
"Divine Wisdom & Love Personified in Christ"

ROMANS 8:31-39, 11:33-36

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PASTOR BRIAN SMITH

WILDWOOD CHURCH

EAST MOLINE, ILLINOIS

AT A GLANCE

What glory of Christ do we behold by faith today? If it is not military or political power, nor riches or beauty, what it is about Christ that we find glorious? It is that in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and love of God is personified. It is manifest and made visible. It is put on display! We can know our God is wise and loving because of Jesus. Do you behold His glory?

INTRODUCTION

Last Sunday I gave you two sabbatical take-aways. The first was the urgency of a praying church. I asked you to commit to praying for the preaching pastor every Saturday. I want to thank you for doing that! The second take away was the need to re-evaluate my regular rhythms and I invited you to do the same. We live in such a hustle-culture and I'm afraid it's really impacting our health. We were made to work, play, and rest. Let's not forget the last part. Today I want to present a third sabbatical take away: our God is wise and loving. Let me share a few sabbatical experiences that really made this clear to me.

CAMP WILDWOOD

Let's begin with Camp Wildwood. We scheduled to do baptisms in Lake Superior on Thursday of the week. I've never done that and I was uncertain it was going to work. The water is typically quite frigid, like in the 30's and 40's. The day prior to our scheduled baptisms, several of us were standing on the beach and were forced to move into the water to keep our ankles from being bitten by the flies.

We'd move from the frigid water to the beach long enough for our feet to warm up and when we could no longer tolerate the biting flies, we'd move back into the water. Things were not looking good! The evening of baptism, much to our surprise, there were no flies and the water temperature rose to a point that it was not only bearable, but actually pretty comfortable. It was like the Lord turned on the heater in the Lake Superior. Everyone joined us for an incredible evening of worship as we watched the sun set over the lake and witnessed nine people make their professions of faith public.

LET'S MEET UP

Shortly after Camp Wildwood I flew to Alaska. Before I could check into my yurt I spent some time reading and journaling at a local coffee shop; a ministry of a local church that my friend, Andy, has told me about before. While I was there, I happened to run into the lead pastor of the church who had recently returned from his own sabbatical. Our time was cut short but we agreed it would be nice to meet again the following week.

I proceeded to my first Airbnb and had a wonderful week with the Lord. On Sunday I moved to another Airbnb about 50 minutes away. I was thinking about how inconvenient it would be for me to drive back to Wasilla to meet with him, but I trusted the Lord to work it out.

I attended church that Sunday mid-way between the two Airbnb's. At that church, the worship pastor informed me that the owner of the Airbnb I was heading to is also a pastor, and that he is

actually a pastor on staff with the lead pastor I met at the coffee shop. I was eager to meet this pastor when I arrived at their place and was amazed when he told me that his lead pastor was going to be there that Thursday for a previously scheduled staff retreat. No need for me to go anywhere, the Lord already had it worked out. Of all the places to stay in Alaska, the Lord brought me to this one and scheduled for that staff retreat to happen while I was there. I thought to myself, “Lord you are such a better planner than I am!”

WE’LL TAKE WHAT WE CAN GET

In the planning process, Kellye and I agreed we should wait for my sabbatical proposal to be approved and my dates nailed down before we made Yellowstone reservations. But that meant we made reservations just six months out instead of the recommended twelve. Kellye did all the legwork on reservations and reluctantly had to accept the spots available, which meant we had to move the camper to three different sites in six days. She was nervous because it’s not exactly how she wanted to plan it.

Yet having experienced it, it is exactly how we would have wanted to plan our trip. It’s how we’d advise anyone planning to camp inside Yellowstone. I think it allowed us to make maximum use of our time there and we saw just about everything Yellowstone has to offer. We thought we just had to settle for what we could get but it turned out to be an ideal way to visit the park.

“The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.” Proverbs 16:9 I planned my sabbatical along with a coach and my wife and the help of some others, but when it came down to it, the Lord gave us what He knew we needed when we needed it at every step along the way.

OUR GOD IS WISE AND LOVING

I tell you these stories to highlight for you that what became abundantly clear during my sabbatical is that our God is a wise and loving God. He is near to us, He knows us, and He cares for us. He is able to direct our lives far better than we can.

Here’s my point: our Father in Heaven is an intimate God who has a plan for us and is not withholding anything good from us. We can trust in His wisdom and love no matter what comes our way. And Jesus is all the proof we need that this is true.

Last week I asked you what is the glory of Christ we behold by faith? The glory of Christ we behold by faith is not political or military strength, nor is it physical beauty or riches. The glory of Christ we behold by faith today is this: the personification of divine wisdom and love. Consider these two passages in Romans 8 and 11.

ROMANS 8:31-39; 11:33-36

“³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:31-39

“³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴ ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?’ ³⁵ ‘Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?’ ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

Romans 11:33-36

DIVINE WISDOM AND LOVE PERSONIFIED IN CHRIST

Jesus’ glory, which John tells us is *“full of grace and truth”* *John 1:14*, is that in the person and work of Christ, divine wisdom and love are made manifest. They are revealed. They are understandable and comprehensible. Even the fact that we can comprehend a portion of God’s wisdom and love is brimming with glory. It is indeed a gift of grace. Remember, no man can behold the glory of Christ unless the Spirit unveils and enlightens the eyes of his heart. (Ephesians 1:18) We call that being born again; made alive in Christ.

