

The Glory of Christ (7): In His Relationship with the Church

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[0 : 00] Is that it? Is the title of the autobiography of the controversial Irish singer and activist Bob Geldof.

! Is that it? Sometimes I wonder whether in the Christian church we reach the end of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus and ask ourselves, is that it? Is the Christian church an institution fundamentally designed to perpetuate the memory of events which took place 2,000 years ago in a place very far away from here, in which case is that it? Or is the Christian church a living body firmly based on those historical events but continuing to thrive and grow in the power of the living God?

The question resolves into this, is Jesus Christ purely a historical figure? Or is He present with and working through His church today?

Okay. I've heard various ministers being disparagingly called yesterday's man. Oh, that preacher, he's yesterday's man. He doesn't communicate with today's world.

Of course, that's rubbish, but never mind. Is Jesus yesterday's man when it comes to the Christian church? Or is He yesterday's, today's, and forever's man?

[1 : 37] Over the summertime, we've been exploring together on a Sunday evening the Bible's teaching on the glory of Christ, His weightiness, His impressiveness, that which entitles Christ to our praise and our worship.

And this week, being the second last week, we want to explore the Bible's teaching on the glory of Christ in His relationship with the church. Notice, not a past relationship, but an always present living relationship.

He communicates Himself to us in all the churches today's. Because of the living Christ's glorious relationship with us, the Christian church is a living body, firmly based upon the historic gospel, but continuing to grow and thrive in the power of God.

We are not a religious memory clinic. We are a living and growing family and body, vitally connected with the living Christ from whom we derive our love and our joy and our comfort and our power.

But how is it possible that the living, physical Christ of the Father's right hand in heaven communicates Himself and has a living relationship with His church on earth?

[3 : 07] Yes, His church as a whole, across the whole world, His church here in Crow Road, and with each one of us as individual Christians. He does it through the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

The glory of Christ in His relationship with His church consists in His gracious gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, in whom and through whom the church lives in the power of the risen and exalted Christ.

Let me say that again. We talk about how Christ gave Himself for us on the cross.

We talked about that this morning. But we may also talk about how Christ continues to give Himself to us through the Holy Spirit. When we come to church, we're coming to a living organism, made alive through the Holy Spirit, thriving, growing in Him.

From John 14 verse 15 onwards, I want us to explore together a couple of themes concerning how the heavenly Jesus relates to us as a church and to each of us as individual Christians.

[4 : 51] The first thing is this. Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit.

I'm going to be repeating a lot of Scripture during this sermon tonight. We tend to think of Jesus purely in terms of who He was as a man. But what we sometimes forget is that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit.

In John 3 verse 34, John the Baptist describes Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit, and I quote, without measure, without measure.

In other words, Jesus wasn't just full to the brim of the Holy Spirit. He overflowed. Again, in Luke chapter 4 verse 1, we read about Jesus, He was full of the Holy Spirit.

Never before in all of Scripture had any man been described as being full of the Holy Spirit. It was the presence of the Holy Spirit within Jesus which enabled Him to do His miraculous miracles of power.

[5 : 59] It is wrongly thought that Jesus used His divine power at these times. He did not. Everything Jesus said and everything Jesus did was empowered by the Holy Spirit whom the Father had poured out upon Him without measure.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, it said of Stephen in Acts 6 verse 5 that He was a man filled with faith and of the Holy Spirit.

And again in Acts 11 verse 24, Barnabas from Cyprus described as a good man full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. But Jesus was the prototype, the first to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And at the right hand of God, the man Jesus Christ continues to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He is filled with the Holy Spirit, first of all, in view of His being in very nature God.

Beth, you'll learn all about this in ETS. In a theological concept known as perichoresis, the three persons of the Godhead live in each other and with each other without diminishing each other's personality.

[7 : 17] But He's also filled with the Holy Spirit by virtue of His being the mediator between God and man. To accomplish His mission of saving His people from their sin, He had to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

In fact, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are so closely identified with each other that in Acts chapter 16 verse 7, the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus.

Jesus and the Holy Spirit are different persons, but they work so closely that sometimes it's impossible to distinguish them. More correctly, as we'll see in a wee while, the role of the Holy Spirit is to bring Jesus to us.

