

## **Introduction**

It has been a while since I last boarded a roller coaster. At my age you begin to wonder if it is an experience you should seek again. And yet I have ridden a few coasters in my life—all without incident. But incidents do happen. They call it a controlled stop when for safety reasons a roller coaster applies the brakes and brings the train to a stop mid-ride.

Controlled stops have brought coasters to a halt on the way up the initial steep incline, at the very top of the hill, and even half-way through upside down loops, stranding riders in the middle of the ride.

Last week we began our study of Matthew 15:29-39. Here we observe 8 ways in which the glory of God shines forth in the face of Jesus. We were gathering momentum, but time limitations demanded a controlled stop. This morning we are going to reboard and finish the ride.

[Read Scripture and Pray]

With words breathed out by the Holy Spirit, Matthew’s report of the events detailed here put on rich display the glory of God in the face of Jesus. Last Sunday we considered the first 3 of 8 ways the glory of God shines through Christ and his work of healing and feeding. Jesus among Gentiles points us to the glorious scope of God’s salvation plan to include in his kingdom people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Jesus on the mountain with multitudes streaming to his feet points us to the glorious welcome offered by God through the gospel. Jesus’ healing of the multitudes depicts the glorious work of new birth and a glorious future in the new heavens and new earth for all who come to him. This morning we will consider the remaining 5 ways in the text in which we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

The Glory of God shines through the face of Christ in . . .

### **I. The Result of His Work.**

A. The Gentiles observed that those formerly mute were speaking as a result of the healing power of Jesus. They also watched as the crippled and

the lame were now whole and walking. They witnessed the exhilaration of blind men and women who now possessed sight. Those who experienced healing and those who saw it were filled with wonder. They realized that what they were witnessing was only explainable as the work of God, and not one of the idols they worshiped, but the one true God of Israel. And so these Gentiles did what the Jewish leaders refused to do. They gave glory to the God of Israel. They worshiped him. The result of the work of Jesus was the glorification of God.

The work of Christ in the lives of people is intended to produce worshipers. In this Gentile context, Jesus' work declared the power of God in His ability and the grace of God to reach out to people living in darkness and worshiping false gods. His work directs people to see that God is not merely looking to save people from the destruction they deserve. His intent is to produce people who extol his greatness, people who bow before him in homage, people whose joy it is to orient their lives under his rule and for his fame. Jesus told the woman at the well that God is seeking people to worship him. This is what people were made for—to be worshipers of God. This is our chief end.

Everything God does for his people in Christ redounds to his praise and is designed to do so. God's blessings put the glory of God on display. And those blessings come through Christ and his work. These physical healings in Matthew are just a glimpse into the spiritual and eternal riches that God has for his people in Christ. Ephesians 1 catalogs these spiritual blessings. His choice of us, our holiness and blamelessness, our adoption as sons, our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, our knowledge of his will, our inheritance, our guarantee of that inheritance, the Holy Spirit. These blessings are mind-boggling for those who look at the unseen eternal. Have you experienced physical healing? You got nothing on these spiritual blessings that are bestowed upon the spiritually dead who are raised to life.

Paul begins this list of blessings with the words, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then he exclaims, "to the praise of his glorious grace." Then two more times in this list he says that God does this gracious work in believers "to the praise of his glory." If the Gentiles glorified the God of Israel that day in view of the miraculous works of Jesus

that they saw, how much more should we who have been saved in Christ. In Ephesians 2 Paul points out the grace of our salvation. God “raised us up with [Christ] and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” God saved us to worship him. He saved us to glorify him. How do we do that? Well for sure, we do it with our words. We should engage our hearts in song that extols our great God and heavenly Father. In Ephesians 5 Paul says we should overflow with song “making melody to the Lord with [our] heart, giving thanks always to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

But worship is more than singing. It is submission to God. Our spiritual service of worship is yielding up ourselves to him. It is living for his honor, whether we eat or drink, whether we are a husband or a wife, a parent or a child, a master or a servant. Your life is to be an exhibition to the world of the greatness of the God who has brought you up from the depths, who has given you life and breath, and promises an eternal inheritance for your eternal joy. The more you understand the magnitude of his gifts to you, the greater will be the exhibition of his glory in you.

