of *exousia*, authority, or literally power over everything in the created order. All that authority was only demonstrated on a limited basis. It was confined to Him and His presence in the little land of Israel. And so that...that limitless, endless, boundless, infinite authority which He possessed from all eternity as God a very God was then narrowed down and confined and limited to a very minimal expression. Nonetheless it was purely the power of God but it was limited until He comes to the great commission. And when Jesus comes to the end of His gospel record and gives the last words for the Apostles to write, He gives them the Great Commission and to Matthew through the Holy Spirit He gives the final words Jesus gave and they are these, this is how He began, "All authority is given to Me in heaven and in earth." And Jesus was in essence saying, "My incarnation is over, I'm going back to the Father. No more limited authority, I now am being restored all the authority everywhere in the universe." This authority which rightly belonged to Him was demonstrated in all of the things He did while He was here. Amazing, amazing power. No way to explain it except to say it is the greatness of God.

And so, as we go through and study all these miracles, we are day after day in the life of Jesus vignette after vignette exposed to this massive power as were the people of that very time. We would like to convince ourselves that had we been there we never would have done what they did and that is reject Jesus. But that would only be because we misunderstand the sinfulness of sin and the

deadness of spiritual death and the blindness of spiritual blindness. They liked His works. They loved His works. They were fascinated by His works. It was His words they hated. It was His words they hated. They didn't like His diagnosis of their sinful condition. They didn't like His rejection of their self-righteousness and legalism. So though they were astounded by His power, they followed their perverted and faithless leaders in murdering the Messiah, the Son of God. So while sovereign majesty dominated in His ministry, suffering humiliation lurked in the shadows.

And it's at a moment like this when He's doing all these mighty deeds and He's just demonstrated power over this very, very strong demon in the case of this boy, and other miracles are happening, it's at this point that the disciples messianic fervor is heightened again. And when they think maybe we're on the brink, they wanted the Kingdom so badly they had along with all the rest of the people in Israel believe that the Messiah would come and He would come and set up the Kingdom when He came. And He would come and exalt Israel and they were on the inside trek and they would be exalted to the high places in the Kingdom and they had all these hopes and desires and they were deeply imbedded in their thinking. They were pervasive in their thinking. So pervasive that when Jesus talked about His dying, it was beyond their ability to comprehend it and Peter pulled Him aside and said, "That's not the way the plan's laid out, Lord. No, no, that's not the plan." Peter didn't mind rebuking Jesus because Jesus had the wrong plan. Peter knew what the plan was, they all knew what the plan was, it was laid down for centuries in their minds. When the Messiah came what He would do. That's why even to this very day today, any orthodox Jew who looks at Isaiah 53 has absolutely no idea that that relates to the Messiah. In fact, if you say that to an orthodox Jew, that's blasphemy. A crucified Messiah? A Messiah who becomes a sin offering? Impossible.

So they either reject it all together, say they don't know what it means, or say Isaiah 53 is designed to portray suffering Israel. So they had this idea the Messiah would come and all He would do is the miraculous and set up the Kingdom. But this amazing sovereign, this one with amazing power also gave an amazing sacrifice and verse 43 says, "He said to His disciples then," verse 44, "Let these words sink into your ears for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." Right at the point where they're starting to feel it again, the surge, the messianic surge, the Kingdom surge, it's going to happen now. Even though Jesus a couple of times had already told them specifically, if you'll note for one, back in the ninth chapter and verse 22, He said to them, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be murdered, be raised up the third day," He had said it, He had said it several times to them, they still do not believe it. "He that is convinced against his will is unconvinced still." It just didn't compute. They just sloughed it off their minds. And so He says to them, "Let these words sink into your ears."

He's trying to get them to listen. Actually the language here in the Greek is the idea of laying something in your ear. Let it just sort of lay in there until you've gotten an understanding of it. The homage of the crowd was fickle. The praise that was being offered to Him, the wonder and the marveling at the greatness of God was trivial and temporary. The one who was the greatness of God incarnate, the one who was so amazing would be rejected very soon in just six months. And so wanting not the disciples to pursue false expectations and to cultivate and nurture false hopes, Jesus says, "Let these words sink into your ears, for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." I told you that and you can fill in the rest of it, the men are the chief priests and scribes and the elders and they're going to be the ones to execute Him by the means of the Romans and then He's going to rise again the third day. So He says you've got to understand this. You can't be expecting the Kingdom. There's a cross first. They were, of course, responding to the popularity of Jesus and that just exacerbated their predisposition to messianic hopes. So He says...look at that phrase, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered." Going to be, about to be, *mello*, it means in a few months I'm going to be delivered. Delivered is *paradidomi*. It can be translated betrayed, sometimes it is translated betrayed. But it's better to keep it in the general generic sense, handed over. It's seeing it as a technical term for a criminal handed over for punishment, handed over for judgment, handed over for, in the case of Jesus, execution. It's a familiar term in the record of Jesus. Matthew 17:22, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill Him."

