

## E. The Life-Work of Christ: The Glory of His Earthly Consecration

**“My food . . . is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work”** (John 4:34)

We move from a consideration of His Person to consider His work. There is a necessary unity between the two. *“What Christ has done is directly related to who He is.”* His Person and work cannot be separated, nor either be subordinated to the other. They are “one indissoluble unity.” As the wholly unique Person He accomplishes a wholly unique work. Also, it is as difficult to divide up His work as it is to divide up His Person.

1. **The Early CONSCIOUSNESS of His Consecration. Luke 2:49-50.** We find this early consciousness reflected in Jesus’ “first words” that are recorded by the gospel writers in Luke 2:49-50. *“He had been so entirely absorbed by the awakening thought of His being and mission, however kindled, as to be not only neglectful, but forgetful, of all around”* (Edershiem, 248).

- His consciousness of a unique relationship. **“My father’s house . . .”** This is the priority relationship for Him.
- His consciousness of a divine necessity. **“I had to be . . .”** (lit. *“it is necessary”*). He declares that He is under necessity, by divine constraint. The conduct of His life will be governed not merely by personal preference, but by the divine relationship and will. He is under divine obligation on account of His divine relationship with the Father. Heaven’s agenda, not human agendas will mark His living.
- His consciousness of a delightful object. *“Where should a child be, but in his father’s house? Where My Father’s affairs are carried out, there you may be sure to find Me.”*
- His consciousness of a sacred calling. Literally our text may be rendered, **“I must be in the things of My Father.”** The great calling is dawning upon His human soul. His curriculum is defined. He will be dedicated to the concerns, matters, tasks, will and service of His Father.

2. **The Special COMMENCEMENT of His Consecration. Luke 3:21-22.** *“The baptism in the Jordan . . . is the act of Jesus’ maturity. He is about to take up His life’s work and in this way He makes a public avowal of His soul’s intention. Here He gathers up His life and offers it in a full consecration”* (H. D. McDonald). Notice that Luke tells us, **“He was praying”** (v. 21). This baptism is attended by a visible anointing and a vocal attesting.

- **Visible Anointing—Commissioning Power.** *“At His baptism He was consecrated for His office by the Spirit’s descent [granted] the inner strengthening and equipping for the task He needed”* (H. D. McDonald). He is set apart and specially equipped for His unique calling and mission. Consider especially Isaiah 11:1-2; 42:1; 59:21; 61:1; and Luke 4:21. He is given a permanent unction of the Spirit to execute eternal redemption. *“Jesus carried out every function of the messianic office in the power of the Spirit”* (McDonald). This is confirmed by Peter’s testimony to Cornelius in Acts 10:38.
- **Vocal Attesting—Commissioning Assurance.** In the voice of the Father from heaven comes wonderful assurance in terms of Fatherly affection and Fatherly approval for the work to which He has committed Himself. In the first part of His statement the Father

owns the Son in His Person; in the second part He owns the Son in the work He has undertaken to do.

3. **The Glorious CHARACTER of His Consecration. John 8:29.** He comes in the character of the promised “Servant of the LORD” found in Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; and 52:13-53:12.

a. ***Glorious in His Submission to the Father.*** In His obedience and earthly submission He is glorious, as fulfilling all righteousness. He is glorious in His devotion to God and His commitment to carry out all His good pleasure. **“My food . . . is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work”** (Jn. 4:34; 6:38). None so honored the Father as He in His earthly eclipse. His whole earthly existence was marked by a willing obedience to the will of the Father. Some refer to this aspect of His ministry as His “active obedience” (in contrast to what some call His “passive obedience” in His self-offering death on the Cross).

