

## Glimpses of Glory (Luke 7:1–17)

### **We Were Made for More**

In 2025, over 4.4 million people visited Grand Canyon National Park, over 4.7 million people visited Yellowstone National Park, and over 4.2 million people visited Yosemite National Park. Great Smoky Mountain National Park recorded the most annual visits in 2025 with over 11.53 million visitors. In total, over 323 million people visited the United States National Parks in 2025.<sup>1</sup> Why is this? What accounts for this irresistible draw, this insatiable hunger within us for natural beauty? What is it about vast, deep, sandstone canyons blazing red and orange in the sun, or the towering heights of snow-capped mountain peaks rising against the cobalt-blue alpine sky, or the way the sunlight filters through the canopy of an aspen glade and dances off the white trunks and yellow-green leaves, or the thunderous rumble of a calving glacier followed by a massive sheet of ice thousands of tons in weight splashing into the icy blue sea... what is it about these natural wonders that attracts people like metal to a magnet from across every conceivable cultural, social, religious, and economic demographic? The answer is that we are created with an insatiable longing for glory. Our souls hunger for it. We yearn to be transported outside our own finite existence and to feast upon the glory of the infinite.

But the tragedy of human history is that we have traded the feast of infinite glory for the famine of pale reflections. The apostle Paul, describing the descent of man into depravity, wrote in Romans 1:

*For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Rom 1:21–23)*

All mankind, beginning in Adam and perpetuated throughout every generation, has exchanged the ineffable glory of God for insipid images of glory; we have worshiped and served the

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<sup>1</sup> All National Park visit statistics are taken from <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/visitor-use-statistics-dashboard.htm>.

creature rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25). We have turned away from Him who stretched out the heavens and hung the stars in their expanse and calls them forth by name (Job 9:8; Ps 147:4; Is 40:26); we have rejected Him who formed the mountains by His might and carved the canyons with His hand (Ps 65:6; 95:4–5; Am 4:13). And yet our gaze seems irresistibly drawn to the heavens, to the mountain heights, to the canyon depths. Why? Because the fall of man did not numb this longing for glory; rather, it has cut us off from the God of glory. All that is left to us are crumbs that never quite satisfy, pale reflections that dim the brilliant hues. And all our unhappiness is the result of trying to feast on crumbs. We were made for more.

C. S. Lewis spoke to this longing with his usually keen insight. In *Mere Christianity* Lewis wrote of the universal longing, the gnawing discontent that resides in every human heart:

Most people, if they really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise. The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy. I am not now speaking of what would be ordinarily called unsuccessful marriages, or holidays, or learned careers. I am speaking of the best possible ones. There was something we grasped at, in the first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality. I think everyone knows what I mean. The wife may be a good wife, and the hotels and scenery may have been excellent, and chemistry may be a very interesting job: but something has evaded us. Now there are two wrong ways of dealing with this fact, and one right one.

(1) The Fool's Way—He puts the blame on the things themselves. He goes on all his life thinking that if only he tried another woman, or went for a more expensive holiday, or whatever it is, then, this time, he really would catch the mysterious something we are all after. Most of the bored, discontented, rich people in the world are of this type. They spend their whole live trotting from woman to woman (through the divorce courts), and from continent to continent, from hobby to hobby, always thinking that the latest is 'the Real Thing' at last, and always disappointed.

(2) The Way of the Disillusioned ‘Sensible’ Man’—He soon decides that the whole thing was moonshine. ‘Of course,’ he says, ‘one feels like that when one’s young. But by the time you get to my age you’ve given up chasing the rainbow’s end.’ And so he settles down and learns not to expect too much and represses the part of himself which used, as he would say, ‘to cry for the moon.’ This is, of course, a much better way than the first, and makes a man much happier, and less of a nuisance to society. It tends to make him a prig (he is apt to be rather superior towards what he calls ‘adolescents’), but, on the whole, he rubs along fairly comfortably. It would be the best line we could take if man did not live for ever. But supposing infinite happiness really is there, waiting for us? Supposing one really can reach the rainbow’s end? In that case it would be a pity to find out too late (a moment after death) that by our supposed ‘common sense’ we had stifled in ourselves the faculty of enjoying it.

(3) The Christian Way—The Christian says, “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exist. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same.”