Now who...who is doing this delivering? Who is the one doing this delivering? Well, was it Judas? It was Judas. Matthew 26:24, "The Son of Man is to go," go to the cross, "just as it has been written of Him but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is delivered." And that man by whom the Son of Man was delivered to the leaders was none other than Judas. By the way, those people who say that Jesus' plans never materialized, that everything Jesus hoped for went awry. Jesus was trying to bring in the Kingdom but somehow things went wrong and He was killed are liars of the rankest order. All along Jesus said, "I am going to be delivered over to them. I am going to be killed by them. And I am going to rise on the third day." That was in the plan from the very beginning. There was no plan B, there was no disruption of plan...nothing went wrong, everything went exactly right. Even Judas was planned. Even Judas was prophesied in the Old Testament as the familiar friend who would lift up his heel against the Lord, the one with whom He would break bread would betray Him. Yes Judas was culpable in Jesus being delivered into the hands of men. It was Judas who delivered Jesus to the Jews, to the leaders.

But what about the Jews, was it them? Listen to Acts 3:13, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified His servant Jesus, the One whom you delivered up to Pilate." There's culpability for Judas who delivered Jesus to the Jews, there's culpability for the Jews to deliver Jesus to Pilate. Matthew 27:26 says this, "Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified." Judas delivered Jesus to the Jews, the Jews delivered Jesus to Pilate, Pilate delivered Jesus to the Roman soldiers to be executed. There's culpability at every point but none of that gets to the real issue. The Son of Man is going to be delivered. The Son of Man is going to be delivered. The true deliverer was

God Himself. I read you in Isaiah 53 that it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, that it was God Himself who chose Jesus to be an offering for sin. That's why Acts 2:23 says this, "This man Jesus delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." You did it, you bear culpability, and Peter was preaching that to the Jewish people at Pentecost. You bear culpability but it was God who delivered Him up by His own predetermined plan and foreknowledge, Acts 3:13. Romans 8:32 says the same thing in a more familiar verse perhaps that most of you would know. Listen, "If God is for us, who is against us; God who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all." It was God who delivered His Son. It's an amazing sacrifice, an amazing plan by God who is pleased to deliver up His Son to be bruised for our iniquities, to be chastened for our peace, to be wounded for our transgressions, to be beaten, as it were, and executed for our spiritual healing.

So here is Jesus saying to the disciples, "Look, don't let the temporary euphoria of the crowd, don't let the temporary popularity give you false hopes." In Matthew 16:21 Jesus said the same thing, of course, in Matthew's account of it, but there's a word there that just strikes me. Matthew 16:21, "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised on the third day." It's the must that interests me. It's the must. It was at this very point, six months before His death, that Jesus began to focus less and less on the crowd and more and more on the disciples and began to show them what was coming. And it was a must. There wasn't any alternative. And there are four elements. He must go to Jerusalem because that's where the Passover lamb has to die. He must go to Jerusalem, there can't be any other place. He will be the final sacrifice and He will be the sacrifice in the very place where sacrifices are made to God. And so in Luke 9:51 it says He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem. That's the first must.

The second is, He must suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes. They are the Sanhedrin. He must suffer many things at their hand. He suffered a mock trial. He suffered horrific injustice. He suffered all of that at their hands as well as the terrible verbal lashings, the discrediting, the mockery, the blasphemy, the scorn that they heaped upon Him. And then it was them who turned them over, of course, to the Romans where He was beaten and scourged and crowned with thorns and all the rest. This was an indictment on the apostasy of religious Israel.

The third must was that He must be murdered...He must be because without the shedding of His blood there would be no forgiveness of sin. And the fourth must is that He must be raised on the third day. And to that we say, "Amen and Amen," right?

So He said, "Look, get it in your heads, lay it in your ears. Let it sink into your ears. I have to die." Matthew says they were deeply grieved when they heard it. Mark says in chapter 9 they didn't

understand and they were afraid to ask. And the reason they couldn't get it was because it was so contrary to all their understanding. That's why in 1 Corinthians Paul says that the cross is a stumbling block to Israel. They can't comprehend of a crucified Messiah, that's just absolute nonsense. Anybody who hangs on a tree is cursed by God, the Old Testament says. God isn't going to curse His Messiah. How could God kill God on a cross? It's absolutely ridiculous. And the idea of a Messiah who comes to Israel and is executed by the leadership of Israel was impossible to comprehend. So alien to their personal affections, so alien to their messianic expectation, so disturbing to their faith and love for Jesus Christ, so opposite all their hopes for Israel, so sad with implications that embraced even them for they too were told they would take up a cross daily. It was just more than they could believe. It was like the first time you heard that someone you loved was dead in some accident and you just couldn't believe it. You see the amazing sacrifice reiterated again.

