

Marvel at the Majesty of God (Luke 9:37–45)

The Majesty of God Is Revealed in the Son of God

A few weeks ago, Ashley and I traveled to southern Utah for our anniversary, where we spent four days hiking through Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks. As we stood atop Scout Lookout and watched the Virgin River ceaselessly carving out the canyon 1,200 feet below, as we sat upon the outcropping of rocks at the summit of the Canyon Overlook Trail and observed how the sandstone walls of the canyon blazed red in the afternoon sun while an enormous ram kept a statuesque lookout not sixty yards across the ravine, as we stood upon Inspiration Point overlooking the garden of hoodoo formations that fill the Bryce Amphitheater and gazed upon the vast landscape stretching out a hundred miles before us from which we could see no less than three distinct thunderstorm cells rumbling and pouring down their afternoon rains... in each of these vistas we glimpsed the majesty of God reflected in His creation. On our last night, we ventured out at midnight to the Checkerboard Mesa Lookout in East Zion to attempt to take advantage of the famed stargazing. We had the lookout to ourselves and waited the requisite thirty minutes for our eyes to adjust to the dark. But it was a cloudy night, and though we could tell that the stars were brilliant, they were hidden behind the floating shroud. Ashley prayed that the Lord would blow the clouds away; I have to admit that I was silently skeptical. Yet sure enough, the clouds began to open, revealing a sky dazzling with thousands of diamonds. Truly, the heavens declare the glory of God (Ps 19:1).

But as the flickering light of a candle pales in comparison to the blazing refulgence of the sun, so does the glory that we saw reflected in the canyon walls and the starlit skies pale in comparison to what Peter and John and James saw upon the Mount of Transfiguration. For there the veil of Christ's humanity was drawn back revealing the ineffable glory of God. The effect was the same as when in the days of the tabernacle the high priest, once a year on the Day of Atonement, would draw back the thick curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies and enter with fear and trembling within the inner sanctum, where the cloud of God's glory hovered above the ark of the covenant between the cherubim. And indeed, as the rest of the New Testament makes plain, the body of Christ is the new covenant temple, where God now dwells in the midst of His people (Jn 1:14; 2:21; 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19–22; 1 Pt 2:4–5). It is no

wonder that when the three disciples beheld the unveiled glory of Christ, they were “terrified” (ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα [Mt 17:6]). Sixty years later, when John again saw the glorified Christ on the Isle of Patmos, he “fell at his feet as though dead” (Rv 1:17). I was captivated by the beauty of the canyon and the stars, but I did not faint in terror; what the disciples beheld upon that mountain is glory of a wholly different magnitude, not a *reflected* glory but a *refulgent* glory.

Jesus Christ is the glory of God incarnate, the majesty of God manifested in human form. And the proper response to the sight of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is to marvel. We know this because in 2 Thessalonians, the apostle Paul says in reference to that day when Christ returns in glory,

when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed... (2 Thes 1:10)

“Saints” and those “who have believed” are parallel, meaning the same thing; therefore, for Christ to be “glorified” and “marveled at” are likewise synonyms. On that day, when Christ returns in the same unveiled glory revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration, all His saints, all believers, will glorify Him by marveling at Him. To “marvel” (θαυμάζω) means to see and to savor unto the satisfaction of our soul. That is what will glorify Christ on that day.

That is what glorifies Christ even today, even while the glory of Christ is hid from our eyes by the veil of this present age. Paul also writes in 2 Corinthians 4:

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, who is the image of God. (2 Cor 4:3–4)

Note that it is the “minds” not the “eyes” that are blinded by Satan—the “seeing” in view in this passage is not a physical sight, but a spiritual sight. Paul says that when unbelievers look at Jesus, they do not see the majesty of God and they do not marvel. But believers do... even those who, unlike Peter and James and John and Paul himself (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13), have never seen the unveiled glory of Christ with their eyes. How? How do believers throughout this age behold and marvel at the glory of God in Christ? Paul continues:

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ 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 glory of God in the face of Christ.
(2 Cor 4:5–6)

By the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord, the glory of God shines in our hearts. Rather than the light of His glory shining into our eyes to give us the *sight* of His glory, His glory shines in our *hearts* to give us the *knowledge* of His glory. In other words, the glory of God is seen in the incarnate Son of God through the eyes of faith. But the response is the same—when the glory of God is seen, it is savored; when the majesty of God is manifested, it causes us to marvel.