There is no need to be worried by facetious people who try to make the Christian hope of ‘Heaven’ ridiculous by saying they do not want ‘to spend eternity playing harps.’ The answer to such people is that if they cannot understand books written for grown-ups, they should not talk about them. All the scriptural imagery (harps, crowns, gold, etc.) is, of course, a merely symbolical attempt to express the inexpressible. Musical instruments are mentioned because for many people (not all) music is the thing known in the present

life which most strongly suggests ecstasy and infinity. Crowns are mentioned to suggest the fact that those who are united with God in eternity share His splendour and power and joy. Gold is mentioned to suggested the timelessness of Heaven (gold does not rust) and the preciousness of it. People who take these symbols literally might as well think that when Christ told us to be doves, He meant that we were to lay eggs.<sup>2</sup>

We long for glory because we were made for glory; we hunger for glory because we were made to feast upon glory. And we are starving because we try to sate our hunger on things that were never meant to bear the weight of glory.

We do this because sin has blinded us to the glory of God. We look to the heavens and we see only spherical orbs of glowing plasma; we look at the mountains we see only hunks of granite pushed upward by shifting tectonic plates; we look at canyons and see only the effect of erosion; we look at glaciers and see only a river of ice. And though we may be impressed by the enormous proportions of a galaxy, or the towering heights of a mountain range, or the churning, burning power of a volcano, or the brilliant colors of a valley of wildflowers, such creations—being only pale reflections of the God who made them, the God for whom we were created—all leave us, in the end, hungry. This is the tragic state of mankind—hungering for something we cannot taste, looking for something we cannot see. And what’s worse, even were our eyes not blind to the glory of God, our wills are yet opposed to the very One who alone can satisfy our souls. And this is a great evil.

*Be appalled, O heavens, at this;  
be shocked, be utterly desolate,  
declares the LORD,  
for my people have committed two evils:  
they have forsaken me,  
the fountain of living waters,  
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,  
broken cisterns that can hold no water. (Jer 2:12–13)*

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<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, in *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (1952; San Francisco: HarperOne, 2002), 113–14. This passage is found in book 3 (“Christian Behaviour”), chapter 10 (“Hope”).

Nevertheless, the God of glory has come near to us in Jesus Christ. The glorious, eternally-begotten Son of the Father became man.

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (Jn 1:14)*

The apostle John testified in his Gospel, “We have seen the glory of God! We have seen the glory of God in the man Jesus Christ!” And grasping for language to describe it, John used the word “tabernacled” (ἐσκήνωσεν) — literally, “dwelt in as in a tent.” John thus recalled the tabernacle in the wilderness, when the glory of God dwelt within the Holy of Holies, above the ark of the covenant. And John said, “Jesus is like that! The glory of God dwells in Christ as in a tent of flesh, and He has drawn back the veil and given us glimpses of His divine glory!” And that is what the Gospel of John is—John’s attempt to show his readers what he saw, namely, the glory of God in Jesus Christ, because the essence of salvation is seeing and savoring the glory of God in Jesus Christ. Near the end of his Gospel, John wrote,

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (Jn 20:30–31)*

And Luke’s purpose is the same. As we open up Luke 7 this morning, we find two events in which the glory of God is revealed in Jesus Christ—the healing of the centurion’s servant (7:1–10) and the raising of the widow’s son (7:11–17).<sup>3</sup> As I studied these passages this week, and prayed and asked what God would have us to see in these two encounters, my mind kept going back to the glory of God in Christ. This is the way I am approaching this passage today, and this is the way I encourage you to approach this passage. And this is not irrelevant or ethereal or abstract, for whatever you face today, whatever trials you are enduring, whatever suffering you are experiencing, whatever anxieties you are undergoing, your greatest, immediate,

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<sup>3</sup> These two pericopes are tightly linked both textually and thematically. Edwards writes, “Luke clearly narrates 7:11–17 as a sequel to 7:1–10”; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 213. See also David E. Garland, *Luke*, ECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 299: “This incident on Jesus’ raising to life a widow’s son is a twin to the preceding healing of the centurion’s slave.”

urgent need is to behold the glory of God in Christ. For if you see and savor the glory of God in Christ this morning, you will find the answer to your struggling marriage, your stressful work situation, your pornography or alcohol addiction, your terminal cancer diagnosis, or the burden of guilt and shame you carry. No matter the particular manifestation of “groaning” (Rom 8:23) you are experiencing, your greatest need is to see and savor the glory of God in Christ. So let’s open up Luke 7, and pray that God would give us eyes to see His glory.