To bring Jesus to us. He does not draw attention to Himself. He draws attention to Jesus. Even though God the Holy Spirit is equal in power and glory to God the Father and God the Son, His role in our salvation is to bring Christ to the church and to the church's people.

So, Christ, who is Himself filled with the Holy Spirit, is brought by the Holy Spirit to the church. That's the first thing.

[8 : 33] Second thing. Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit.

In John 14 verse 15 through 17, Jesus said, If you love me, you will keep my commandments and I will ask the Father and He will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth.

Again, in John 15 verse 26 across the page, Jesus said to His disciples, When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father.

And once more in John 16 verse 13, Jesus said, When the Spirit of truth comes. In these passages and many more, Jesus promises that having got away, He will send His Holy Spirit to be with His disciples.

Having ascended to heaven from His royal throne at the Father's right hand, He will send His Spirit upon His church.

[9 : 45] Indeed, before His ascension in Acts 1 verse 5, Jesus promises the disciples saying, You will be baptized by the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

And then, of course, we have in Acts chapter 1, the day of Pentecost, Acts chapter 2 rather, when the promised Holy Spirit comes. We read, From the throne of His heavenly glory, The Jesus who Himself overflows with the Holy Spirit, poured out the Holy Spirit upon His church.

And that gift of the Holy Spirit to the church has never been revoked. The Spirit of God is as powerfully present in the church of the 21st century as He was in the church of the first.

The risen and exalted Christ from heaven continues to fill His church and His people with the Holy Spirit. Later in 1 Corinthians 6, 19, Paul reminds us saying, Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?

These living bodies of ours are temples to the living Holy Spirit He lives within us. He lives in us in a far more powerful way than God ever dwelt in the temple in Jerusalem.

[11:29] Once more in our text, John 14, 17, Jesus promises that He will send another helper to be with them. He says of the Holy Spirit, He dwells with you and will be in you.

He dwells with you and will be in you. Jesus promised His church and His people the Holy Spirit, and He delivers and continues to deliver on that promise.

Now, this is a very important truth, but what does it have to do with Christ's present relationship with us as a church and with us as individual Christians? Well, having just promised that He will send His Holy Spirit to be with them, in John 14, verse 18, the very next verse, Jesus says to His disciples, I will not leave you as orphans.

I will come to you. And later He says, in verse 23, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

In other words, when the Holy Spirit comes, He doesn't come alone. He brings with Him both the Father and the Son to live within us.

[12:53] In the most mysterious of movements, the fullness of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit now makes His home in the heart of the Christian.

And the Holy Spirit who lives within us brings Christ with Him. In John 16, verse 7, I've always been confused by this verse, John 16, verse 7, Jesus says to His disciples, it is to your advantage that I go away.

It is to your advantage that I go away. He says that to His disciples, John 16, 7. How so? Would it not be better would it not assure us more firmly in the faith if Jesus was still physically with us in person?

How then could He say, it is to your advantage that I go away? During His public ministry, Jesus could be with His disciples, but He could not be in His disciples.

He could be with His disciples, but He could not be in His disciples. But now through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is not merely with us, He is in us.

[14:14] He is far closer to us now than He was to His disciples. When I was studying for this sermon, I came across a quote by the Puritan John Owen.

I recently was talking about this book on the Holy Spirit by John Owen to Ross McCaskill's dad, Donald McCaskill, and he said, oh yes, an hour a page.

And it is an hour a page. And I said to poor Donald, I said, no, not for me, Donald. It's an hour a sentence. It really takes a long time to read John Owen's book on the Holy Spirit. Anyway, Owen wrote these words.

I don't expect you to write them down. As in His incarnation, Christ took our nature into personal union with His own.

So, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, He takes our persons into a mystical union with Himself. Hereby, He becomes ours, and we become His.

[15:21] I love this quote because it tells me, the Holy Spirit lives in me and the Holy Spirit unites me with Jesus.

I am entirely as one with Jesus as He is with me. That what happens to me is important to Jesus because I'm one with Him.

And that because I'm one with Him, I can take all my cares and concerns to Him and He will care for me. More of that in our application section.