- *Voluntary Submission.* This He did freely and voluntarily and cheerfully and consistently and increasingly. **“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me”** (Jn. 6:38). Freely at great cost to Himself. He is glorious as our obedient Surety, being born of women, born under the law, filling its demands for us (see Heb. 10:5-10; Ps. 40:8).
- *Representative Submission.* He is glorious in that His obedience is a public one, a representative one “for us” (Winslow, 117). It was an obedience and submission not for Himself, but for us. We were obligated and could not and would not. He was not obligated but He did--for us! [Romans 5:17-19] Glorious as our “last Adam,” for “as through the [first Adam’s] disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19). His whole life was a vicarious life--a life lived unto the Father for us, for our sake, rendering to Him what we could not and would not. Find a moment where His obedience fails, where sin enters in, and all our salvation dies. Glorious in His submission to His earthly parents rendering what we as children have not. Glorious as resisting the wiles of the devil in the wilderness. Glorious in His whole-hearted commitment to the task the Father has given Him. *“Go, my Captain, go! Stand, my Captain, stand!”*
- *Progressive Submission.* He grew in obedience (Luke 2:52). He progressed from one degree of faithfulness to another, growing in His own faith and dependency and responding to the increasing responsibilities of His maturing manhood. It was a tried and tested obedience (Heb. 4:15). He learned the increasing demands of obedience, as the writer to the Hebrews writes, “from the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8).
- *Completed Obedience.* Glorious in His sinlessness. Glorious in His holiness, His purity of soul and life. In vain do we find a stain or shadow on the character of our blessed Redeemer. Glorious as what man should be in all his active and passive graces--the pattern of perfect human holiness--the living exemplar of what it means to fulfill all the law of God.

b. ***Glorious in His Signs of Power.*** “[A]nd we beheld His glory, glory as the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14). He manifested His

glory in the mighty and miraculous “signs” He did. These displays were for the purpose of revealing Himself and the work He had come to do. The first twelve chapters of John’s gospel concerns itself with this revelation of His glory for the glory of the Father, recording at least seven “signs.” There was glory in His good and mighty works. Did not Peter see His glory in the catch of fish in Luke 5. Did not the disciples behold it as He rebuked the wind and waves and brought them to an instant calm? Did not the crowds see it as the widow’s dead son began to sit up and speak (Lk. 7:16). Glory poured out of His hands.

- c. ***Glorious in His Society with Sinners.*** He is glorious in His society with sinners and His tender and mighty dealings with them. He received sinners (Luke 15:2)! Glorious in His sympathy. Glorious in His willingness to heal and to help those who called upon Him. Was there not a glory in His touching of the leper? When men could find no other helpers, they found in Him one willing and mighty to give relief. There was glory in His gracious words and gracious offers. Glory, the glory of grace, poured out of His lips. Glory as He exposed hypocrisy and challenged unbelief. Glory as He taught of the kingdom and called men to Himself.
4. **The Comprehensive CONTENT of His Consecration.** We deal with a different question than that proposed in His incarnation. There we considered why He came *as* He did. Now we consider what He came for, what He came to do. We consider what He Himself said of His own mission from Matthew, Mark and Luke. (I am indebted to B. B. Warfield, *Person and Work of Christ*, for these observations)

- a. ***He Came to Preach the Gospel.*** Our first statement of purpose is found in Mark 1. Jesus is in Galilee. He had earlier taught at the synagogue in Capernaum, teaching with such authority that the people were “**all amazed**” (v. 27). This teaching He had authenticated by casting out unclean spirits and healing the sick. He was spending the early morning in prayer when His disciples find Him and tell Him that “[e]veryone is looking for You.” In verse 38 Jesus replies: “**Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, in order that I may preach there also; for this is what I came out for.**” And the consequence is found in verse 39: “**And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.**” In the companion account in Luke 4 we are told that “**He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.**” Why did He come? Here we are told an immediate purpose. He came to preach. He came as that greater prophet greater prophesied by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15. Wherever we see Him, He is preaching, whether on a mountain side, in a boat or synagogue, or in a house. Until the day He died, He preached. We are not left in the dark as to what was the content of Jesus’ preaching. In Luke 4:43, the Lord said, “**I must preach the kingdom of God. . .**” Christ considers Himself under compulsion to preach the “**kingdom of God.**” He set forth the immanency of the kingdom character of the kingdom, the characteristics of the kingdom citizen, the requirements for entering the kingdom. In Mark 1:14-15 Jesus’ preaching is summarized: “**And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the gospel.’**” By this preaching He, like his forerunner John the Baptist, urged men to prepare to enter the kingdom of God. And it was this preaching by which He manifested to the Jews that He was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. You remember that occasion in Matthew 11 when John was imprisoned? The Scripture tells us that Jesus had been teaching and preaching and when John heard of what Christ had done he sent asking, “**Are you the Expected One [lit. coming One], or shall we look**

for someone else?” Remember the Lord’s response? **“Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”** The Lord is quoting from Isaiah 61, a text of Scripture which the Jews recognized as referring to the Messiah. What would accompany the Messiah? Not only miracles, but **“the poor [would] have the gospel preached to them.”** Thus, the Lord’s preaching validated that He was the promised Messiah. He came to preach the good tidings of life. He came to do the work of an evangelist, to show the way of peace, to proclaim deliverance to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind.