### **The Glory of Christ Revealed in His Authority to Heal the Sick**

The first glimpse of glory that we see is Jesus’ healing of the centurion’s servant. Let’s read the passage, and then I will point out where I see the glory of Christ shining through.

*After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent him to the elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.” And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well. (7:1–10)*

Before we focus in on the interaction between the centurion and Jesus, let me say a few words about the centurion himself.

A “centurion” (ἑκατοντάρχος) was a mid-ranking Roman officer so-named because he had charge of one hundred men. Thus, there would be sixty such officers in a Roman legion containing approximately 6,000 soldiers. One commentator noted that “army captain” would

probably be our closest modern equivalent.<sup>4</sup> In a small town like Capernaum, the centurion would likely be the ranking officer. Interestingly, no less than five centurions appear in Luke's narratives, and all five are described in a positive light:

- There is this centurion in Capernaum who demonstrated great faith (7:1–10).
- There is the centurion who confessed Christ when he saw the way he died (23:47; cf. Mt 27:54; Mk 15:39).
- There is Cornelius, the centurion who believed on Christ through the preaching of Peter (Acts 10:1–48), and who is described as a devout and God-fearing man even before his conversion (Acts 10:2).
- There are the centurions in Jerusalem and Caesarea during Paul's arrest and custody who at the very least appear to be reasonable, law-abiding men (Acts 21:32; 22:25–26; 23:17–18, 23; 24:23).
- There is Julius, the centurion who conducted Paul to Rome (Acts 27:1–44) who heeded Paul's warning and saved Paul's life in the midst of the storm and shipwreck. The fact that Luke mentioned his name suggests that he may have been known to the early church, perhaps because he became a Christian convert.

The Roman historian Polybius recorded that the qualifications for a Roman centurion were that they must not be so much “seekers after danger as men who can command, steady in action, and reliable; they ought not to be over anxious to rush into the fight; but when hard pressed they must be ready to hold the ground and die at their posts.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, it was required of centurions that they be men of courage, reason, intelligence, and integrity, and the New Testament accounts seem to bear this out.<sup>6</sup> In addition, as the ranking officer in many Roman outposts, it behooved centurions to ingratiate themselves with the locals through acts of generosity. Edwards records that, “Countless inscriptions from the ancient Mediterranean world celebrate [centurions] as public benefactors.”<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that this centurion's generosity in Capernaum was entirely politically motivated; it is doubtful the elders of the Jews would have been so effusive in their praise of him if they suspected he was merely bought their loyalty by building their

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<sup>4</sup> Leon Morris, *Luke*, TNTC (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1974, 1988), 156, citing James Moffatt.

<sup>5</sup> Morris, 156, citing William Barclay's commentary.

<sup>6</sup> “Men of fortitude and integrity were clearly required. It agrees with this that each of the centurions of whom the New Testament gives us knowledge is a man of character”; Morris, 156.

<sup>7</sup> Edwards, 210.

synagogue.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, their reason for declaring the centurion worthy of the exercise of Jesus' healing power is that “he loves [ἀγαπᾷ] our nation” (v. 5) and that he demonstrated this love by building their synagogue. Leon Morris writes,

It is not said that he was a worshipper of the true God, but a man would scarcely have undertaken all that is involved in building a synagogue without some interest in the God who was worshipped there. It is true that some Romans helped religion out of a cynical regard for the best interests of the State; but this centurion was a man of faith (9), not a cynic. Some have conjectured that he was a ‘Godfearer,’ one who worshipped God but declined to become a proselyte to Judaism, which is not improbable.<sup>9</sup>

I have already said that centurions needed to be men of reason and intelligence, and this undoubtedly drew many of them (like Cornelius) to Judaism, which was an infinitely more reasonable worldview than the paganism that dominated Roman society. So I think it not only plausible but likely that this centurion was a monotheist, a worshipper—or at least a *very* interested observer—of the God of Israel, yet without fully converting to Judaism.

