

# 'Full of Grace and Truth'

by T. Austin-Sparks

---

*The sermon emphasizes the glory of God manifested in Jesus Christ, in terms of grace and truth, and how it is revealed in the first sign of the Gospel of John.*

**Scripture:** John 1:14, John 1:16

**Topics:** "Transformation in Christ", "Grace and Truth"

---

## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the manifestation of God's glory through Jesus Christ, highlighting that His glory is revealed in grace and truth. He contrasts the intolerable glory associated with the law given through Moses with the life-giving glory found in Christ, who 'tabernacled among us.' The sermon illustrates how the first miracle at Cana symbolizes the transformation from emptiness to fullness, despair to joy, and shame to glory, ultimately pointing to the Church as a community of believers who experience this transformation through faith. Sparks encourages believers to recognize Christ as the source of all fullness and to submit to His lordship for true joy and life.

---

## Transcript

READ: John 2:1-11; 1:14,16,17.

"Manifested his glory," "(and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

Following very closely upon our meditation in chapter 1, we proceed to a further emphasis upon the manifestation of the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

If the first part of the first chapter is occupied with introducing and presenting Christ in the eternity and in the universality of His Person, and that all that is brought to us in the content of His humanity, when - as the word here literally is - "He pitched His tent among us," if that is the great thing and the basic thing, all that follows is the breaking up and applying of that. Christ eternal, Christ universal, brought down into human life, and by reason of pitching His tent among us, bringing us into fellowship with Himself in His eternity and His universality, thus becoming in our own life the all, and in all, from the Father's standpoint. To catch some of the meaning of that will make the greatest difference possible in our experience.

Glory in Terms of Grace and Truth

The Apostle, long years after, writing this Gospel says: "We beheld his glory" (we contemplated, gazed upon His glory). Then he gives some definition of it: "...glory as of the only begotten from the Father," that is parenthetical; and then - "full of grace and truth." "We beheld his glory... full of grace and truth." What was it that "we" of that sentence beheld? What was it that was contemplated, gazed upon by the disciples? It was glory interpreted in terms of grace and truth.

There is a naked glory of God which, breaking in measure upon men from time to time, has rendered them as dead in its presence, a thing of unbearableness to the natural man. It was not so in this case. John later in the Apocalypse saw that glory of the exalted Lord and fell as dead at His feet, but when he - with others here included - beheld, contemplated His Glory, it was not that glory, it was glory interpreted in terms of grace and truth. It was, as we said, the glory of God as through the prism of His humanity. It was the glory of God showing itself through a human life along the lines of grace and truth.

Now you notice a comparison and a contrast is drawn here immediately by the Apostle in this very connection. He says: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ," and that is connected with the tabernacling among us. The tabernacle which enshrined the law which came through Moses in the wilderness was the place of the Shekinah glory, and when the Shekinah glory came, by the coming of the law through Moses, it was a glory which was intolerable. You know what the Apostle says in the letters to the Hebrews and Corinthians, that even the people besought that they might no more hear that sound, so terrible was it, and Moses had to put a veil over his face because they could not look upon him or that glory (Hebrews 12; 2 Corinthians 3). It was intolerable glory which meant destruction, not salvation; which did not mean life but death; even a beast if it touched the mountain would be slain. You see glory can be a terrible thing, and when we pray "Show me Thy glory" we must do so in terms of grace and truth as in the Gospel by John. I mean in the revelation of God by Jesus Christ. It would be death, destruction.

Well, the Shekinah glory coming to the tabernacle of old in the coming of the law, the enshrining of the law, was a glory intolerable. But here is a tabernacle ("He tabernacled among us"), another tabernacle in this wilderness, in which, in Whom, is the Shekinah glory, the same glory, the glory of God, but interpreted in terms of grace and truth; not intolerable, not to destruction, not to judgment, but unto salvation; the same glory. But, oh! how the glory differs in its coming to us through Moses and through Christ!

#### The Church - A Company Who Have Seen

Now, this glory being contemplated was formative of a people; that is the object of it. That is, the revelation of this glory in Christ, in terms of grace and truth, was to constitute disciples, the nucleus of the Church, and to lead on to the whole Body of the Church. "This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and HIS DISCIPLES BELIEVED ON HIM." That was the object of it. It was to constitute discipleship; that is, a company of taught ones. How were they to be taught ones, the instructed ones? Not by receiving a whole list of orders: "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not"; not a creed, a rule of life to be imposed upon them; that is, not just Christianity, but to be brought by the Lord Himself into the inner realities of His own Being, what He is. He, the Tabernacle, with the Shekinah glory enshrined in terms of grace and truth, is going to manifest that glory along the line of living fellowship with Himself in what He is. The Church has ever been, in the thought of God, intended to be a company of taught ones in that sense, those who know along experimental lines what the Lord Jesus is. That is simple. It gets away from a great deal of the complication of ecclesiastical systems and brings us down to personal relationship to the Lord. "...And manifested his glory," it says here. Quite a proper, legitimate, permissible way of paraphrasing that