And then finally, the amazing sympathy. Jesus might have said to them, "You know, it's really getting old, guys, that you don't get it." But He also knew that built into human characteristics are defense mechanisms so we're not so traumatized that we literally disintegrate. Physical shock works to our benefit. I was thrown out of a car when I was young at 75 miles an hour, slid about 120 yards down the middle of the highway on my back. It wasn't painful. I didn't feel anything. If I managed to cut my finger somewhere I'll go, "Ouch." How in the world can I slide down a highway, have 64 square inches of my back removed to the bone and not feel anything? That's called shock, isn't it? And somehow your body kicks into a mode where it shuts off the pain sensors. This is a...this is a blessing. And the same thing is true in terms of your mind, and the Lord knows there's only so much that you can handle and then there's a sort of meld down of your sensibilities because you couldn't take it anymore. And so verse 45 says they didn't understand the statement.

And what was His reaction to that? "Oh, come on, guys, let Me tell you again." No. "And it was concealed from them so they might not perceive it." The reason they didn't understand it is they just couldn't handle it. And rather than the Lord say, "Well you might not like it but I'm going to tell you all the details," it says here, "It was concealed," passive, it was concealed. Well there's a big debate about how it was concealed. That's pretty simple how it was concealed. There's only one person who knew the future, who was that? Jesus Christ, right? He's the only one who knew the future. So when He said, "I'm going to be delivered into the hands of men," namely the chief priests, scribes and elders, "suffer many things," only He knew what they were and therefore only He could conceal them. So here you have the High Priest, the tender High Priest, the compassionate Lord withholding information that would be way too devastating for them to handle. If they knew all the things that were going to happen, they would have run even then and they would have missed their last six months of training. It was bad enough after the training, they still fled. But at least they fled after the training and they were all regathered after the resurrection and everything made sense. It was

concealed from them, *parakalupto*, by divine action. The Lord held it back from them.

There's an illustration of that in the eighteenth chapter of Luke, just quickly. Luke 18:31, "And He took the Twelve aside and said to them, 'Behold, we're going to Jerusalem, all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.'" Now they're getting close now. They're headed to Jerusalem. "He'll be delivered to the Gentiles and be mocked and mistreated and spit on and after they've scourged Him they'll kill Him, and the third day He'll rise again." He's still telling the same thing, they're getting close, as you know, at this point cause they're just moving in to Jerusalem at this time. Verse 34, "And they understood none of these things and this saying was hidden from them and they did not comprehend the things that were said." The Lord didn't force the issue. The Lord Himself hid it from them cause there was just too much for them to bear. The Lord allowed their self-protective disbelief to shelter them and shield them from too great a sorrow and too great an anxiety that would have literally turned them into people with ongoing panic attacks. And they, of course, it says at the end of verse 45, were afraid to ask Him about the statement. They didn't want anymore information, He didn't give them anymore.

Folks, one of the sweet mercies of the Lord is that you don't know the future. That is a sweet mercy. It would eliminate...if you knew the future, you couldn't enjoy anything because everybody's future in the end is sad. You wouldn't have any of the joy of anticipation. You know, we live our whole life in this wonderful euphoria of anticipation. And no matter what we anticipate, the anticipation is always better than the event because when you finally get to the event, you have to pull out your credit card. Have you noticed that? And not only is that a bad experience, but then when the deal is over, you're back saying, "What was all the anticipation about?" Now you've got to pay the thing. I love anticipation. I don't care about events as much, but I love anticipation. I love surprise. Don't you like surprise? How would you like to live in a world with no surprises, no planning, no preparing, just go through what is already prescribed? Who wants to live that way? What a horrible way to live. And not only would I have to suffer all the bad things now that exist, but I'd have to suffer in anticipation of everything bad that's coming ahead that I know about. Nobody could live with that. I don't need all the excruciating details of the moment, let alone the future.

They couldn't handle more than they were living and the moment, and I can't handle more than I'm living at the moment and it's the sweet mercy of the Lord that I only know what I need to know for now. I don't want to know the future. The Lord doesn't give me any more details than I can handle. And some day down the road as it all unfolds, it will come to make sense. It really will. Even on the road to Emmaus He said toward the end as He gets down to the Great Commission, He says, "All of this that happened is what I told you." He says to them in Luke 24:44, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was with you. Now look back at it." Oh...now when the trauma was over and He was alive and out of the grave, and the fear was gone, they could look back and He explained it

all...now we see. That was enough.

He's amazing to me, this living Christ, amazing power, amazing sacrifice, amazing sympathy. Our conquering sovereign, our crucified Savior, our compassionate sympathizer, as you gaze at His glory, as His glory expands, so does the potential by the Spirit's work for you to become like Him. What a glorious promise.

Father, we thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ. We thank You for the majesty. We see in Him the majesty, the greatness of God. We are in awe of Him. Fill our lives with the vision of Christ. May we be consumed with Christ to the point of utter self-denial, to say for me to live is Christ, to die is gain. May Christ be all in all to us. May we be lost in wonder, love and praise. And now as we come to look at Him in the cross again and be reminded of His sacrifice as we share in the bread and the cup, we confess our sins, our transgressions. Wash us, cleanse us so that we do not partake in an unworthy way.

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