So this centurion, stationed at Capernaum, had a “servant” (δοῦλος) who was “highly valued” (ὅς ἦν αὐτῷ ἔντιμος — lit. “who was precious to him” [in Matthew’s version, the centurion refers to him as “my child” (ὁ παῖς μου)]), who was sick and about to die.<sup>10</sup> Matthew’s account of this event states that the servant was “lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly” (βέβληται ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ παραλυτικός, δεινῶς βασανιζόμενος [lit. “being tormented terribly”]). I won’t speculate as to what disease the servant had; it could have been any number of dreadful maladies. But what is clear is that it was terrible and it was terminal. And so the centurion, having heard about Jesus, sent a delegation of Jewish leaders to him to implore Jesus to come and heal his beloved servant.

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<sup>8</sup> “The centurion’s patronage of the Jewish synagogue in Capernaum conforms to this expectation [i.e. of *munera*—the use of private funds for public services and civic projects]. This fact need not compromise the sincerity of his gift, any more than claiming a tax exemption allowed in the U.S. tax code compromises a charitable contribution”; Edwards, 209–10.

<sup>9</sup> Morris, 156.

<sup>10</sup> On the unlikelihood of this event being the same as that described in John 4:46–54, see Edwards, 209n4. Morris states, “Some hold that the healing of the nobleman’s son (John 4:46ff.) is a variant of the same story, but the evidence scarcely supports this”; Morris, 155.

What intrigues me about this story is what changed between v. 3 and v. 6. In v. 3, the centurion sent the delegation of Jewish elders to implore Jesus to come and heal his servant. They did; and Jesus consented to go with them. But in v. 6, the centurion sent “friends” (φίλους) to say to Jesus, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore I did not presume to come to you” (vv. 6–7a).<sup>11</sup> What changed his mind?<sup>12</sup> Something happened between his sending of the first delegation and his sending of the second. What it was, I can only guess. Perhaps he had a conversation with someone who had not only heard *about* Jesus (ἀκούσας περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ [v. 3]), but had actually *heard* Jesus, *seen* Jesus, and had *come* to Jesus in saving faith (6:17–19). Perhaps he simply gave deeper consideration to what he had already heard about Jesus. Whatever it was, between the sending of the first delegation and the sending of the second, the centurion saw the glory of God in Jesus Christ. Two things changed between v. 3 and v. 6: the centurion’s view of Jesus changed, and the centurion’s view of himself changed.

What changed in his view of Jesus? At the beginning of this passage, the centurion regarded Jesus as a miracle-worker, one who—somehow, somehow—wielded power over sickness and disease. However the centurion conceived of this miracle-working power, it had more to do with magic than majesty. Somehow, the centurion reasoned, if Jesus comes physically to my home, if He physically sees and physically touches my servant, He will be able to impart physical healing. If you think about it, it is not all that different from how a tribal villager regards a shaman, or witchdoctor. They don’t really understand how the magic works, but there seems to be an understanding that proximity is required to harness the power. So the centurion presented his résumé of worthiness, and requested Jesus the itinerant shaman to come and do his thing to heal his servant. And before we cast stones at the centurion, let us first reflect upon the fact that this is precisely how many still approach Jesus. They bring their résumé of worthiness, and they request his magical impartation of power. In other words, they treat Jesus like a witchdoctor, and

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<sup>11</sup> On the differences in Matthew’s and Luke’s versions, see Morris, 157. Morris writes, “There are different ways of dealing with the difficulty. Some think of irreconcilable differences in the two accounts, while others harmonize them by thinking of the man as sending messengers first and afterwards going himself. But it is better to see Matthew as abbreviating the story and leaving out details inessential to his purpose. What a man does through agents he may be said to do himself. So Matthew simply gives the gist of the centurion’s communication to Jesus, whereas Luke in greater detail gives the actual sequence of events”; *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Morris simply comments, “This is a little curious, since the earlier request had been for Jesus to ‘come’”; Morris, 157.

God like a pagan deity. So at the beginning of this passage, the centurion had a low view of Jesus and a high view of himself.

