
“Christ's Glory Revealed to and through His Church”

MATTHEW 16:13-18 & ROMANS 10:14-17

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PASTOR BRIAN SMITH

WILDWOOD CHURCH

EAST MOLINE, ILLINOIS

AT A GLANCE

Did you know that every true believer is a brother or sister in Christ? This is how we will spend eternity together in heaven. All other distinctions will dissipate as we're united together in the kingdom of God. And what will bind us together forever in Heaven binds us together on earth – the glory of Christ. Every born-again believer has beheld the glory of Christ here on earth by faith and we will behold it together by sight in Heaven. It is our blessed privilege, then, to not only behold His glory, but to reveal it the lost world by proclaiming the His Gospel.

INTRODUCTION

Every Sunday morning true believers around the world gather under the banner of Christ to praise and proclaim His glory. We gather because the glory of Christ compels us to worship Him. This was true of the first church, and it has been the conviction of the Church ever since.

On my sabbatical I had the privilege of gathering with several churches, locally and in other states. I didn't go in to compare it to Wildwood. I went to worship with my brothers and sisters in Christ. Whether it was Church on the Rock, or Rock Island Bible Church, pastored by my friend Doug Rowland, whether it was Edgewood Baptist on the west side of the QCA pastored by my friend Brian Bill, or FBC Silvis in the middle, pastored by my friend who introduced me to Gitche Gumees Bible Camp where we do Camp Wildwood, Ben Lovelady, whether it was Calvary Chapel in Florida, or Faith Bible Fellowship in Alaska, Christ's Church is alive and well and is spread over all the nation and around the world! The bond we have in Christ with one another in the Church is not only local, it's global.

Every believer in the world is my brother or sister in Christ. That's how we're going to spend eternity. We might just be neighbors here. We might just be co-workers here. We might be strangers here. The reality is that we might even be enemies on the battlefield here, which must absolutely grieve the heart of God, but we will spend eternity as brothers and sisters in Christ. There is a bond between believers that will outlast this world and everything in it!

ONE THING IN COMMON

What is the thing we share in common? Believers all around the world are bound together forever by one thing: we have beheld the glory of Christ. Knowing that the banner of the Lord is flying high over people in other nations with different languages and cultures should fan our mission zeal into a bright flame. To know that Christ, our king, is worshipped far and wide by an incredibly diverse body of believers is awe-inspiring and we should want more than anything else to see Him worshipped ever further and wider and broader.

We ought to want more than anything else that everywhere there is a people group, there is a local church, a gathering of the saints to whom and through whom the glory of Christ is revealed. I say that deliberately and I'd like to spend the rest of our time today unpacking those two phrases. The church is a group of people “to whom” the glory of Christ is revealed and “through whom” the glory of Christ is revealed. These two phrases reveal both our identity and our purpose.

UPON THIS ROCK

Let's begin with the identity phrase, the church is a group of people *to whom* the glory of Christ is revealed. Let's read Jesus' words to Peter in **Matthew 16:13-18**.

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:13-18

What do you see there? I see Jesus establishing His Church not on a man, but on a confession. A confession based on a revelation from God. A confession of the glory of Christ. While some say that Jesus was a good man, a moral teacher, even a prophet, Peter made the confession that Jesus was the Christ because he had seen His glory. His eyes were opened to Christ's glory as the Son of the living God because God had revealed Christ's glory to him. And it is upon **this rock** that Jesus said **I will build my church**. The church is built upon one thing: the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. That's what unites genuine believers and it's the greatest privilege we have.

In his book, *Glory of Christ*, John Owen asserts, "One of the greatest privileges the believer has, both in this world and for eternity, is to behold the glory of Christ." It is a privilege to behold Christ's glory here by faith and it will be an even greater privilege to behold it by sight. What unites every true believer in the world is not politics, nor culture, not education, nor economics; the one thing that unites every true believer is that we have beheld the glory of Christ.

YOU ARE THE CHRIST

We say with Peter, **You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God**. This is what it means to be born-again. We've beheld His glory. Every genuine believer echoes that truth "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" because they have beheld His glory.

When the Church gathers, we gather in unified worship of the One whose glory we have beheld. We are united around this one thing, this thing alone, that Jesus Christ is glorious to us. The person and work of Christ is glorious. It is marvelous. This is why we prioritize the gathering, not because of what's in it for us, but for who Christ is and what He has done. I am always curious of a person's spiritual vitality when they neglect gathering with the church.

I understand there are extenuating circumstances for some. I'm referring to people who act like they can take the church or leave it. I'm worried for these people's souls because if they have truly beheld the glory of Christ, if they truly have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, then I do not believe they will stay long in that condition of neglecting the gathering. I believe Christ's glory compels Christians to gather in worship and to regret it when they cannot.

Gathering together as the church is primarily about worshipping Jesus corporately with fellow believers to whom the glory of Christ has been revealed and we ought to meditate upon that. It is not primarily about us getting something out of it, though how remarkable that we can walk away from the gathering encouraged and refreshed. The primary purpose of the gathering is to worship Jesus with people who see Jesus as glorious just like we do. There's no stronger bond than that. But our gathering also serves as a testimony, both passively and actively.

OUR PASSIVE WITNESS

Our passive witness is like this, every time we gather, we prioritize the gathering over something else the world presents as more significant; be it sleep or sports or entertainment or work or whatever it is. We are saying to the world, “Jesus is our God and we’re going to worship Him today.”

