

SERMON THEME: **Of the greatest needs and voids, Christ is the only satisfaction; He will reward you who love and seek Him.**

Intro – Finding a way out of the window well of a fallen world... Without the Christ of glory invading this world, we would have no hope, no way out and up. But now we not only have a way out, we have real vision and true hope.

Read Proverbs 8
Pray

Who else, knowing you so well, would call you so freely? (8:1-5)

Two weeks ago, we heard Paul's call in Colossians and committed ourselves to finding and proclaiming Christ from every corner and letter of Scripture. God's Word is the story of God's Messiah and if we miss God's Messiah we miss the whole point. Sometimes, Christ's presence in a story or a Psalm is shadowed or a little buried; other times, it shines far brighter than the sun, such as this passage about the glory & call of wisdom. If Christ is the wisdom of God to us, then Proverbs 8 is the blueprint for glory, the step by step discussion of how truly magnificent and majestic our Lord is and what exactly this means for you and for your kids and for your church.

Glory, as a topic, may seem far off, out there somewhere, important in a vague and inspirational way. God's Word will have none of that. Glory is nothing if not immensely practical and livable; the glory of Jesus, we will see, is not something meant to make us nod and smile and stroke our beards. Christ's glory is, perhaps, one of the most important practical considerations we can take up on a weekly basis. First because Christ's glory, His weighty greatness, has wondrously invaded this world. **(read 8:1-5)**

Common truth may slip by us: listen, *Christ came to this world*. Did He have to? Did God owe us His glory? But Christ came, came to save, came to free those unworthies He loved eternally. Christ did not hide or hoard His glory to Himself, but is revealing it, bit by bit, to this world. His glory seen in creation, seen in a perfect life; think of the transfiguration – that moment when we get a glimpse of what majesty and glory Christ had been hiding those years on earth. The glory of the Living God has come to the decidedly inglorious world of men.

The second great fact follows closely, that Christ does not reserve His glory for the worthy, but for the beloved. And here is an important lesson, that "worthy" and "beloved of Christ" are two very different categories. We see wisdom standing at the corners, calling out for all who would listen. In contrast to the wicked woman of chapter seven, the wisdom of God calls with a clear, loud voice to men, to the children of men. See here that Christ calls those who *need* Him. Those painfully aware of their shortcomings, their simplicity, their foolishness.

During His life on earth, this was a recurring theme: I have not come to the righteous, but to the sinner, not to the healthy, but the sick.

Here we simply need to be honest about ourselves. Do we understand, accept and acknowledge our need? Do we believe ourselves to be simple or wise? Without God's help, are you foolish or understanding? The glory of God demands a realistic view of ourselves. And we can be assured that Christ's glory will shine most brightly when we harbor no misconceptions of ourselves. When we acknowledge our weakness, our desperate situation, our inability to get out and up, we will begin to see Christ in all His glory.

Realize what your greatest needs are, then see that the glorious Christ is the answer (8:6-13)

To see that Christ's glory is no mere devotional thought, but extremely practical, see what Christ offers to those who would cling to Him. (read 8:6-9) Christ offers nobility; nobility's value increases where there is great shame. Shame is thick in the air of this world because of sin – don't you ever wonder, "What if they really knew, what would the rest of you think if you really knew me." There is no nobility, no pristine *goodness* to be found anywhere outside of Christ, so He offers it to all who would hear. He offers "noble things"; what are those noble things?

The first test for the nobility of Christ's words is their *rightness*. Here again, rightness becomes the most valuable treasure where *wrongness* persists. And where else does *wrongness* take the day than in our world? Here where lies are more common than truth, where every news story has spin, everyone has an agenda, and, most of all, the continued presence of the father of lies. Into this world of lies and half-truths entered the very Word of God; upholding every part of God's Word and speaking only truth, Christ offers to those who would hear Him the most precious gift of *truth*. Truth is much maligned and mocked in an age of relativism, but time will reveal how great our need is for this five letter word, truth found only in the Messiah of glory.

Truth brings the bad news of our status before a holy God. Truth also brings the good news of the possibility of right standing before God. Everything Christ says is righteousness. *Righteousness!* How great is our need! Adam rebelled and lost righteousness; we, we've never known righteousness since before we were born. We live in a world of wrongness, of evil yet Christ has come and offers righteousness through faith in him.

That faith brings union with Christ, being inextricably bound to the very Wisdom of God. This union always has results, results like prudence, knowledge, discretion (8:12). Very few of us need to be convinced that we need prudence or more knowledge or (certainly!) more discretion. The painful memories of bad decisions convince us of this. These great needs of ours are met wondrously and solely in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does all this mean then – these great offers of nobility, truth and righteousness through Jesus? It means that our understanding of Jesus, our Christology, is essential. It's at the very core of every need, every desperate condition of humanity. A right understanding of who Christ is doesn't lead to just praise and devotion, but it leads to hope. Hope. Isn't that what the world is crying out for? Even us in the church, don't we often feel deep down that need for certainty, for real hope. Hope comes through catching a vision of the glory of Christ.

When you find a good mechanic, an honest plumber, a friendly and knowledgeable doctor, what do you do? You hold on to them, tell others about them. Why? Because they're both rare and helpful. How infinitely more rare and more helpful is the Lord Jesus? Are we holding on to Him with tenacity, are we fixing our gaze upon Him?

The rewards of Christ's glory far surpass our needs and dreams (8:14-21)

In case we didn't hear the first time, or in case we somehow don't think nobility and righteousness and all those things are very worthwhile, Proverbs goes on to describe the rewards of Christ's glory for us. Skim down verses 14-21. Simply put, *Christ is better*. Better than silver. Better than gold. Better than jewels. Better, in fact, than anything else you could ever possibly desire. The question for us is simple: Do we believe it? Do we believe Christ is better? If we do believe it, our lives will change, our priorities will shift, our families will become radically different than the world. Christ's glory will become the very heartbeat of His church.