But we must acknowledge that there is a kind of marveling that does not glorify Christ, and this is the point of today's text. I think v. 43 forms the center of this passage. Verse 43 is the hinge between Christ's exorcism of the demon in vv. 37–42 and His announcement of His impending sufferings in vv. 44–45:

And all were astonished at the majesty of God. But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." (9:43–44)

In one sense, this entire sermon is an exposition of v. 43. Why is that *while they were all marveling at everything he was doing* Jesus chose at that time to predict His sufferings? What is the relationship between His majesty and His misery? And how does this inform what it means to marvel at His majesty? The thesis of this sermon may be stated as follows: *Saving faith marvels at the majesty of God revealed in Christ's promise, power, and providence... but preeminently in His passion.* May God be pleased to shine in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, that He might be glorified in us as we marvel at Him.

The Majesty of God Revealed in Christ's Promise

First, saving faith marvels at the majesty of God revealed in Christ's promise. This first point is not at the forefront of Luke's narrative, but lies in the background. Let's read vv. 37–43a:

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astonished at the majesty of God. (9:37–43a)

The main question to be answered at this point is to whom Jesus addressed His holy frustration? There are four options: His frustration was directed toward the “great crowd,” to the father of the demon-possessed boy, to His disciples, or to some combination of the three. It is not an easy question to answer, for there are reasons for believing that Jesus was frustrated with the disciples’ lack of faith, and yet it would be strange indeed if Jesus referred to His disciples as a “faithless and twisted generation” (γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη). I think it is best to regard Jesus’ frustration as directed, in various ways and to various degrees, towards all present—the crowd, the father, and His disciples. Let me give you three reasons:

- First, in Mark’s much-longer account of this event, when Jesus came upon the scene, the disciples were engaged in an argument with the scribes. When Jesus asked what the argument was about, the father told him that he had brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples to cast out the unclean spirit, but they could not. While Mark did not say what the argument between the disciples and the scribes was about, it seems to have been the result of the disciples’ inability to exorcise the demon and what that might mean about Jesus. Whatever it was, it revealed that the scribes, the disciples, and the crowd were all missing the point. In Christ the King, the kingdom of God had appeared. As Jesus made clear in Matthew 12:

“But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Mt 12:28)

The disciples' inability to exorcise the demon had given the crowd, and specifically the scribes, cause to doubt and to slander their Master. *Sure, what Jesus and His disciples have done thus far is impressive, but now they have come up against a power greater than theirs. Therefore, Jesus cannot be the Messiah.* So Jesus vented His frustration at the crowd, and specifically the scribes.¹

- Second, Jesus also appears to have been frustrated with the boy's father. I admit there is no hint of this in Luke's narrative; in Luke's Gospel the father did everything right—he brought his son to Jesus' disciples, and when they failed, he brought the boy to Jesus Himself, begging that Jesus to only “look at my son” (ἐπιβλέψαι ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν μου).² But in Mark's Gospel, the father said to Jesus, “If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us,” to which Jesus responded, “‘If you can!’ All things are possible for one who believes” (Mk 9:24). In other words, the father's opinion of Jesus likewise falls short of the reality. [It should be noted, however, that the father responds brilliantly to Jesus' rebuke: “Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, ‘I believe; help my unbelief’” (Mk 9:25).]
- Finally, though, Jesus also seems to have been frustrated with His disciples.³ Again, this is less evident in Luke's Gospel than in Mark's. For in Mark's narrative, after Jesus cast out the demon, the disciples asked, “Why could we not cast it out?” And