But then he beheld the glory of God in Christ. Again, I don't know how it happened. But something definitely changed. Because by v. 6, the centurion had a high view of Jesus and a low view of himself. No longer did he view the healing of his servant as a matter of magic, but as a matter of majesty—of authority. No longer did he view Jesus as a shaman wielding magical power, he viewed Jesus as “Lord” (Κύριε) wielding divine authority. The centurion was a man who understood authority. He was himself a man under authority, and he had soldiers and servants under him. And he understood that when one has authority, he need only utter a word and his will is done. In his case, he had soldiers and servants who heeded his every command; in the case of Jesus, evidently it was creation itself that heeded the word of Christ. Therefore, there was no need for Jesus to come physically to his house. Furthermore, now that he had seen the glory of God in Christ, he no longer regarded himself as worthy to have Jesus come under his roof. So he simply implored Jesus to exercise His divine authority in compassion upon his servant. And Jesus did.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Proper Response to Glory Is Faith**

Do you see the glory that the centurion saw in Jesus? It is here, shining forth in this text. J. C. Ryle commented,

A greater miracle of healing than this, is nowhere recorded in the Gospels. Without even seeing the sufferer, without touch of hand or look of eye, our Lord restores health to a dying man by a single word. He speaks, and the sick man is cured. He commands, and the disease departs. We read of no prophet or apostle, who wrought miracles in this manner. We see here the finger of God.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Ryken writes, “Somehow the centurion knew that Jesus Christ had the same kind of authority. He may not have known that Jesus was God the Son. Presumably he could not define the doctrine of the Trinity, or explain how the words of the Son were backed by the full authority of the Father. But the centurion knew that Jesus had power over the physical needs of the human body. As far as he was concerned, the miracles of Jesus proved that he spoke with almighty authority. All Jesus had to do was say the word, and his wish was creation’s command”; Philip Ryken, *Luke, Volume 1: Luke 1–12*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009), 312.

<sup>14</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Luke, Volume 1* (1858; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2012), 154.

Do you see His glory? How shall you respond? The proper response to the sight of the glory of Christ is faith. And in the centurion we find a faith that was, in the words of Jesus, unmatched in all Israel. Indeed, Jesus “marveled” (ἐθαύμασεν) at this man’s faith— “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith” (v. 9). What is this faith that causes Jesus to marvel?

*It is a faith that is born of a sight of Christ’s supreme glory.* Where did the centurion’s faith originate? What produced it? The text does not say, but somewhere between v. 3 and v. 6, his view of Jesus changed. He saw the glory of God in Christ. Luke does not tell us whence came the centurion’s faith, but Matthew tells us in no uncertain terms whence came Peter’s faith. When Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was,

*Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 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.” (Mt 16:16–17)*

Flesh and blood did not reveal to the centurion that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, with authority over creation. God did. And so it is with everyone who sees the glory of God in Christ. One of the clearest passages on the origin and nature of saving faith is 2 Corinthians 4:3–6, where the apostle Paul wrote,

*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. (2 Cor 4:3–4)*

To be an unbeliever is to look at Jesus and not see the glory of God, and this blindness is owing to sin and to Satan. This is why some of you sitting here today are bored and wishing you were somewhere else. I am showing you Christ, and you do not, you *cannot*, see in Him the glory of God. So what do you do? What do you need? You need God to open your eyes, which He is pleased to do through the preaching of Christ.

*For what we proclaim is Christ Jesus as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to*

*give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*  
(2 Cor 4:5–6)

Would that God will do in our midst this morning what He did for Peter, for the centurion, and for so many of us. May He open your eyes to see the glory of God in Christ.

*It is a faith that locates its hope in Christ's sovereign compassion.* What was the ground of the centurion's hope of healing in vv. 3–5? It was his own worthiness.<sup>15</sup> He was a “worthy” (ἄξιός) man; he loved the nation of Israel; he built the synagogue at Capernaum (vv. 4–5). And what was the ground of the centurion's hope in vv. 6–8? It was no longer his own worthiness, for he confessed in v. 6, “I am not worthy” (οὐ ἰκανός), and in v. 7, “I did not consider myself worthy (ἐμαυτὸν ἡξίωσα).” So if he no longer based his hope of healing on his own worthiness, then on what basis did he make His plea? The answer can only be Christ's sovereign compassion. The centurion made no claim upon Christ's power; he simply appealed to Christ's mercy. That is saving faith.