His immediate calling is our as well, His work is to be ours—to go up and down and publish the glad tidings of the gospel. We are to preach the gospel. We have many responsibilities individually in our families and among ourselves, but in this world we are to preach. That is the calling. Said the commentator Ryle: *“By preaching, the Church of Christ was first gathered together and founded, and by preaching it has ever been maintained in health and prosperity. By preaching sinners are wakened. By preaching inquirers are led on. By preaching saints are built up. By preaching, Christianity is . . . carried to the heathen world.”* What are we to preach? The same message as our Lord: **“Repent and believe the gospel.”**

**b***He came to shepherd Israel.* The second statement of His purpose for coming is found in that account of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15. Here is the dramatic account of a Gentile woman pleading for mercy on behalf of her demonized daughter. It is a cry of faith as indicated by the words by which she calls out to Him, **“O Lord, Son of David!”** She uses his Messianic title. But there is a strange silence to her plea. The Scripture tells us that the Lord **“did not answer her a word”!** The disciples are frustrated with her urgency and ask Jesus to send her away. Apparently directing Himself to the disciples the Lord replies, **“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”** (v. 24). The woman is undeterred by this response and renews her approach to Christ. **“Lord, help me!”** What at first appears as a hard answer is really the means of the Lord’s drawing out of this pitiful woman’s heart the faith that is resident therein. **“It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”** She seizes upon his words and her faith argues for an answer. **“Yes, Lord.”** She is unruffled by this and she remains humble. **“[B]ut even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”** The Lord Christ on hearing this argument of faith, heals the woman’s daughter at once. But in the midst of what is a blessing to a Gentile is a statement of purpose. **“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”** It is a significant statement. It is made in the context of Jewish rejection of His ministry and the apparent Gentile recognition of His calling. He affirms that it is for the **“lost sheep of the house of Israel”** that He was sent. To Israel and for Israel He asserts He has come. Again, we have a statement of immediate purpose respecting His personal ministry. It is upon this flock that His heart is set and for this flock that his heart goes out. It was in the midst of His preaching ministry we are told in Matthew 9 that **“seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a Shepherd”** (v. 36; cf. Sec. 98). By this statement the Lord Christ declares to His disciples that He is that great shepherd promised by God in Ezekiel 33 and 34, **“I will deliver My flock,”** says the Lord God of Ezekiel 34:22. **“Then I will set over them on shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them.”** It is an echo of the prophesy recalled near His birth in Matthew 2:6: **“And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among**

**the leader of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler, who will shepherd My people Israel.**” He has come as the “**good shepherd**” who will lay down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). He came to shepherd His people to recover them, gather them into the fold, feed them and lead them into the green pastures (cf. Heb. 13:20; I Peter 2:25; 5:4).

Jesus’ words ought to be a reminder to us what He Himself said to a woman at a well: “[S]alvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22). The infant church was Jewish. It was built upon the conversion of some of the lost sheep of Israel. Even the ministry to the Gentiles was prosecuted by a Jew named Paul. This gospel that we are to proclaim is “**the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek**” (Rom. 11:11). “**By their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles.**” Gentile blessing comes out of a Jewish root and, as we have seen from the book of Romans, future world blessing is still awaiting Jewish acknowledgement of their Shepherd. The Lord Christ is our Great Shepherd now and one day in fulfillment of the prophecies of Ezekiel He will enfold the nation Israel.

- c. *He Came to Cast Strife.* The third statement we have from our Lord regarding his purpose in coming is found in Matthew 10. The context of the statement is the commissioning of His twelve apostles. In verse 34 we find this amazing statement from the Lord: “**Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.**” The statement cuts across their understanding of the purpose for which Messiah would come. Jewish expectation was that messiah’s coming would usher in a gold age of peace and prosperity. After all, was not this Messiah called the “**Prince of Peace**” in Isaiah 9:6? Would not His reign cause the nations to “**hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks**” (Isa. 2:4)? But here He declares just the opposite. He has not come to “cast” peace upon the world, but to cast strife! He is warning his own whom He has commissioned to go out and preach the same glad tidings to the same lost flock (vv. 5-7). He told them in verse 22 that they would be hated by all on account of His name; and He seeks to encourage and strengthen them. Three times in verses 24-33 He tells them not to fear. And now He is saying, in effect, “*Don’t be surprised at the persecution you find as you preach. My mission is not now to bring peace, but strife and conflict.*” Peace will ultimately issue from the Lord’s mission, but the path to peace is a path of conflict. This commission is similar to that which the Lord gave to His prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel. “*Preach, but don’t be surprised at the response you are going to get! My Person and My word are unsettling to houses and families.*” He has come to separate men out. Now this is not the sole, nor chief purpose for His coming, but it is an instrumental purpose.