¹ Edwards believes that Jesus' frustration is directed at the crowds, writing, “Though the disciples are unable to heal the boy, Jesus does not chastise them. Inability and inadequacy are limitations, not faults. In contrast, disbelief (12:46) and perverse belief (Acts 13:8, 10; 20:30) are willful choices for which people are culpable. The chastising element in v. 41 closely echoes prophetic grievances against unbelieving Israel (Deut 32:5, 20; Num 14:11; Isa 65:2)”; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 287. Likewise, Morris concludes, “We should take the address then as ‘to all people who are present and had failed to show faith enough for the healing of the boy’”; Leon Morris, *Luke*, TNTC (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1988), 193, quoting from J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Luke* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971).

² “The father asks Jesus not to heal his son, but simply to ‘look’ upon him, trusting that what he sees will move him to greater compassion than words alone could evoke. It is a profound request, one better made of God than of an ordinary rabbi”; Edwards, 286. Morris writes, “There seems no reason for thinking of the father [as the recipient of Jesus' rebuke], for in the first instance he was not a ‘generation,’ and in the second he had brought his son for a cure in faith, even if imperfect faith (Mark 9:24)”; Morris, 193.

³ “No mention is made here of anyone's lack of faith or the need for prayer, as in Mark's account (Mark 9:23–24, 29). Nevertheless, Jesus responds harshly to the disciples' failure. He lumps them together with the whole mass of the faithless and perverse people of Israel (Deut 32:5, 20; Isa 65:2; Jer 5:21–23; Ezek 12:2)”; David E. Garland, *Luke*, ECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 403. “When Jesus said this [“O faithless and twisted generation”], he was speaking about the disciples as much as anyone else. . . . [T]he faithless people in this instance were primarily the disciples, who did not have the faith to cast out the boy's demon”; Philip Ryken, *Luke, Volume 1: Luke 1–12*, REC (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009), 485.

Jesus replied, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer” (Mk 9:28–29). The implication is that in the course of their attempt to exorcise the demon, the disciples had failed to pray. Furthermore, if we remember back to the beginning of Luke 9, when Jesus sent out the twelve “to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal,” he “gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases” (9:1). Jesus gave the disciples authority over “*all* the demons” (πάντα τὰ δαιμόνια), not just some demons. So why did the disciples fail to cast out this demon? It was not that this was a particularly strong demon that exceeded their powers; *every* demon exceeds the powers of man. Therefore, *every* exorcism must be performed by faith in the power of Christ. If we put these two thoughts together, we can see why Jesus may have been frustrated with His disciples. On the one hand, they had failed to believe His promise. He had given them power and authority over “*all* demons,” which included *this* demon. Yet they could not cast it out. Why? Because they failed to believe the promise of power and authority. On the other hand, Jesus’ statement about this kind only being driven out by prayer implies that they hadn’t prayed, but rather had presumed upon that power and authority. I suspect that while they were out in the cities of Galilee, they had (initially, at least) been rather timid in commanding the demons to flee in the name of Christ, and somewhat to their surprise, the demons had fled. “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” (10:17). But as time went on, they ceased being surprised at the power and authority that they wielded, and began to presume upon that power and authority, forgetting that it did not belong to them by right, but rather by a stewardship from Christ. And so, when this man brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples, and they presumptuously and prayerlessly commanded the demon to flee, the demon did not flee and they lost their nerve and began bickering with the scribes.

