

## **Introduction**

From the day the Apostle Paul was converted, he preached Christ. Right there in Damascus where the scales fell off, he was in the synagogues proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God. When he wrote to the Corinthians, he said, “what we proclaim is not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord. For God ... has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Paul asserts the glory of God is made known by Jesus. As we turn to Matthew 15 this morning, we see exactly what he is talking about.

[Read Scripture and Pray]

ALL Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness to make us complete, equipped for every good work. Therefore, never underestimate the importance or power of any passage of the Scripture. We may be tempted to do so with our text this morning. We recently studied Jesus’s feeding of the five thousand. And here we are again at a similar feeding. In addition it was as early as Matthew chapter 4 that we began to read of Jesus’s amazing ministry of teaching that was punctuated by mighty works of healing every kind of affliction. Such is again the case here in Matthew 15:29-39. So we might be tempted to sail right by these reports. And yet, if we did we would miss some striking displays of God’s glory.

With words breathed out by the Holy Spirit, Matthew’s report of the events detailed here puts on rich display the glory of God in the face of Jesus. In the course of the next two weeks I am going to show you 8 ways the glory of God shines through Christ’s work of healing and feeding. This morning I want you to see 3 of them. Next week, we will look at the other 5.

### **I. Jesus Was Among Gentiles.**

A. Matthew provides a couple of strong indicators that Jesus was reaching out into Gentile territory. Firstly, he tells us that as the afflicted were being healed, the crowds glorified the “God of Israel.” If these were Jews, there

would be no need to make the distinction. Then there is the reference to the baskets in which the left over fragments of the huge banquet were put. This is a different word for basket than what was used in the previous feeding when twelve baskets of left-overs were collected. That was a small size basket typically used by Jews to carry one or two meals. The word in this text is a distinctly Gentile type of basket. It was much larger. It was of the size into which a man would fit. For it was this kind of basket by which Paul was let down through a window in the city wall when the Jews of Damascus were seeking to kill him. At any rate, what Matthew hints at, Mark specifies. Mark informs us (7:31) that these events occurred in the region of the Decapolis, a Gentile area on the Sea of Galilee.

B. Immediately after the previous miraculous feeding, multitudes of Jews turned away from Jesus, and the higher-ups of the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem arrived and put their determined rejection of Jesus on unmistakable display. So Jesus had withdrawn from the Jews, entering the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon. There he commended the faith of a Canaanite woman. She had perceived that salvation was from the Jews. Yet she was not asking for what was meant for the Jews, only for the crumbs they let fall to the floor. She had said, "even the household dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table." Jesus applauded her faith, I think not just because of its resilience but also because of her perception. God's Son the Messiah was being set as food on the table before the children (the Israelites) and they in effect were throwing the food on the floor.

The hardheartedness of the Jews opened the door for the Gentiles. This is a truth explained by Paul in Romans 9-11. So Jesus, coming back from the region of Tyre and Sidon, re-enters the boundaries of Israel to minister to Gentiles now in the sight of the Jews as though to provoke them to jealousy.

Salvation is of the Jews, but from eternity past God determined to save people from every tribe and tongue and nation. Paul explains that the Jews are natural branches and Gentile believers are wild branches grafted in. In the wisdom of God, a hardening of Israel has occurred until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. The ways of God, bringing salvation to the world

through Israelite rejection only later to bring many of the Israelites to the same salvation, causes Paul to erupt in amazement in Romans 11: "Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! . . . For from him and to him and through him are all things. To him be glory forever. A-men."

We see the glory of God in the face of Jesus as he ministers among the Gentiles because his ministry reflects the glorious depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God—How he is bringing salvation through the Jews to many of them and also to the world.

It is striking to observe how this ministry among the Gentiles also bears out the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. The promise was that in his descendant all the nations of the world would be blessed (Genesis 22:18). Stop for a moment and ponder. God gave Abraham, in his old age, a son. And at a point in time God told Abraham to take Isaac TO A MOUNTAIN and offer him there. And he did. He got as far as raising the knife to slay his son. At that moment God acknowledged Abraham's willingness to yield Isaac up and he supplied a substitute for the offering, a ram caught in the thicket. It was after Abraham had taken Isaac up the mountain and offered him to the Lord that the Lord made this promise. He said, "Since you have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and the sand of the seashore, . . . and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

Now here is Jesus on the mountain. He is the offspring of Abraham. That is one of the first points Matthew makes about Jesus from the beginning of his gospel. He is the offspring of Abraham, and he is the son, the only true son of God, whom God (like Abraham) has not withheld. And he is carrying out the promise God made to Abraham that through his offspring all the nations would be blessed. Jesus on this mountain among the Gentiles shines the glory of God and the glory of his promise to bless even Gentiles.