When people believe Christ is better, when Christ is sought, when He is the center of vision, what happens? Kings reign and rulers declare what is just. Princes rule and nobles govern justly. Christ is the power behind authority, the only reason things go right. This is quite nice, but it gets better.

When the church passionately pursues the Christ of glory, He will not just help us, but *love* us. Jesus will respond by revealing Himself to those who seek Him. "Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and show myself to him." Christ will visit His people with blessing beyond description. Honor, true riches (not the kind our world settles for), righteousness. What He brings is better than gold; He brings fruit, He brings real change. Part of the glory of Christ's glory is that it will, it must change us. It is fully impossible to come into proximity to the Lord of Glory without being changed. He will, by the power of the Spirit, bear fruit in our lives. Fruit like kindness and goodness, gentleness and selflessness...He will make us into the worshipers God wants us to be. Again, Christ's glory is practical; it means proper vision, true hope, real change.

As Christ's disciples, the followers of His glory, we are invited onto His path, the path of justice, the way of righteousness. The best thing about the path of the Christian is what's at the

end. Christ has promised His followers an inheritance, treasures filled to overflowing. Please note that Christ did not promise a paycheck but an inheritance; a vision for the glory of God means that we look at things through His timeline, we make our dreams much bigger. We dream of glory and eternity and inheritance with Christ and world conquest instead of more stuff or bigger houses. Coming into contact with the glory of God, we are forced to adjust our expectations of Christ. He has promised such great blessings and we expect so very little from Him, we desire things so mundane and meaningless. As a church, our vision must always be stretching to match the glory of Christ. Our day to day and year to year goals ought to be built on a foundation of eternal confidence in Christ's victory.

Christ's glory has shone from before creation (8:22-31)

Now it's not really until halfway through this chapter that Christ's glory arrives firmly in the spotlight. (read 8:22-25) Who is the Lord Jesus Christ?

- Christ was present with the Father at creation. John told us this in his gospel: in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Proverbs calls Him here the Master Workman of the Father. It was by the power of Christ, the Word, that God *created*. Part of Christ's glory is revealed in His power. If Christ made all creation and sustains it even today by the Word of His Power, is there anything He cannot do, are there any promises He's made to the church which He cannot keep? This all to say that we must believe Christ's ability to live up to His glory.
- Here's another great question: When we think of Christ, do we naturally tend to think of those 30 years he walked on this earth? That's not bad, but it's not the whole story; Christ didn't *begin* 2000 years ago. To grasp the glory of Christ, we must believe that He was before all things. That He was eternally co-existent with the Father, that He has no beginning and thus no end. This means that there is mystery to Jesus Christ. Sometimes, because He became a man, we may forget the awesomeness, the majesty, the wonder of our Messiah. He existed before all things, eternally begotten by the Father. The reverence and awe we have for God ought to extend to all three persons of the Trinity, for all three share in the mystery of God.
- Another way to look at Christ is through the power of prepositions. According to this passage, Christ is *above*, *beyond* and *before*. He is above, transcendent, majestically over all of His kingdom. He has ascended on high and while He is here through His Spirit, He is above all. He is also beyond all; His glory is not within the reach of creation, His life in us is not possible under our own will and power. He is, apart from grace, unreachable. He is also before. Christ is the first Son of the Father, the firstborn of the

dead, the Head of His church. He is before all things, both before in time and before in prominence.

When we were very little kids, these are things we thought of our parents, that they were the tallest, the first people ever, the most powerful. We grew and our misconceptions were corrected. But have we grown out of our awe for the Lord Jesus? If we are to fix our eyes on Christ, if our vision for ministry is to be centered on and driven by this God of glory, we must fear the Lord. Fear in the very best sense: knowing His power by His creation, knowing His transcendence through His Word, we give reverence and obedience to Christ as the truly great Messiah. He must take center stage in all our life's passions, the glory of His name ought to be *the* purpose driving this church.

Christ's call is the call of glory, will we hear it? (8:32-36)

After such a wonderful revelation of the glory of Christ, what would you expect? Maybe a command to repent, to cower in terror, to never approach one whose glory so far surpasses us? Most surprising, then, is this call from the glorious One in verse 32, without question the most wonderful invitation ever received. Christ, whose glory outshines all, calls you to Himself, calls us. Listen to me. Keep my ways. Hear me when I speak. Be wise. Watch daily at my gates, spend time at my temple, seek me because I am your life. *Why? Because whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord.* Here is the greatest story of all: the Lord Jesus Christ has called a people to Himself. He has redeemed them and now calls them brothers and sisters. He descended not to condone humanity, but to save it. He came not just to dwell among us, but that we might dwell with Him. He has provided adoption into the Father's family and He has given to us the power of the very Spirit which upheld Him in the wilderness. We now belong to the Christ of glory, the Christ above, beyond and before.

Brothers and sisters, we belong to the Christ of glory. He is ours through the Spirit. Not just personally, but as a family, our head is the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul told the Corinthians that the church is a body – each of us has a vital part to play (a part without which the body would not function properly). But none of us are the head. None of us direct the church, provide the wisdom. The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of His church. We are His body. Think of that! Do you want to develop a Christ-sized vision for the church? Then realize and believe that Christ is the head of this church. We are united to the Christ of glory – what can He not do? What miracles can He not work? If the head of the church really and truly is Christ, what can ever stop us? What powers can withstand a body whose head is Christ? ...