The point is that just as Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit during His public ministry, the Holy Spirit is now filled with Jesus.

The Holy Spirit now fills Jesus in His heavenly ministry. And Jesus from heaven sends His Holy Spirit upon His church. And He sends His Holy Spirit to live within us.

[16:27] This is how Jesus communicates Himself to us as a church and as individual Christians. He does it by His indwelling Holy Spirit. This is how we can say, but the glory of Christ in His relationship with the church consists in His gracious gift of the Holy Spirit to the church in whom and through whom the church lives in the power of the risen and exalted Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the reason that when it comes to the Christian gospel is that it is always the wrong question. The Holy Spirit is the reason why the Christian church is a living, growing body firmly based upon those historical events but continuing to grow and strengthen and thrive in the power of God.

The Holy Spirit is the hidden power of the church, the power through which God is building His church and the gates of hell shall never prevail against Him. The Holy Spirit is the glory of Christ in

His living relationship with us as Christians and as the Christian church.

For the remainder of our time, I want us to apply this glorious truth about the Holy Spirit being with us, about Christ being with us through the Holy Spirit who lives within us.

And I want to do it in three brief ways. The first is this. Christ is present with us. Christ is present with us.

[18:06] At the conclusion to the so-called Great Commission, Jesus said to His disciples, and behold, I am with you to the very end of the age. Behold, I am with you to the end of the age.

The reason He could say this was because of the Holy Spirit He would send into their hearts. Christ is with you tonight. He is closer than your needest and your dearest.

What comfort this brings to us. In times of grief, in times of trial, in times of difficulty, others may abandon us. But Christ never will.

He's the friend who sticks closer than any brother because He's made our home in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Christ. The Lord, who is our Psalm 23 shepherd, is with us in, what did that call it, Death's Markdale, the dark valleys of life.

when we've fallen away and when we've lost our grip in Him. Christ, who lives within us, remains faithful to us and continues to be with us.

[19:24] And He brings us back to Himself. When we pray, He's listening to us from inside us. Listening not to the words we speak, but the desires of our hearts.

When we laugh, He's with us. When we cry, He's with us. When we grieve, He's with us. When we rejoice, He's with us. When we're in company, He's with us.

When we're lonely, He's with us. He's with us where we are, even unto the day when we shall be with Him where He is. However it may feel to the contrary, Christ is always with you.

Always. Second, because Jesus has poured His Holy Spirit out upon the church and into the hearts of individual believers, Christ strengthens us.

He strengthens us. John 15 is an incredibly important chapter in the Word of God. In this chapter, Jesus paints an image of Himself as a vine and we are the branches.

[20:31] We draw our nourishment from Him even as the branches of a tree draw their nourishment from the trunk. As we remain and abide in Christ, He gives us life and through Him, we can and well bear spiritual fruit.

Some say it is harder to be a Christian today than at any time in the past. I'm not sure that's true. It never has been the path of least resistance to be a believer.

To go against the flow always takes strength. That is why in John 15 verse 5 Jesus says, apart from Me you can do nothing.

No Christ, no vine, no strength. We'll come back to this point in our conclusion but we jump now to the experience of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 where he's struggling with something in his life which is causing him extreme pain, extreme weakness, extreme suffering.

The so-called thorn in the flesh, 2 Corinthians 12. We read there three times in verse 8, three times I pleaded with the Lord about this that it should leave me but he said to me my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness.

[22:06] By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us the heavenly Christ strengthens us in our weakness. He gives us grace to deal with the thorn. He gives power to the faint-hearted.

strength and power so needed in our fight against sin, so needed in the fight to remain in Christ and to swim against the flow of the world but that is exactly what the heavenly Christ gives to us.

In Luke 4.14 we read, and Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. Just as the Spirit of God gave our Lord power, so too our Lord now sends His Spirit to strengthen us in all our weaknesses.

You see, the thing is He knows our hearts from the inside and He knows how fragile and vulnerable we are.

So weak any stiff wind of life might blow us down. In our weakness the heavenly Christ strengthens us and gives us power to cope and yes, even to overcome.

[23:19] And then finally, Christ is present with us, Christ strengthens us, this wonderful truth about Christ communicating Himself to us by the Holy Spirit.