Just as Abraham did not withhold his only son, even so Almighty God did not withhold his only son. Romans 8:32 says it, God "did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all." Jesus himself is he who said in John 3:16,

“For God so loved the world he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him—even Gentiles—should not perish but have eternal life.” Jesus among Gentiles reveals the glory of God’s grace to the nations.

## **II. Jesus Was on a Mountain.**

A. Matthew states plainly that Jesus went up on the mountain and sat down there. This is not an idle detail. It was on a mountain that Abraham was willing to offer his son and it was on the mountain God made the promise to bless the nations through Abraham’s offspring. And now here on a mountain, what Jesus had done among the Jews he is doing among the Gentiles.

B. But there is another momentous mountain experience which occurred in the Old Testament back to which Jesus’ presence on the mountain points. It was at Mt. Sinai. It was there that God handed down the law through Moses to the Israelites. We need to turn to Exodus 19:10-25 and read. [Read].

In this Exodus text, God comes to the mountain. And in Matthew 15:29, God in the person of Jesus also comes to the mountain. But the differences between the comings and the conditions are stark.

When God came to Sinai,  
The people were given three days to get ready. They had to cleanse and consecrate themselves. They were to maintain ceremonial cleanness and were to not even go near a woman (for that would make them unclean).

In addition, at Sinai, limits were set. God came to the mountain, but the people could come no closer than the foot of the mountain. They were not to even touch the mountain. Whoever touched the mountain would be put to death.

There were all kinds of ominous demonstrations. The mountain was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended upon it in fire. The whole mountain trembled greatly. The sound of a trumpet was heard. It grew louder and louder. God answered Moses in thunder.

The people absolutely could not have access. An additional warning was in order that the Lord would break out against anyone other than Moses and Aaron who dared break in.

The people themselves trembled in fear. 20:18 says, "Now when all the people saw the thunder and flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled and they stood far off." Moses explained that God was instilling in them the fear of him. It was such a dreadful day that the people did not want to hear God anymore.

Meanwhile, what a contrast when Jesus sat on the mountain by the Sea of Galilee!

No preparation was necessary. The people did not have to prepare; they came as they were. They came with all their deficiencies, all their ailments, all their scars, all their uncleanness. They were Gentiles.

There were no limitations. Multitudes, thousands of people came. And the people came all the way not to the foot of the mountain, but to the feet of Jesus himself.

There were no exhibitions of sound or drama designed to instill fear in those who came. No trumpet, no smoke, no trembling . . . only Jesus and his disciples there to welcome and minister compassionately to those who came. The fellowship that took place is expressed by Jesus in verse 32. Jesus speaks compassionately saying the crowd has been WITH HIM for three days. At Sinai the Israelites had to wait three days just to see the appearance of God. At this mountain in Galilee, the Gentiles got to be WITH GOD for three days.

C. The difference between these two mountains and their corresponding conditions is the difference between the law and the gospel. On Sinai the law was given. Everything about the handing down of the law of God indicates His holy perfection and righteousness. The holiness of God resounds in his law. And all you have to do to be guilty of all is to break it even at one point, even from your heart. The handing down of the law of God in a display of fear and trembling, smoke and fire, and a refusal of

access shows human beings how incapable we are to have access to God on the basis of our own deeds.

The very ones who stood at the foot of the mountain where God delivered the law were already breakers of that law. All they heard reiterated to them again and again that they were unworthy of God. They would be completely unable to win God's favor or keep his favor by this law.

The apostle Paul explains that the law, good as it is, cannot help us be justified. The law speaks so that people will be silenced before the tribunal of God. We have no argument. We realize our works cannot justify us. What the law does is make us aware of our sin against God. What it does is justify the wrath of God against those who disobey. On Sinai we behold the holiness and justice of God. And it is fearful!