*It is a faith that entrusts itself to Christ's saving authority.* There was no magic involved in the healing of the centurion's servant, only the exercise of authority over creation that rightly belonged to Jesus as Creator. Even so, when we come to Christ for salvation, for the healing of our souls, we come in faith that He has authority to forgive our sins, authority to discharge our debt and absolve our guilt, authority to raise the dead and impart the Spirit of life, by virtue of His saving work in His life, death, and resurrection. In other words, saving faith does not come to Christ and seek salvation as some kind of vague hope rooted in we know not what; saving faith comes to Christ and says, “Lord, you died on the cross for my sin and rose again on the third day, and now all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to you precisely for the purpose of forgiving sins and saving sinners. Say the word, and I will be saved.” Saving faith is not a wish and a prayer, but a confident appeal to Him who has authority to save.

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<sup>15</sup> “Like many seekers, both then and now, the centurion imagines himself as good as the next guy. Indeed, his credits (v. 5!) should put him in the pole position with Jesus, and he naturally makes his appeal on the basis of his worthiness. But as Jesus draws near to him, he must revise, indeed reverse, his outlook. He lowers the flag of self-satisfaction and lifts up his hands in contrition—and it is contrition, not status and influence, that evokes the powerfully warm response of Jesus”; Edwards, 212. See also Ryken, 308–11, who does not impute this pride to the centurion himself, but rather to the elders who lobbied Jesus on his behalf. Likewise, Garland, 297. If I have wrongly imputed pride to the centurion, I will gladly apologize to him in heaven.

## The Glory of Christ Revealed in His Power to Raise the Dead

So Luke 7:1–10 reveals the glory of Christ in His authority to heal the sick. Luke 7:11–17 reveals the glory of Christ in His power to raise the dead. Let’s read the passage, and then I will show you where I see glory.

*Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people!” And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country. (7:11–17)*

Again, let me make a few brief notes about the context that will help us to picture the scene.

Nain was the southern-most city of Galilee, about twenty-five miles south of Capernaum.<sup>16</sup> Jesus was, at this point, still attended by massive crowds; and as they approached the city gate, they met a funeral procession coming out of town. A typical first-century Galilean funeral procession was a community event that included an open funeral bier/platform on which rested the dead body wrapped in a funeral shroud (σορός). The bier was carried by men, with a crowd of men walking in front, a crowd of women walking behind, and musicians and mourners mingled amongst their respective genders.<sup>17</sup> Luke wrote that this procession included a “considerable crowd” (ὄχλος ἰκανός). The procession came to a halt at the city gate as the crowd following Jesus met the crowd following the funeral bier. It is a narrative filled with expectation as the parade of death met the Lord of life.

I see two ways in which the glory of Christ is revealed in this passage. *First, the glory of Christ is revealed in His compassion toward human suffering.* Luke informs us that this grieving

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<sup>16</sup> Edwards, 213.

<sup>17</sup> Edwards, 213–14; Morris, 159–60.

mother was a widow, and that the young man (νεανίσκος) who had died was her “only son” (μονογενῆς υἱός). This meant she was now utterly alone in the world. With no husband and no child, she would now be utterly dependent upon the charity of her community. The sight of this grieving woman, and knowledge of her plight, provoked the Lord’s tender compassion. “And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep” (v. 13). The one who has power over death has compassion upon those affected by the devastation of death. This is what John Piper (following Jonathan Edwards) calls the “peculiar glory” of Christ—He is not only majestic, He is meek; He is not merely strong, He is tender; He not only has power over death, He has compassion upon those who grieve. The majesty of one who has power over death is one kind of glory; but the meekness of one who has compassion upon a grieving widow is another kind of glory. And we must recognize both. Power without compassion is hopeless; compassion without power is useless; but power with compassion is glorious.<sup>18</sup> And Jesus Christ is the power and compassion of God incarnate in human flesh.

*Second, the glory of Christ is revealed in His power over death.* This is, of course, the main point of this passage. Jesus said to the woman, “Weep not” (μὴ κλαῖε). He touched the funeral bier, caring nothing about becoming ceremonially unclean. Jesus does become unclean by what He touches; He purifies what He touches. And then He issued the command, “Young man, I say to you, arise [ἐγέρθητι — lit. ‘be raised’],” and the gates of death flung open in obedience to the Lord of life. And the “dead man” (ὁ νεκρός)—Luke wants us to have no doubt that this young man was, in fact, really and truly dead—sat up and began to speak.<sup>19</sup> And Jesus gave him back to his mother, alive. Behold, the glory of Christ.

### **The Proper Response to Glory Is Worship**

Do you see His glory? How shall you respond? How did those who witnessed this demonstration of Christ’s glory respond? They responded in three ways.