Beloved, do not expect peace in this world until the Lord comes again. Don’t be surprised at the world’s response to the truth we bring. Christ, at his first coming, did not intend that peace would result. Instead He came to cast a sword. He came not to usher in a universal brotherhood of men. Loyalty to this Christ will put you at odds with this world. Households are divided this day on account of His coming. There are those who confess Him and those who deny Him. He is the Great Wedge, but we are to cleave to Christ.

d. ***He Came to Ignite Division.*** In the fourth occasion that Jesus sets forth the purpose of His coming we have words very similar to those in Matthew 10:34. This time they are found in Luke 12:49-53. The occasion is different. The Lord has set His face toward Jerusalem. The Lord, again, clears up misconceptions regarding His coming and warns His disciples, **“I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth?”** (Isn’t that what the greeting cards all sentimentally assert from a superficial understanding of the words of Luke 2:14?) **“I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two, and two against three.”** He has come to cast fire upon the earth. That fire is later spoken of in terms of “division” in verse 51. And the wording is emphatic in the text. We might render verse 51 in this way: *“Do you think that I am come to give peace on earth? Not all, I say to you, nothing else but division.”* This fire will not be kindled until what He calls His **“baptism”** is accomplished. That is none other than His sin-bearing work on Calvary’s cross. All this division comes out of what takes place on the Cross. His death will cause a fire to break out. The shadow of Gethsemane comes across His mind. He is pressed of soul concerning this baptism realizing its awfulness, but also its necessity if the fire of division is to be kindled. The fire is a purifying fire. It is one which will separate the true ore from the dross. The text is in the midst of a whole chapter of warning. *“He came to die that He might set the world on fire”* (Warfield). It is the constant refrain in the book of John, for example, that **“there arose a division again among the Jews because of [His] words”** (John 10:19, cf. 6:52; 7:12, 43; 9:16).

Oh, we are not to love division or seek to make it. But we must understand that men will be divided about Christ, divided about His person, divided about His life, divided about His death. We ought to be suspect about presenting a Christ who does not divide men! Read carefully the book of John and you will find that men were always wanting to kill Him!

e. ***He Came to Fulfill the Law.*** The fifth statement of purpose we have from our Lord is contained in Matthew 5:17-18. Again, He is clearing up misconceptions as to the reasons and results of His coming. **“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.”** Jesus did not come to set aside the Old Testament. He says that it is as abiding as heaven and earth. He has come for a different purpose—to fill up the Law and the prophets. He came to fill up the Old Testament by fulfilling the great prophecies of His coming. The Old Testament the culmination of its ceremonies, its types and figures in Him. But most importantly, He came to fulfill the Law by His perfect obedience. He came to fulfill all righteousness which the Law revealed and required for men. He came to be more than our Pattern or our Example. He came for more than to explain the character of God’s righteousness and the radical demands of the law. He came to be our Righteousness. It is what we read in Romans 10:4: **“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”** Not that we can now ignore the law of God as irrelevant. But that now our acceptance with God is not through obedience to the law, but by faith in Christ, who as Righteousness and as righteous, fulfilled all the laws demands for us.

f. ***He Came to Call Sinners.*** Our Lord’s sixth stated purpose for His coming is found in Luke 5:31. It comes at a reception which Matthew has given for Jesus. And it comes