statement would be to say: He showed forth His grace and truth, for that was His glory. If you see the grace and the truth which the Lord Jesus is you at once apprehend His glory. I mean this; go to Cana of Galilee and be one of the people there, especially one of the responsible people, and get delivered out of your dilemma in this way, and you will be a happy person. You will be full of praise and thankfulness. You will say: "We have had a great deliverance; what would have happened if He had not done it?" That is seeing the glory of Christ, being filled with the glory of Christ, glorifying Christ in your heart, you become full of His glory. But of course it is an insight into Who He is, not just a happy deliverance from a difficult situation.

Follow through "John" with any of those great interventions of the Lord Jesus in times of need, trouble, distress, suffering, sorrow, death; get the issue of it in the heart of the one concerned, and what is the effect? A rejoicing in the Lord, a worshipping of the Lord, an adoration of the Lord; saying, What a wonderful Lord He is! You have beheld His glory. You have got a correspondence in you with something that He is, the greatness of Christ. You have been brought into that by some expression of Him along the line of grace and truth.

### The Great Inclusive "Sign"

We take this first of His signs. Take all the signs of "John" as the showing forth of His glory and all of them were in terms of grace and truth. We have pointed out that out of six words in the Greek which are translated in some versions "miracle," John's favorite word is the one which means sign. There was a hidden meaning. So the miracles of Christ in "John" are signs; they are meant to be teaching factors, instructing instruments conveying some meaning.

So we look at the eight signs of "John" and find that they are manifestations of His glory in terms of grace and truth; and the first one is basic to them all and basic to the whole Gospel. That is, all the rest are gathered up in the first one, and the whole Gospel is gathered up in the first sign. That is why I think it was done outside of Judea. We have pointed out that what was said and done in John's Gospel in the main was said and done in Judea, but you find the first movements in "John" are not in Judea, and two, perhaps three, of these signs were outside of Judea, but they are in a special way related to the Church and are formative of the disciples, and have to do with that realm which is what we call "Church" ground. Perhaps the best way to explain that will be to let it come to us as we go on. But let us repeat that the first sign in Cana of Galilee outside of Judea is a comprehensive one, has in it all the features of John's Gospel, is basic to all the other signs, and carries us right on to the end. Note that phrase that comes up in it - "the ruler of the feast." The man there referred to was not the master of ceremonies, but was simply the man who had charge of the food and drink, and had to taste things to see that they were all right. He tasted the food and wine before the guests partook, to see if they were all right. What he said was a very significant thing. He said: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now" - "You have kept the best wine till the last," that is not the usual order. When you take that with its larger significance you are seeing the end of Christ. The end of Christ is going to be the best; I mean the end of Christ's coming into our experience is going to lift us on to a level where everything is at its best. Supposing that suddenly there disappeared all those elements of clash, discord, every element of lack of fellowship, schism, warfare in all its principle and spirit, lust and passion and corruption, and there spread over this whole realm a state of absolute peace and harmony, with everybody in perfect understanding and friendliness and joy and gladness, and the thought of evil had disappeared, what a wonderful thing that would be. We could put up with this world under those conditions! Well, that is the best wine that is coming. That is the end of Christ; it is that which is kept for the ultimate issue of all that precedes in the work of Christ, and all that is gathered up in the sign

in Cana of Galilee in spiritual principles.

There are all kinds of things in principle gathered up in this miracle and each one of them represents a movement toward that glorious end where there will be a testimony to the transcendence of the Lord Jesus over anything according to nature. The usual thing is so-and-so, but the order is changed with the Lord Jesus. You come out into something unusual at the end with Him, the best wine kept to the last. When you and I get into the glory we shall say: This is the best wine kept till the last.

### The Third Day - Fullness of Divine Testimony

Now briefly, look at this first sign. First of all it says: "And the third day there was a marriage." Is that just a natural observation? Is that merely to give us a movement of time? I do not think so. I think it is in keeping with various other similar references in this Gospel. "Now Jesus, eight days before the passover..." Why that? Why these time movements? Well, briefly here without being too full, we may say that this third day represents a taking up of the contents of the two days before. The third day means that there is a full Testimony; three is the fullness of Divine Testimony, it is the Divine perfection, the Divine fullness; and on the third day this fullness of Divine Testimony in representation comes in through this sign. It takes up what has gone before, brings it to fullness of crystallized expression. What has gone before? Well, the beginning of John is the doctrine of the Person of Christ, Who He is, what He is; that has gone before. Then there is the gathering of disciples by the Lord. The heavenly Testimony to Christ, the Testimony of man to Christ, and now a gathered company. Simon, Philip, Nathanael, Andrew. I should like to stay with each one of them to indicate their significance. You must dwell upon that.