*They were seized by fear.* This is the right and proper response to glory. You do not go to the Grand Canyon because it is safe; if it were safe, you would not go, for it would be boring.

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<sup>18</sup> See John Piper, “Majesty in Meekness: The Peculiar Glory of Jesus Christ,” in *A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 211–26.

<sup>19</sup> “‘The dead man sat up’ is a linguistic contradiction, of which Luke was certainly aware. The contradiction was necessary, however, in order to convey that the boy was biologically dead—not just near death, unconscious, or swooning”; Edwards 215n25.

You go to the Grand Canyon because it is dangerous; you go for the very reason that it will kill you if you do not approach it with reverence and respect, if you get too close to the edge. It is of the essence of glory to be dangerous—terrifyingly, breathtakingly, irresistibly dangerous. I have been reading through the Chronicles of Narnia again with Susanna, and was struck again by the way Lewis consistently weaves reverent fear into the Narnian creatures' interactions with Aslan, Lewis' Christ-figure in the allegory. When the Pevensie children first hear of Aslan, Susan asks whether he is safe:

Susan said, "Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion." "That you will, dearie, and no mistake," said Mrs. Beaver, "if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly." "Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy. "Safe?" said Mr. Beaver. "Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."<sup>20</sup>

At the end of the book, Mr. Beaver says of Aslan that he "doesn't like being tied down," that he can't be controlled. "He's wild, you know. Not like a *tame* lion."<sup>21</sup> If that isn't an apt description of the problem of progressive Christianity, I don't know what is. They have attempted to tame Jesus, and in so doing they have lost sight of His glory. Consequently, they are dying, because a tame Jesus is incapable of satisfying the gnawing hunger of the human soul for glory. A tame Jesus cannot raise the dead.

*They glorified God.* "They glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and 'God has visited his people!'" (v. 16). While "a great prophet" falls short of Jesus' true identity, the crowds are correct that in Jesus "God has visited [ἐπεσκέψατο] his people" with salvation. This is messianic language (cf. Zechariah's song in 1:68, 78).<sup>22</sup> The crowds do not understand everything, they do not fully comprehend who Jesus is, but they know that in Christ

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<sup>20</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950; New York: Scholastic, 1987), 75–76.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 179–80

<sup>22</sup> "The exclamation of the people in v. 16 is a *confession of faith* that, in the raising of the boy in Nain, this prophet from Capernaum is the fulfillment of the longing of Israel for God's eschatological intervention of salvation"; Edwards, 216. See Edwards, 216–19, for a discussion of the Elijah and Elisha typology present in Luke 7. Morris comments, "This is an inadequate view of Jesus, but it probably represented the highest title the townsmen could give anyone"; Morris, 160.

the messianic salvation has dawned. And they worship. This is the appropriate response to the sight of the glory of God in Christ; and it is not an act of the will or a decision of the mind, it is a reflex of the soul. Worship is what the human soul does when it encounters the glory of God which it was created to enjoy.<sup>23</sup>

*They told everyone.* “And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country” (v. 17). Like fear and worship, this, too, is the reflex of the human soul to the sight of God’s glory. It is of the nature of joy that it seeks to draw others into its enjoyment. What is your natural impulse when you see a beautiful sunset, or a breathtaking vista, or read a really good book or hear a really good song? “Look at that! Read this! Listen to this!” Why? Because joy is increased when it is shared. This was evident throughout Jesus’ ministry—anytime people saw the glory of God in Christ, they couldn’t shut up about it, even if warned by Jesus to tell no one (Mk 1:44–45; 7:36). Why? Because those who have seen Christ’s glory must tell others; it is the natural response of the human soul.

### **“The Things of Earth Grow Strangely Dim...”**

Your greatest need today is to see and savor the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This morning, I have tried to point to that glory in these events described in Luke 7. I have done what I can; so I will simply close by exhorting you to look upon Him, and by praying that God would open your eyes to see.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face;  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> C. S. Lewis wrote, “But the most obvious fact about praise—whether of God or anything—strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honor. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise. . . . The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game. . . . My whole, more general difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what indeed we can’t help doing, about everything else we value. I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation”; C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958), 94–95; quoted in John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, rev. ed. (1986; Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2011), 21–22.

<sup>24</sup> Helen Howarth Lemmel, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus,” 1922, Public Domain.