in response to a grumbling by the Pharisees and scribes about the disciples eating and drinking with tax gatherers and sinners. It is in response to a complaint about the company Jesus and His men kept that our Lord says, **“It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”** The Lord has come to call a certain class of men to a certain duty. The Calling. The Character. What is significant in the context is the character of those called—they are characterized simply as **“sinners.”** This is what they are by character. This is why the Lord did eat and dine with sinners, because that was His calling, to call sinners. That was the condemnation which the religious leaders branded Him with in Luke 15:2: **“This man receives sinners and eats with them.”** Isn't this the most wonderful thing about Him?!? See who He would call to Himself! Not those who walk with integrity and work righteousness. Or those who speak truth in their hearts. Or those who do not slander with their tongue or do no evil to their neighbor. It is those who are unjust, thieves, liars, lusters, fornicators, hypocrites, haters, extortioners He calls! He has come to call the muck and scum of the earth. There is none who can say, *“I am too unworthy, too wicked, too bad.”* The Repentance. But we cannot leave it at that, nor leave the sinners at that. The call is to repentance—it is to turn from the muck and more. It is to come out of the pig trough. In other words, the call to sinners is for them to come not willing to remain as they are. He went into the midst of sinners for a purpose, to call them out of their sin. Jesus, it is true, is a friend of sinners, but not those who desire to hold onto their sin.

The Savior continues to seek and call men to repentance. *“No sin-sick soul is too far gone for Him.”* It is His glory to heal the most desperate of cases. Have you ever recognized and felt your sin-sickness? It ought not keep you away from, but encourage you to apply to the Great Physician. *“To feel our sins, and know our sickness is the beginning of real Christianity.”*

- g. ***He Came to Save the Lost.*** The seventh statement of purpose is found in Luke 19:10. It is Jesus' closing words in the account of the salvation of the tax collector, Zaccheus. Here is the “gospel center.” The little man has received the Lord into his house and repented of his robbery, amid the grumbling again of some that Jesus has gone to be the guest of a sinner. **“Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”** Here the Lord sets forth most clearly that His purpose in coming was to seek and to save the lost (see also Matt. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:15; Lk. 1:47; 2:11, 30; 3:6; 19:6). He Seeks. The initiative was His. Unmasked the Lord stops and speaks to Zaccheus. Unmasked He makes himself a guest at the tax collector's house. Unmasked He sends renewing grace into the hard man's heart. It is salvation for which He came. That which Matthew records in his first chapter. **“You shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins”** (Matt. 1:21). He saves the **“lost.”** That is, He delivers those who are all out of the way of life, who are so utterly in darkness and so utterly enclosed as to be beyond human rescue and finding. The brevity of the account and the matter of factness of it, hide in a measure the stupendous nature of what happened that day in Jericho. Zaccheus found for himself that Jesus receives sinners and therefore **“received Him gladly.”** How simple it was!

Has there been a time in your life in which you have received Him gladly? And do you still? Notice what evidence Luke gives us of salvation in Zaccheus' case. Not, *“I have believed in him,”* though such is absolutely necessary for life, but **“Half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I**

**will give back four times as much.”** His selfishness and his sin he has renounced for Christ. Christ came to make new men out of us.

**hHe Came to Die.** The last statement of purpose is that familiar text of Mark 10:45, found also in Matthew 20:28, which is probably the most important of all the statements for it sets forth not only His purpose in coming, but how His coming would save sinners and reclaim the lost. This is the way His saving work will come about. **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”** Here He sets forth that He came to die. Immediately we must realize that His death was not some unexpected tragedy. It was at the forefront of His mind as His mission. He knew He came to be slaughtered for sinners. Some would see two purposes in this verse: to serve and to give His life. But Warfield is probably right when he sees them as referring to one and the same thing. The manner of Christ’s daily life was not that of a servant. On the contrary, He lived among His disciples as Master and Lord and claimed their obedience and received their worship. It was not the manner of the earthly life, but the fact of an earthly life, that He was on the earth at all, which was his service (Warfield. 314). And this service was to come and die. And the death for which He came to die was no common death, no mere martyr’s death, no mere holy man’s death. This death was **“a ransom”**—a buying off. It is the public payment of the debts which helplessly sinful men owed to an infinitely holy God. It is a payment in which He will take the place of others. He becomes a substitute to take the place of those who deserved to die in their sins. **“He who knew no sin, became sin for us.”** It is a voluntary payment, willingly and freely given. It is a full payment, a full satisfaction. *Application:* See here the love of Christ for sinners. **“Greater love has no one that this, that one lay down his life for his friends”** (John 15”13). His presence in the world of sinners would be enough to manifest this. His receiving them in life should assure it. But that He should take the sins of sinners, he who knew no sin. That he should hang in judgment in our place. That He would receive the wrath of God we deserved. That He would suffer Himself to be forsaken of God.