Fulness out of Emptiness. Life out of Death. Joy out of Sorrow. Glory out of Shame.

All that is gathered up and brought into this Testimony of the third day, the Divine fullness. What is the Sign in its elements? Well, there is marriage. You say: An ordinary, perhaps, everyday occurrence. Yes, but this comes within the compass of the Divine economy; this comes under the hand of the Divine sovereignty. Things that happened in these Gospel records did not happen by chance as mere everyday happenings. They came in order of the Divine sovereignty to fulfill a purpose.

You watch that principle; that which looked like an ordinary happening turned out to have been Divinely ordered to serve the eternal purpose. God in sovereignty was ordering these details to His own ends. It was not just by chance or hap that things took place, came to pass in the life of the Lord Jesus. This marriage, one amongst many marriages, had a place in the economy of God. It is not without tremendous significance that the first sign of the Lord Jesus by which He showed forth His glory should be related to a marriage; it is foundational.

If you look on through all the other elements you look on to a day of another marriage, the marriage supper of the Lamb and you will find in the marriage supper of the Lamb all the elements which are in this marriage of Cana. Waterpots, vessels, and there are six of them. These are vessels of humanity, human vessels, in type. Man is here in view, man, six is the number of man; and man as a vessel; but impoverished, knowing nothing of fullness, may have been quite empty or may have been well-nigh empty.

The fact that the Lord had to command that they were to be filled indicates that they did not know fullness. Emptiness! Intended for fullness but not enjoying it! Intended for very large fullness. (Each one of these vessels was capable of containing about twenty gallons of water.) They were not little waterpots, not mere

pitchers or jugs. You notice the details were given. The firkin is the New Testament measure which corresponds to the Old Testament bath, and the Old Testament bath was some eight gallons, perhaps eight-and-a-half.

So you can see about how many gallons each of these vessels held - and there were six of them. Capacity intended for a large measure of fullness but not in it, not knowing it. And if that water speaks of life, then they are not knowing life; it is death. "In him was life." "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it abundantly" - the intention of God. The thought of God for man is fullness to the brim, not only fullness in a very small capacity but in large capacity.

A large capacity being used to the full; life! But here death was truly in possession, if not altogether, where life ought to have been. Further, this whole occasion had become overshadowed by the failure of wine, and knowing that it was the foundational thing of such an occasion, that if the wine failed their feast failed, you may take it that in the hearts of those responsible there was consternation and despair, a cloud was over the whole thing, and a very great deal of anxiety.

I mean that joy must have been quite seriously arrested by reason of this emergency. "These things have I spoken unto you, that... your joy might be full." And then this state of things would undoubtedly bring reproach and shame and disgrace, anything but glory, just the opposite of glory. You see the elements in this. What was the effect of the intervention of the Lord Jesus? It was to change this whole situation. "Fill the waterpots with water." It was an imperative which carried with it that they were to be filled to the brim, and they filled them to the brim.

He changed their emptiness to fullness, their death to life, despair to joy, shame to glory. Life represented by the water; the marriage covenant represented by the covenant of His Blood, the wine; the fullness to the brim: "Of his fulness we all received, and grace upon grace." That is an after statement of the Apostle, it is a retrospective view, he is writing many years after this and he says: "We beheld his glory," "of his fulness have we received." From emptiness to fullness, from shame to glory, from despair to joy.

Fullness! All this was illuminating as to His Person. Life, the covenant in His Blood; the Light as to Who He was; the "joy unspeakable and full of glory." All these are elements of this basic sign. You see everything is gathered up in this, all the other signs are gathered into it. It was intended to be a foundational thing by which these disciples were brought into a spiritual knowledge of Himself. All the great principles of both Testaments are here. If I were to stay with the whole matter of Divine life, which He came that we might have abundantly, the gift of God which is eternal life, you would find it one of the basic things of these signs.

If I were to stay with the precious Blood represented in the cup which we take at the Lord's Table, the wine, the basis of a covenant union with Him when He says: "...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" - a marriage union in His Blood; if I were to stay with God's thought for His own, that they should know fullness, and how God is always anxious to have things filled, and how God has always been anxious to have things filled, and does not believe in things being half filled; we should have a very large volume, but the end would be the same, namely, the universal glory of Christ.