THE UNVEILED GLORY

Let’s consider the unveiled glory in the person and work of Christ this morning and behold how He reveals the divine wisdom and love. Let’s begin with Adam and Eve. Mankind was the crown of God’s creation and was created sinless and fully able to both behold and enjoy God’s glory forever. They were called to multiply as image-bearers of God so that the earth would teem with more image-bearers so that the glory of God would cover the earth. This was our intended purpose.

In the garden Adam and Eve fell in sin and rebellion. The image of God in them was tarnished and their purpose was forsaken. Rather than God’s nature and character being displayed throughout each generation, depravity and sin reigned on the earth in and through man. But even from the beginning, just after the fall, God promised He would provide a Savior, and man would not entirely be cut off from Him forever. The Savior would suffer but would ultimately conquer and prevail. (cf. Genesis 3:15)

Fast forward to the giving of the Law through Moses, God revealed to us the true condition of our hearts: broken and sinful. The Old Testament resounds with this truth: man is woefully unable to save himself. Still, for centuries people thought that by observing the letter of the Law they could be restored to right relationship with God. Annual atonements for sin revealed the error of that supposition.

When the time was right, God sent His own Son, born of a woman. Hebrews tells us He had to become like us in every way so that He could relate to us and serve as our great high priest and set us free from bondage to sin.

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” Hebrews 2:14-15

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:15-16

Unlike any other man born according to the flesh by natural procreation, the Son of God was born by supernatural conception. This man Jesus lived an ordinary life, becoming like us. However, unlike you and I, Jesus lived a perfect life. No sacrifice was necessary to atone for His sin, for He was without sin entirely. *“For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.”* Hebrew 7:26

Nevertheless, Jesus suffered like a sinner. Hebrews 12 tells us He endured the cross, despising its shame for the joy set before Him. (cf. Hebrews 12:2) What joy? The joy of bringing many sons to

glory. *“For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Hebrews 2:10*

Our salvation was wrought by His suffering. Christ died once for all. *“he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.” Hebrews 9:12*

“But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” Hebrews 9:26-28

He now sits enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high and He serves as our great high priest, interceding for us. He fulfilled the Law, He became the final sacrifice, He redeems all who put their faith in Him and He is coming back to bring us home! For all of these and more, Jesus Christ is the personification of divine wisdom and love and He is full of glory!

As we reflect upon the person and work of Jesus Christ, which reveals divine wisdom and love, do you recognize how glorious it is?

TWO QUESTIONS TO HELP US BEHOLD CHRIST’S GLORY

If you want to behold the glory of Christ, ask yourself these questions:

Question 1: Who is this Jesus?

Answer: Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, the Word made flesh, Emmanuel, God with us. God was with us in the person of Jesus Christ and when Jesus ascended, He and the Father sent the Holy Spirit, who now dwells within the heart of every believer. God is with us. He is near to every believer, no longer isolated in the Temple into which only one man may enter, and he but once a year. We have full access to God in Jesus Christ. Implication: we may approach our God with confidence, knowing He is near to us and desires that we draw near.

Jesus is also the proof of God’s love. How do we know that the divine Creator of the universe is benevolent, caring, and loving? Because of Jesus. *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8 (NIV)* We need not wrestle with God’s nature and character wondering if what He has for us is for our good. We need not worry that our God is capricious, unstable, unpredictable. We know His character because He reveals His character in the person and work of Christ.

Finally, Jesus is the answer to the unsolvable problem which is this: how can God be both just and the justifier? In other words, how can God both punish sin as a just and holy judge yet also forgive sinners? The answer is Jesus, who bore our punishment on the cross. He paid our sin-debt and He gives us the gift of righteousness. Only God has the wisdom to resolve this fundamental problem of sin. The person and work of Christ reveal His wisdom and even angels long to look into it.

“Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.” 1 Peter 1:10-12

The wisdom and love of God put on display in the person and work of Christ boggles even the angel’s minds. What about yours?

Question 2: At what cost did Jesus transfer to us His righteousness and forgive us our sin?

Answer: at the cost of His own life, for “...without the shedding of blood there is no atonement for sin.”
Hebrews 9:22

This past week we remembered 9/11 as a nation. We mourned for the more than 3000 people who were brutally murdered by those terrorist attacks. We also mourned and honored the acts of heroism of the brave first responders who risked their lives, even losing their lives, to rescue others. They ran into the fire. We honor such men and women as heroes. We pause and remember their sacrifice. How much more ought we to pause and remember and honor the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the results of which rescue us not for a moment, but for eternity?

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Brothers and sisters, this is the essence of communion. This is why we regularly observe the Lord's Supper. It is a reminder of who Jesus is and what it cost Him. The Lord's supper ought to spark thoughts of glory as we meditate upon these truths. We behold the glory of Jesus as the personification of both divine wisdom and divine love.

Let that glory dwell in your minds and fill your hearts. Don't brush past it as if it is at all normal that God would become flesh and die for you.

And in response, entrust to Him your entire life knowing that **He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Romans 8:32**

One thing became abundantly clear to me this summer, our God is wise and our God loves us. Jesus is the personification of both. Amen?