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## **II. The Display of His Compassion.**

A. The crowds had been there with Jesus for three days. Perhaps they had brought food with them when they came but not three days’ worth. They were in a desolate location where there was no place to get food. Jesus was not unaware of the situation. And before anybody says anything, he was sensitive to the need. Going back home did not mean hopping on the train, getting in a car, or jumping on a bicycle. It meant a long, long walk requiring stamina.

B. I am in awe of what Jesus said to his disciples. “I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.” I am so helped by Jesus’ expression of compassion. He declares that he has compassion on the crowd. He states with words what he displays in action. And it provides assurance that the kindness which he displays springs from a heart of sympathy. He does not miraculously feed

the crowd because he wants to show them how miraculous he can be. He feeds them because he cares for them.

Isaiah 40:11 tells us that God "will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."

Psalms 103:13-14 assures our hearts that "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are but dust." That is Jesus. Note his determination: "I am UNWILLING to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." The glory of God shines in the compassion of Jesus.

B. And I am lifting him up before you this morning to assure you and comfort you and encourage you with the knowledge that this is God. He is compassionate. He knows and understands and sympathizes with our weaknesses and threats. It is true in a physical sense and in a spiritual sense. Out of his compassion, he has given everything we need for life and godliness.

C. The compassion of God calls us to worship. How great is our God! He is not a unfeeling, uncaring deity. He is sensitive even to sinners. He causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. He feeds the wicked and the good.

The compassion of God also calls us to comfort and trust. Are you in a situation of misery? Are you weak? Cumbered with a load of care? He is aware and he feels compassion and he is unwilling to send you away empty.

The problem is that we sometimes do not take the comfort and provision he offers. Could you imagine some in the crowd rejecting the food Jesus distributed through his disciples? That would be a foolish choice, but that is the choice we sometimes make. We choose to wallow in fear and anxiety rather than be comforted and strengthened with the truth he supplies. We choose to continue in self-destructive behaviors rather than obey his compassion-driven wise counsel. Praise God that even then he continues in

compassionate patience! My encouragement this morning is that you be driven to Christ by the fresh appreciation of his compassion for you.

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### **III. The Endowment of His Disciples.**

We observe in Christ's miraculous feeding of the crowd that Jesus empowers his disciples for usefulness beyond their resources.

Jesus asked the disciples, how many loaves do you have? Seven, they said, and a few small fish." Here was a crowd not quite as large as the one that recently gathered on another shore of the sea, but it was 4,000 men not counting women and children, so probably upwards of 20,000. Jesus took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks and gave them to the disciples and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. In the hands of Jesus the seven loaves and few fish were more than enough to do through the disciples what they could never have accomplished on their own.

It glorifies God that he takes the little and does unimaginably great things with it. He takes the things that are not and uses them to bring to nothing the things that are. He uses the dull to do the cutting. He uses the humble to overcome the strong. He uses the poor to overflow in giving beyond their means. He uses the inadequate to more than meet the need.

That means he can use you and me to do things that we know in ourselves we cannot. Disciples of Christ, never think you don't have enough, are not strong or smart enough or ready enough for Jesus to use you. He is the God who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all we can ask or think. Don't doubt him. Don't put your confidence in yourself, but don't let your awareness of what you do not have keep you from allowing him to multiply your lack to do amazing feats of spiritual strength and ministry.

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### **IV. The Service of the Multitude.**

Jesus Serves Many and Meets the Need of Each One. You know, words can be powerful. They can pack a punch. I like these words in verse 37: "And they ALL ate and were satisfied." There was a crowd on the

mountain—thousands and thousands of people—but each individual's need was met. They all ate and were satisfied. God met the needs of all and he met the needs of each. God loves all his people, and no individual gets lost among the many. Jesus exhibited this aspect of God's glory in a way that was felt by every single one.

God wants his people to know that he loves them all and EVERY SINGLE ONE. You need to be assured that God's general sort of love is a specific love. His love for the whole is also a love for each. Every single member of his family has come one at a time because he came to them. As many as received Christ, who believed in his name, to them he gave the right to become children of God, who were born of God, one at a time. God cares for his whole family and he cares for every single person. You think about it. Jesus fed the whole crowd, but each person got their portion.