When people see us driving on Sunday morning and pulling into the church parking lot, we are proclaiming to the world, “We worship Jesus.” That’s why one of the hallmarks of the historic church is a soaring steeple with a cross at the top. We’re telling the world that we’re gathering together on this day to worship the One, True, living God and the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son.

We’re not only saying this to the world, but we’re also saying this to our kids. When we prioritize the gathering of the saints, we’re sending the message to our kids that we really mean what we’re saying. You cannot convince a child with your words that your faith is meaningful and sincere while your lifestyle denies it. Kids believe what they see more than what you say.

We also have an opportunity to be a passive witness when we leave this place and pull up to a restaurant for lunch dressed in our Sunday clothes. People can tell who came from church and who just rolled out of bed, especially servers.

And there’s an implication here that we ought to be mindful of. We ought to practice in the restaurant what we preach, or what we’ve heard preached, in the pulpit. Be kind. Be joyful. Be respectful. And above all else, be generous! Make the server grateful he or she got the Sunday lunch shift!

OUR ACTIVE WITNESS – REVEALING CHRIST’S GLORY

But this is all a passive witness. Let’s talk about an active witness. We all know there’s more to being a witness for Christ than just showing up to church and not being a jerk at lunch. Which brings me to the second premise: the glory of Christ is revealed *through* the Church.

The glory of Christ is revealed *to* the Church. The true Church is comprised only of people who have confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. But let me argue that the glory of Christ is revealed to the Church *so that* it can be revealed through the Church, namely to unbelievers.

You might say to me, Pastor, why do we need to worry about reaching unbelievers? Don’t you know its God who saves them? Afterall, Paul said, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* Ephesians 2:8-9

To that I would reply with the words of the same man, *“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.”* 1 Corinthians 9:22

Did Paul believe he was responsible for saving sinners? Of course not, at least not effectually! Paul taught clearly that its God who saves us. But God uses witnesses who proclaim the Gospel to do it. God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. Consider Paul’s line of reasoning in **Romans 10:14-17**.

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Romans 10:14-17

BEAUTIFUL FEET

What do you observe there? I observe Paul telling us that other people's salvation, effectually rendered by God, is practically rendered by those whose feet bring the good news! You might argue this is not prescriptive, it's descriptive. This is simply describing a process, but there is no command.

Here's a command. *"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" Matthew 28:18-20*

Nation here does not refer to nation-state or country. It refers to people group. While the gospel is likely already inside every nation-state, there are thousands of people groups who have not been reached with the Gospel. They have no bible in their language, no local church in their community, no gospel presence. According to the Joshua Project, there are still approximately 7391 unreached people groups out of 17,446.

And here is a prophetic expectation given by Jesus before the crucifixion, *"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."* John 15:26-27

And restated after the resurrection, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* Acts 1:8

Did the first disciples take the gospel to the end of the earth? Did they reach every nation, every people group? We know the answer to this is no. Implied is that this commission was intended not only for the first disciples but for every disciple.

Even if Romans 10 is not prescriptive, which I believe it is, or at least assumes such, the words of Jesus certainly are. Consider the very first act of the church on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit filled them. What did the Church do? Did they gather privately and worship?

No. Instead, they went out and declared the gospel of salvation, the glory of Christ Jesus, to people who had crucified Him just weeks earlier. They boldly proclaimed to the world, to Jews and Gentiles alike, that Jesus is the Christ. The Holy Spirit used the Church to reveal the glory of Christ to about 3000 people that day who heard the Gospel preached by the people and were born again by the Holy Spirit.

DIVINE PRIORITY

I think I can safely say the priority of the Holy Spirit in the Church is the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ because Jesus is glorified by everyone who believes it.

It is for this very reason that the Apostle Peter would later instruct the church, *"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..."* 1 Peter 3:15

Faithful followers of Christ prioritize what He prioritizes. The Holy Spirit reveals those priorities to us as He shapes us into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18). And what is clear from scripture is that the priority of Christ, the priority of the Holy Spirit, is that the gospel of Jesus goes to every people group in the world.

That where there is a people group, where there is a tongue, where there is a tribe, there is also a local church – to whom the glory of Christ has been revealed and through whom it is to be revealed such that what was foretold in the first century is fulfilled in the last.

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in

their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" Revelation 7:9-10

Paul tells us that as we behold Christ's glory by faith we will grow in His likeness. The more we behold, the more we're transformed. If we desire to live faithfully to the end we will strive to behold the glory of Christ more and more. We'll desire to live our lives for His glory, doing works of righteousness so that others will see our good works and glorify the Father. We'll strive to align our priorities with His, seeking opportunities to reveal the glory of Christ by proclaiming the gospel at every opportunity. We'll be mindful of our passive testimony and deliberate in our active testimony.

The Church is united globally around one thing – the glory of Christ. It has been revealed to us and we have confessed that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. Furthermore, the glory of Christ is entrusted to us in the form of the Gospel. It is our task, our duty, our responsibility to steward that precious gift by being the beautiful feet that bring the good news to every nation so the Father can reveal to them the glory of the Son.

Wildwood, we are not the Church, but we are part of the Church. We are not the only ones doing gospel work but are engaged in the work of God where He sends us. We are not the only faithful people on the planet, but we are among the faithful. We do not have ministry figured out, but we are working hard to be both more faithful and more fruitful. And all of this is true because the glory of Christ has been revealed to us by faith, and so that the glory of Christ can be revealed to others, until the glory of Christ we've beheld by faith is beheld by our eyes. Amen?!