What is the application of this first point for the church this morning? *We marvel at the majesty of God revealed in Christ when we believe His promise without presuming upon His pledge.* Jesus is not honored where His promise is not believed; in fact, he is frustrated and angry.⁴ Simply put, there is no excuse, no justification, for unbelief. Which means that there is no

⁴ “This was not sinful impatience, but holy frustration with the unbelief of his own people, including his closest friends”; Ryken, 485.

excuse, no justification, for the fruits of unbelief. There is no excuse, no justification, for fear, worry, or anxiety over our provision. Has Jesus not promised that our heavenly Father knows what we need before we ask it and has committed Himself to provide for our every need as we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (Mt 6:32–33)? There is no excuse, no justification, for fear, worry, or anxiety over our circumstances. Has God not promised to work all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28)? There is no excuse, no justification, for fear, worry, or anxiety over pain or persecution, over disease or death. Has not Jesus promised that not a sparrow falls to the ground apart from the will of our Father, and therefore that not a hair of our head can be harmed apart from His command (Mt 10:29–31)? *But I wasn't there on the mountain to see Jesus in His transfigured glory!* So?! How many times does Jesus need to rise from the dead in order for His promise to attain credibility? These promises are not empty words, merely black ink on a white page. They are the blood-bought promises of the crucified and risen Son of God, and He is honored when we believe them.

And yet, we dare not presume upon His promise so as to become prayerless. We dare not presume upon His promise of provision, and fail to pray for our daily bread. We dare not presume upon His promise of preservation, and fail to pray for the grace to persevere. God has promised to bless the preaching of His word with fruit according to His sovereign will (Is 55:10–11), yet I dare not presume upon that blessing by failing to prepare, failing to pray, or failing to proclaim the gospel. We marvel at the majesty of God revealed in Christ when we believe His promise without presuming upon His pledge. Examine your heart... where are you failing to believe Christ's promise? Look for fear, anxiety, or disobedience; for where there is the smoke of sin, there is always the fire of unbelief. Examine your heart... where are you presuming upon Christ's pledge and failing to pray? Look for powerlessness in your ministry, or in your battle against sin; for where there is powerlessness, you may be sure there is prayerlessness.

The Majesty of God Revealed in Christ's Power

Second, saving faith marvels at the majesty of God revealed in Christ's power. Look again at the way Luke contrasts the disciples' powerlessness in the face of the demon with Jesus' power over the demon. The disciples were unable to cast it out, but when the father brought his son to Jesus and the demon manifested in His presence, it was a totally different story:

While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astonished at the majesty of God. (9:42–43a)

Though the disciples failed for lack of faith and lack of prayer, Jesus does not stop to pray. He simply commands, and the demon obeys. Jesus need not appeal to an authority outside Himself; all authority in heaven and on earth belong to Him (Mt 28:18). This is emphasized by the three-fold, matter-of-fact way in which Luke relates the exorcism: Jesus “rebuked” (ἐπετίμησεν) the unclean spirit and “healed” (ἰάσατο) the boy and “gave” (ἔδωκεν) him back to his father. There was no debate; there was no elaborate ritual; there was no crucifix or holy water; there was no demanding the demon’s name that He might gain control over it. There was just the sovereign command of the Son of God.

And the crowds recognized this. Exorcisms were not unknown in Israel prior to the appearance of Christ. The third-century BC deuterocanonical Book of Tobit describes the exorcism of a demon by means of a ritual of fumigation (Tob 6:14–18; 8:3). The first-century Qumran scrolls contain incantations offered in the name of David and Solomon intended to combat demons (11Q11).⁵ The first-century AD Jewish historian Josephus reports witnessing an exorcism in which an exorcist named Eleazar utilized a ritual first revealed to Solomon:

God also enabled him [Solomon] to learn that skill which expels demons, which is a science useful and sanative [i.e. conducive to health] to men. He composed such incantations also by which distempers are alleviated. And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return, and this method of cure is of great force unto this day; for I have seen a certain man of my own country whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian, and his sons, and his captains, and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The manner of the cure was this:—He put a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the

⁵ Tom Schmidt, “Exorcism in the First Century Jewish Mind,” April 17, 2013; <https://www.ttschmidt.com/blog/exorcism-in-the-first-century-jewish-mind>. See Geza Vermes, ed. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 310–11.

demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he abjured him to return to him no more, making still mention of Solomon and reciting the incantations which he composed. And when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man.⁶

That sounds a bit like a carnival side show, does it not? It reminds me of the seances that were popular at the turn of the last century, when the supposed medium would employ parlor tricks to blow out candles or make knocking sounds on the walls. Against that backdrop, in light of that first-person testimony of what evidently was common in Jesus' day, it is remarkable how different is Luke's description of this exorcism of the demon-possessed boy. There were no ancient incantations, there was no special ring, no special root, no drawing the demon out through the nostrils, no cup of water... there was nothing of the sort. There was only the sovereign command of Christ— "Be gone!" And suddenly, this child that a moment before was convulsing on the ground and foaming at the mouth, was clean and healed and whole and in his father's arms. It is no wonder that "all were astonished [ἐξεπλήσσαντο] at the majesty of God," and were "all marveling [θαυμαζόντων] at everything he was doing" (v. 43).

What is the application of this second point to the church this morning? *We marvel at the majesty of God revealed in Christ when we acknowledge and are astonished by His unparalleled power.* Yes, we are separated from this event by two-thousand years. No, we are not eye-witnesses. But there were many eyewitnesses of this event, and they were "all" (πάντες, πάντων) astonished by what they saw. Why? Because they were familiar with the reality of demon-possession, and they were familiar with the ritual of exorcism, and *this* was not at all like *that*. This was of a different kind, for Jesus expelled demons not with incantations or rituals or by appealing to David or Solomon, but by His own sovereign authority. They saw this, they understood this, and they were astonished by this. The crowd's reaction was identical to that of the crowds when they heard Jesus teach:

⁶ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, in *The Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 255–56 (8.45–48).

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished [ἐξεπλήσσοντο] at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.
(Mt 7:28–29)

Or do you remember when the officers were sent by the Pharisees to arrest Jesus for teaching in the temple? When they came back empty-handed, what did they say? “No one ever spoke like this man!” (Jn 7:46). Now, as we will see in the next point, saving faith says more than this. Saving faith is more than being astonished at Jesus’ teaching or His miracles, but it is not less than astonishment at His teaching and His miracles. So examine yourself... Are you astonished at the power of Christ? Are you astonished at His authority? Are you astonished at His teaching? The crowds had never heard or seen anything like Jesus, and they marveled at Him. Do you?

The Majesty of God Revealed in Christ’s Passion

Third, saving faith marvels at the majesty of God revealed in Christ’s passion. We now come to the crux of the passage. The crowds marveled at the majesty of God revealed in Christ’s power. But that does not rise to the level of saving faith. As I have asserted time and again, all four Gospels reveal that the vast majority of the crowds that surrounded Jesus’ ministry were unconverted... even though they were astonished at His preaching and His power. Remember, for instance, what Jesus said of the cities of Galilee:

Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”
(Mt 11:20–24)

This seems to me to be the meaning of vv. 43–44:

And all were astonished at the majesty of God. But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.” (9:43–44)

Why did Jesus choose this particular time to remind his disciples—quite forcefully, I might add (“Let these words sink into your ears” [θέσθε ὑμεῖς εἰς τὰ ὦτα ὑμῶν τοὺς λόγους τούτους])—of His impending passion? It is because Jesus knew the crowds did not comprehend who He was or what He had come to accomplish. They were astonished at His preaching and His power, but unless you marvel at His passion, you have not understood Christ. For the center of Christ’s redemptive work, the foundation of His role as Messiah, is His atoning death for sinners. Verse 44 is Luke’s shorthand for the longer prediction given in vv. 21–22:

And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one [i.e. that He is the Christ of God (v. 20)], saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” (9:21–22)

Nevertheless, there is an element in this second passion prediction that was missing from the first. Note the passive voice of the verb “be delivered” (παράδιδωσθαι). The Son of Man is about to *be delivered* into the hands of men who will kill Him. Delivered by whom? Delivered by God.⁷ In other words, Jesus’ impending death is not an accident, not a tragedy, but the pinnacle of God’s redemptive plan forged in eternity past.

*Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions;*

⁷ “The passive voice of the verb is a reference to God without using God’s name (for fear of defiling it), i.e., God is handing his Son to humanity. The verse reflects the language of the Servant of Yahweh in Isa 53:6 (LXX) and hints that Jesus will die for the sins of others”; Edwards, 289.

*he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all. . . .
Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt... (Is 53:4–6, 10)*

*“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.
(Acts 2:22–24)*

God the Father delivered His incarnate Son over into the hands of sinners, in order that through their wicked machinations He might accomplish His holy purpose—namely, to provide for His elect and beloved people a substitute sacrifice, a representative to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, to bear our guilt and carry our shame, to be stricken, smitten, afflicted, pierced, crushed by God in His holy and righteous wrath, that we might have peace with God and healing for our souls.

I do not want anyone here to make the same mistake as the crowds. Jesus is not a miracle-working prophet to be admired, one of a number of miracle-working prophets throughout history. He is not the charismatic founder of a religious movement to be revered, one of a number of charismatic founders of religious movements throughout history. Rather, Jesus is the only Mediator between God and Man, the eternal Son of God who became the incarnate Son of Man that He might bear in His body the sins of His people and suffer the wrath of God in their stead. He is not merely to be admired or revered; Jesus Christ is to be trusted as our only Savior

and worshiped as our only Lord and God. *You cannot truly marvel at the majesty of God revealed in Christ, until you marvel at the majesty of God revealed in Christ's passion.* I urge you then, to look upon Him who is your Suffering Servant, look upon Him as He is mocked and beaten and scourged, look upon Him as He hangs in agony upon the cross, look upon Him as He absorbs in Himself the wrath of God that was due to you, look upon Him as He pleads for the forgiveness of His tormentors, look upon Him as He cries out in triumph, "It is finished!" And look upon Him as He emerges triumphant from the grave on the third day, to grant the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life to all who come to Him. Look upon Him and marvel.

The Majesty of God Revealed in Christ's Providence

But there is one further glimpse of majesty to be marveled at in this passage. Look finally at v. 45:

But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying. (9:45)

The disciples did not understand Jesus' prediction of His impending passion. Why? Luke gives us insight into the ultimate explanation for the disciples' ignorance—the meaning of Jesus' saying "was concealed" (παράκεκαλυμμένον) from them. Concealed by whom? Once again, the answer must be "by God." Ultimately, it is God who conceals and reveals the truth of the gospel to the human soul, such that He remains utterly and absolutely sovereign in the salvation of sinners. How should we respond to this truth? Most people resist it bitterly, so strong is our commitment to human autonomy and our desire to be masters of our own destiny. But I suggest we should respond to this truth the same way Jesus did. Look with me at Matthew 11, immediately following Jesus' condemnation of the cities of Galilee that I read earlier.

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Mt 11:25–27)

The doctrine of divine sovereignty, of divine providence, delighted Jesus. He viewed it as a reason for worship and thanksgiving. And as Jesus saw reality with infinitely greater clarity than we do, uncorrupted as He was by sin, I suggest that worship and thanksgiving is the good and proper response to the sovereignty of God.

Thus, fourth, *saving faith marvels at the majesty of God revealed in Christ's providence*. God conceals the gospel from some and reveals it to others, in accordance with His plan and purpose. And He has given this sovereignty to His incarnate Son. Let us marvel at that truth.

Marvel at the Majesty of God Revealed in the Messiah of God

This morning, I invite you to behold the majesty of God revealed in the Messiah of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to marvel at Him. Marvel at His preaching. Marvel at His power. Marvel at His providence. But remember that saving faith ultimately marvels at His passion. We do not know Christ truly and savingly until we know Him in His death and resurrection. We do not worship Christ rightly until we trust Him as our only Savior and obey Him as our only Lord.