Jesus said that even though sparrows amount to very little value to men, not a single one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father. The psalmist tells us that God determines the number of the stars and gives each one a name. If your Father cares about every single bird and has a name for every single star, what does that mean about you? You do not get lost in the crowd. In the day we gather around the throne, there will be myriads of myriads, and not a single one will be lost in the shuffle.

Why even your gifting in the body is designed by the Lord. You are who you are by his creation and each person in the body of Christ has a place and role of significance. None of us is a bench warmer. None of us is meant to be a spectator. Each has a role as unique to us as the person he made us to be. He loves you and he has designed you. Flourish in that love and in that design!

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#### **V. The Duplication of his Previous Work.**

Verse 37 tells us that when the feeding was over and everyone was satisfied that, just like the last time, there were leftovers—seven baskets full of the broken pieces. And verse 38 tells us that just like the previous feeding the number of folks who ate from the piddly resources was astronomical—four

thousand men not to mention the women and children. What Jesus had done before, he did again.

It is striking to me—Is it not striking to you?—what happened when Jesus called the disciples to him and told them of his determination not to send the crowds away hungry. Their response was, “We are in the middle of nowhere. Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?” It was not a lifetime ago that Jesus had fed a crowd even larger than this one with less.

Why do we not read that the disciples rubbed their hands together and exclaimed, “Yes! Here we go again! We get to do it again!” I think that we don’t read that for the same reason that we become anxious and sometimes throw up our hands and say, “What am I going to do this time?” when we face a challenge. Didn’t the Lord get us through the last one? Didn’t he supply our need then?

Melissa and I are reading a biography of George Muller. George made a commitment early on in his life not to ever make known his needs but to wait silently on God’s supply. And there were many times when the supply went low, but there was never a time when he and his wife went without. Countless times God met their needs just in the nick of time. They never wrung their hands in frantic concern, they just got on their knees and prayed, and God supplied just like he had done before.

Lamentations 3:22-23 says, “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new . . . EVERY . . . MORNING.” Jesus shows us the glory of God in that he repeats a mighty work he had done before and reminds us that we have to trust him repeatedly, every day for the needs of that day, for the challenges of that day and that moment. And we can because he is faithful. How brightly the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ!

## **Conclusion**

One of Charles Dickens’ literary works is entitled Little Dorritt. The story commences with the return to London of Arthur Clennam from 2 decades of living in China with his father. Seeking his next phase in life, he encounters

Mr. William Dorritt who has lived in debtors' prison for over 20 years. Dorritt seems to make the most of his imprisonment, pretending contentment and living as if he chose to be there, although in a roundabout way he begs for and accepts handouts from his visitors who come and go pretty much as they please. Poor and living in squalor, Dorritt wins the sympathy of Clennam. He regularly visits the poor imprisoned Dorritt and brings him small gifts and always leaves him with some coins. Longing to bring some relief to the prisoner, Clennam engages to discover the nature of Mr. Dorritt's case. Happily, in the process, Clennam discovers that Mr. Dorritt is the lost heir to a large fortune. Because of Mr Clennam's efforts, Dorritt is able to pay his way out of prison and enter English society as a man of great means. His status is completely altered.

But when Mr. Clennam gives Dorritt the news, his attitude to Clennam changes completely. He gives not a word of thanks to Clennam but gruffly informs him that since he will be entering society, there will no longer be a reason for the two to continue in acquaintance. Dorritt goes on to live as if he never knew Mr. Clennam.

It is a rather heart-breaking turn in the story. Here was a compassionate man stooping to show kindness to a poor debtor living in squalor. Here is one whose unmerited kindness even resulted in a complete transformation of status. And yet the recipient, suddenly concerned for his reputation among high society, refused even to admit he once knew the one whose kindness brought him into the wealth he now enjoyed.

If we follow Jesus, the light of the glory of God has shown brilliantly upon us in him. If we are the recipients of the lavish gifts of his kindness, it is only fitting that the world hears us proclaiming his glory. It is only right that we tell the world where our spiritual riches have come from. It is only proper that we extol him with words and with obedience and with faith and with joy . . . giving glory to him.

Any society which would look down its noses at one whose kindness has lifted us from the squalor of our nature is society that we should not want to impress. O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together.