Christ speaks through us. Christ speaks through us. The church is on mission. I miss Kirk for many, many, many, many reasons but one of which is he used to remind us of this all the time.

The church is on mission. It is God's mission. The offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ to every person on planet earth. The ultimate renewal of all things through Him.

Christ sends us out on a great commission. Go and make disciples of all nations but He hasn't sent us out alone. The cruel Pharaoh of Egypt commanded the Hebrew slaves to make bricks without straw but Christ gives us both bricks and straw because He sends us out in the power of the Holy Spirit to build His kingdom.

The church goes in the power of the Holy Spirit the same Spirit who opens the eyes of the blind and the hearts of the stubborn. It is He the Spirit of Christ who shines the light of the gospel into the darkness of the human heart and brings new birth.

[24 : 43] It's He. But more than that it is the living and reigning Christ who from heaven by His Spirit speaks through the church's proclamation and the church's message.

In 1 Thessalonians 1 the apostle Paul is rejoicing in the response of the Thessalonians of the gospel and he writes these words to them. He says, Our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

Again in 1 Corinthians 2 verse 4 he writes, My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom but in a demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

When the Holy Spirit of Jesus speaks to the faithful preaching of the gospel the power of heaven prizes open the darkened hearts of the stubborn to the irresistible grace of Christ.

When the gospel is preached in faithfulness though its preacher may stumble and be unrefined and uneducated in its presentation the Spirit often times comes in power and drives home with startling urgency our need for Christ.

[26 : 05] We sometimes call this unction. Myself and Graham were talking about this morning. The preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones whom some of you may have heard spoke often of unction the Holy Spirit empowering his preaching but he said he'd only ever experienced unction once in his life during a dream he was having at night.

I'm quite sure his listeners would have said different. Only twice have I ever felt unction not in my own preaching but strangely in the preaching of two other ministers neither of whom were great orators charismatic speakers or particularly educated preachers.

they highlighted what the text of Scripture said they pointed to Jesus and the Holy Spirit drove it home to my heart.

The risen Christ spoke through them from heaven. Surely we must make this a matter of earnest prayer all of us that our pulpits! that our pulpits must be filled with the Spirit owned unction of the preaching of the Word of God.

But not only does the Holy Spirit speak from church he speaks with the faithful witness of God's people. As we share the gospel with unbelievers the Holy Spirit takes all we say and drives it home.

[27 : 34] He hammers the nail of the gospel into the hearts of its hearers. Many of us myself included shirk our responsibility to share the gospel because we're afraid we'll get tongue-tied.

We won't know what to say. It's a fair objection but then we need to know it's not so much we who are doing the speaking it's the Holy Spirit who's speaking through us.

He can take our stumbling confused words he can make them into a speech more powerful than anything delivered in pulpit or parliament.

God has a church for his mission and he does not send us out alone the risen Christ from heaven fills us with the Spirit for the mission he's called us to.

The Holy Spirit he goes with us wherever we are into the closest of the shops of Thornwood and the streets and pavements of Crow Road among the down and outs and the up and outs of our city.

[28 : 38] And because of the Spirit's speech through us this isn't as far as the church's gospel goes. Rather the kingdom of God will continue to grow and grow in us through us and from us.

So turning full circle to that question is that it? Because of Christ's continuing love and relationship with his church by the Holy Spirit we answer this is certainly not it.

but as we close let's bring it personal and challenge each other let's challenge each other in the words of John 15 to remain in Christ.

In John 15 verse 4 Jesus commands the same abide in me abide in me just as the branch lives as it lives in the vine so we challenge each other live in Christ abide in Christ abide in his love isn't that one of the most spectacularly beautiful commands Jesus ever gave?

Abide in my love live in his love remain in his love let's abide in him through the word he has written through the prayers he promises to answer through our obedience and the commands he gives because even as enabled by the Holy Spirit we abide in Christ he will abide in us his joy in us will be complete and the glory we give him will shine through us to a dark and needy world are you am I abiding in Christ may the triune God Father Son and Holy Spirit who dwells within your heart bless us as we put into practice the glory of Christ's living relationship with his church Amen Amen [30 : 52] Thank you.