In the end He is going in His Son to fill all things, and the Church is to be the fullness of Him Who filleth all in all. Full waterpots - a humanity eventually full to the brim with the life, joy, glory of the Lord, of what He Himself is. That is all here.

## Governing Factors

As to the REVELATION of Jesus Christ - the Light, well, that is another great theme running all the way through the Scriptures. But do you notice the things which govern all this? Firstly, "Mine hour." "The mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee?" - or, what is there in common between thee and Me; meaning, You are thinking in one realm and I am thinking in another; you are thinking of making this feast a success; you are thinking - good woman that you are in your sensitiveness for people's dilemmas and unfortunate situations - of how we can make things easy and save them from this very awkward situation; you are thinking in this natural realm. I have other thoughts, I am here not to be a guest at a marriage, but in relation to the end for which I have come from heaven. And that phrase: "Mine hour" is always related to the great work of the Lord Jesus in His Cross, by which His universal purpose is to be accomplished. So He puts back the natural suggestion, all that is merely sentimental and earthly, and waits for the witness of the Spirit in His heart to move with the Father in relation to eternal things. "Mine hour"; that governs this thing; that lifts things off that sentimental level of the Lord gracing a wedding with His presence, helping things out socially, and it brings things out into the vastness of an eternal issue. So His Cross is basic to His very first sign. "...manifested forth his glory." "...glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." That is not something which is local, which is a time thing; that is eternal. That governs this feast. So He intended it to be.

The next thing is "the beginning of His signs." This is a significant act which carries with it such a tremendous significance, which has behind it a whole realm of meaning.

## The Link of Faith

When you realize that, you get these eternal elements, the light, life, joy, fullness, you see that spirituality is one of "John's" main features all the way through; that is, that believers, those linked with Christ, are brought into a realm of spiritual fellowship with Him, spiritual understanding, spiritual intelligence. And then faith has its place. "Filled with water." True! but it had not become wine yet. It did not become wine until it was on its way to the master of the feast.

Think of those men taking to the master of the feast water for wine. But Mary had said: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," and their hesitancy had been forestalled, faith had come into operation to draw out wine that was yet water, and on the way it changed, and when it reached the master of the feast it was best wine. There is a challenge of faith. I only wish we could get into the fullness of this; faith's relationship to the fullness of God in Christ for us, apprehended by faith; faith's relationship to what Christ is in fullness, life, joy, glory.

You and I are in the state of this feast when it broke down; by nature we are in that state. There is a cloud over us, there is a sense of need, emptiness, spiritual death, despair. We are conscious that we are in something but we are not getting anywhere; this thing has broken down, it is in a state of suspense. The whole thing wants changing. There needs to be life in the place of death, fullness in the place of emptiness, joy in the place of despair, glory in the place of shame.

Are we not there by nature? Is that not our place? Yes, this broken down marriage feast is just a good picture of our state; those waterpots, before the word of the Lord Jesus came to them, represent our condition. The general atmosphere of this kind of dilemma is the state of our lives until the Lord comes in in relation to His Christ. "Mine hour"; and when we see what He is, God's fullness for our emptiness, God's joy for our joylessness, God's life for our death, God's hope for our despair; it is all what Christ is.

Not something He is going to give us, it is Himself. "(...We beheld his glory...) full of grace and truth." "...of his fulness we all received, and grace upon grace." And then the link between all is the obedience of faith. It is faith rising up and acting in apprehending Christ, taking Christ, appropriating Christ, subjecting our whole life to Christ. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it"; making Christ the Master of the feast. That is why I said this man was not the master of ceremonies.

The Lord Jesus was the Master of Ceremonies; the other man was only tasting things. When the Lord Jesus is the Master all things are subject to Him. This is the issue. The trouble which holds things up very often is that we still have a way of our own, and thoughts of our own. Those men might have stopped and said: You are going to get us into a fine mess telling us to take water to the ruler of the feast. We might argue and say: What is the good? I do not see the good of this, I do not see how this is going to work out.

We are not subject to Christ. We have to come down to the place where our wills, our likes, our preferences, our sympathies and antipathies, all of ourselves must go and He has to be LORD, and when He is Lord and we have come under the impact of His Cross the issue will be this fullness, joy, glory, life.

I do trust that we shall grasp one thing, whether we are able to grasp the hidden significance or not - Christ everything. He is everything, He can be everything to us, changing things as He changed things here from what they were not to what they ought to have been. He can make that change for us.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/full-of-grace-and-truth/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**