Meanwhile, what a difference on a mount near the Sea of Galilee as we see God in flesh. Jesus WELCOMES all who will draw near. He administers MERCY to them ALL. These come not merely to the foot of the mountain. They come to the feet of Jesus. This is a living breathing demonstration of the essence of the gospel. The wages of law-breaking is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. All who will draw near to God on the basis of the person and work of Jesus Christ will be received and welcomed without fear. To seek justification through Christ is to seek justification through faith. Paul writes the Romans, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access." There was no restriction on Jesus's mountain, nothing to keep people off. And is this for you and for me? Yes, indeed! We may draw near to God through Christ just as those Gentiles drew near to Jesus on the mount. We may draw near to find mercy and grace, to indulge in fellowship, to behold the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

### **III. Jesus Brought Healing to Those Who Came to Him.**

It is astounding. Thousands and thousands came. For three straight days, Jesus was involved in healing those who were brought. Matthew details the afflictions. There were the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and

many others. This picture must have been vividly fixed in his mind. They put them at the feet of Jesus, and he healed them.

These were all debilitated. The lame could not make certain parts of their bodies work. The blind couldn't see. The crippled refers to people without certain body parts (who knows) because of accident or disease. The mute could not speak, probably also a reference to those who could not hear. Miraculously, Jesus addressed all of these debilitations. Where once they could not, now they could. The crowds were seeing the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing—debilitations overturned! Death was replaced with life! What they could not do before, now they could because they came to Jesus. And the crowds were filled with wonder, with amazement, with delight.

Listen. There is no greater affliction for any human being than spiritual debilitation. And this is how each of us comes into this world. Human beings are born spiritually unable, dead, debilitated. We are spiritually lame, blind, crippled, and mute because we are dead spiritually.

But if we come to Jesus, we have been born again by God. We are not any longer crippled, blind, mute. We are healed by Jesus through the Spirit. John writes (1:12-13) that all who receive Christ, who believe in his name WERE born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but OF GOD. Jesus told Nicodemus that to see the kingdom of heaven, you must be born again. You must be touched by the power of Christ Jesus like these Gentiles he touched on the mountain. As surely as Jesus has power over physical disease, he has power over spiritual death. It is an awesome evidence of his great power as men, women, and children are awakened from their spiritual death. They then repent of sin and believe in Jesus. Desires and drives that once used to rule them are now dethroned. They hunger and thirst for righteousness. The hardness of heart they once had towards God is replaced with life and vitality and joy and wonder.

The glory of God is seen in the face of Christ because he graciously receives and works powerfully in the lives of sinners. He graciously reaches out to these whose afflictions are evidence of their sin. Had they been at Sinai, they would have trembled in fear. These are no less lawbreakers than the

Jews. Their afflictions are evidences of their sin. But Christ receives them and transforms them. He does the same to the spiritual afflictions of every lost person who will draw near to God through him. These are truths that beckon you, if you have not already done so, to come to Jesus in repentance and faith. Turn from your law-breaking and trust in Christ. But if you have come to him already in saving faith, these truths beckon you still to stay and remain with him, to indulge in the riches of fellowship and to serve him joyously.

## **Conclusion**

There are 5 more wonderful expressions here of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, but we will look at them next time.

For now let me leave you with the awareness that in exhibiting his great power and blessing among the Gentiles, Jesus was giving us a foretaste of the new heavens and the new earth. It will be an eternal mountain top experience of the Lord's glory. We will not be restricted in approaching the Lord. Nothing will hold us back from being with him, in his presence where there is fullness of joy. In addition, Jews and Gentiles will be there. People from every tribe and tongue and ethnicity and nation will populate the new heavens and the new earth. The many made one will glorify the God of heaven and enjoy his presence. And that is not all. The removal of debilitation will exceed anything we can imagine. The physical healing poured out richly upon these Gentiles gathered there on the mountain with Jesus for those days is a foretaste of the wholeness we will know there. What Jesus did on that mountain in the physical sense will be taken to another level in a spiritual sense. All spiritual debilitations will be gone. The crippled and lame will leap. The blind will behold him. And the mute will open their mouths to declare his praise, and there will be nothing to hold us back.

I was talking this week with Ariail about her experience last fall of visiting national parks in Utah. She went out there with Grace Anne and Denise. The parks are filled with massive monuments of wonderment to the glory of God—giant arches and formations. Ariail said that seeing pictures or hearing about the beauty even seeing these formations from a distance was exhilarating. But it was almost nothing compared to being right there in the



midst of them and experiencing them firsthand. I have no doubt that is how heaven is going to be. We are given a foretaste of the wonder, a foretaste of the joy, a foretaste of the fellowship, of the healing, and of the praise. No doubt when God's people arrive, our jaws will drop, our hearts will burst, and our wildest prior imaginings will be superceded infinitely. Let this foretaste fuel your diligence toward holiness. Let it propel your tongue to proclaim Christ wherever you will be this week. Let it be your hope when times are tough. Let it be your song of joy in this land of sojourning.