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Sermon Notes

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## **Christ Rejoices Over Divine Sovereignty**

**Matthew 11:25-30**

### **I. Earth Out of Step with Heaven**

- The composer was in despair... 57 years old, drifting in life, poverty stricken, struggling to survive in London, away from his homeland, near the end of his rope
- Many days he went without food... he was depressed and near the end of his rope
- One night in 1741 he wandered the empty streets of London... it was almost dawn when he returned to his shabby room
- On the table was a thick envelope from Charles Jennings, the man who wrote his librettos. As he read them, he found them covered with Scripture texts
- Wearily, he tossed the pages aside and fell into bed... but he could not sleep; the words flowed again into his mind

*Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God ... The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light ... For unto us a Child is born ... Glory to God in the highest ... Hallelujah! Hallelujah!*

- Too stirred to sleep, he got up and went to his piano. The music flowed from his heart-rich, majestic, triumphant. He began to write. Night and day for three weeks, he wrote feverishly. He forgot sleep, food, rest. He refused to see anyone. At last, on the day the work was finished, one friend managed to gain entrance.
- The composer was at his piano, sheets of music strewn around him, tears streaming down his face. "I do believe I have seen all of Heaven before me, and the great God Himself," he exclaimed.
- Millions of people have been able to believe that. The first audience to hear the composition -- in Dublin in 1742 --gave it the greatest ovation in the city's history. Weeks later, London heard it for the first time, and again it was a triumph. The King was so impressed during the Hallelujah Chorus that he rose to his feet -- a custom that still prevails.

Newman Flower said, "Considering the immensity of the work, and the short time involved in putting it to paper, it will remain, perhaps forever, the greatest feat in the whole history of musical composition."

The centerpiece of Handel's Messiah is the "Hallelujah Chorus", and the focus of that piece is Revelation 19 & 11:

***Revelation 19:6 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.***

***Revelation 11:15 "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."***

## B. Human Beings Struggle Hard Against the Doctrine of God's Sovereignty

### 1. Charles Spurgeon's Football

"There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought more earnestly to contend than the doctrine of their Master over all creation—the Kingship of God over all the works of His own hands—the Throne of God and His right to sit upon that Throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth, and we proclaim an *enthroned* God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as *He* thinks well, without consulting them in the matter; then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His throne is not the God they love. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust."

### 2. Jonathan Edwards Change

"From my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty....It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God.... And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, in respect to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, from that day to this; so that I scarce ever have found so much as the rising of an objection against it, in the most absolute sense.... I have often since had not only a conviction but a delightful conviction. The doctrine has often appeared exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. But my first conviction was not so." [quoted in Piper, Desiring God, p. 40]

## C. Christ Delights in God's Sovereignty Too!

***"I praise you Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth...!"***

## II. Overview: Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

- A. Christ Denounces Unrepentant Cities (vs. 20-24)
- B. Christ Praises God for Sovereignty (vs. 25-27)
- C. Christ Invites All Burdened Sinners to Come to Him (vs. 28-30)

Start and finish of this text: human responsibility

Center of this text: Divine sovereignty

Perfect blending together in text... no controversy, no confusion, no cacophany

- D. Human Responsibility
  - 1. Korazin and Bethsaida responsible for their unrepentance
  - 2. Jesus appeals to all sinners to come
- E. Divine Sovereignty

### 1. Divine Power: Christ's Miracles

***Matthew 11:20 Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.***

### 2. Divine Perception: Supernatural Knowledge of Gentile Cities

***vs. 21 If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.***

***vs. 23 If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.***

### 3. Divine Prerogative: NOT to Do Miracles There

Christ was in Tyre and Sidon, and chose not to do those same miracles there. This was His choice, His prerogative, and He exercised it.

### 4. Divine Praise: Christ Praises Father for Sovereignty

***vs. 25 "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.***

### 5. Divine Position: Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth

**vs. 25 "Father, Lord of heaven and earth..."**

6. Divine Preference: Concealing to Some, Revealing to Others

**vs. 25 "I praise you... because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."**

7. Divine Pleasure: All Things Done According to God's Pleasure

**vs. 26 "Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."**

8. Divine Presentation: Father Commits the Universe to the Son

**vs. 27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father."**

9. Divine Privacy: No One Knows the Father or the Son

**vs. 27 "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son..."**

10. Divine Privilege: The Son Chooses to Reveal the Father to Some

**vs. 27 "...no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."**

### III. Christ Praises His Sovereign Father (vs. 25-26)

#### 4. Divine Praise: Christ Praises Father for Sovereignty

**vs. 25 At that time, Jesus answered and said "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."**

##### 1. Timing and Cause

a. "At that time"... connects with what preceded

b. Greek: "answered and said"

i) only KJV and NKJV adequately bring out "answered"

ii) Jesus was "responding" to input

- iii) what input?? The rebellion of Korazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum
  - c. Jesus is rejoicing in the face of rebellion and unrepentance
- 2. Heaven and Earth are out of Step
  - a. what causes earth to rejoice causes heaven to weep
  - b. what causes heaven to exult, rejoice, and praise causes us to argue, reject, become irritable
- 3. Christ is Praising His Father... specifically for His sovereignty!!!
  - a. could have chosen at that moment to praise God for **other things**
    - i) God's patience in not destroying Korazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum yet
    - ii) God's mercy and grace in giving those cities such miracles
    - iii) God's love in causing the sun to rise and the rain to fall despite their wickedness
    - iv) God's mercy to those who DID repent in other places
  - b. could have chosen at that moment to **plead** with God for Korazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum
  - c. could have chosen to **call down fire** from God upon Korazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum
- 4. Instead, Christ rejoices in His Spirit that His Father rules over all things, even rebellious cities like Korazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum

We'll see more clearly in a moment how Christ praises his Father for sovereignty in salvation even over those who do NOT repent!

## 5. Divine Position: Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth

*vs. 25 "Father, Lord of heaven and earth..."*

- 1. Two Sovereign Titles for God
- 2. Second one first: Lord of Heaven and Earth
  - a. pagan view of gods
    - i) Palestine made up of small countries like Balkans

Illus. Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia

Back then: Moab, Ammon, Syria, Edom... plus Israel and Judah

ii) localized tribal deities

Greek gods... Poseidon, god of the deep; Hades the god of the underworld; Mars, the god of war

Jurisdictions over functions.

Some gods were national gods

e.g. Moab had detestable god Chemosh

Chemosh totally identified with Moabites... What the people of Moab needed, Chemosh provided:

***Judges 11:24 Will you not take what your god Chemosh gives you? Likewise, whatever the LORD our God has given us, we will possess.***

When the Moabites went out to fight, Chemosh went with them

***Numbers 21:29 Woe to you, O Moab! You are destroyed, O people of Chemosh! He has given up his sons as fugitives and his daughters as captives to Sihon king of the Amorites.***

Chemosh would never hurt his people too much because if they were destroyed, he would be too

Case in point... Moab is gone, and where is Chemosh now??

b. Biblical picture of God radically different

***1 Kings 20:28 The man of God came up and told the king of Israel, "This is what the LORD says: 'Because the Arameans think the LORD is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the LORD.'"***

***Jeremiah 23:23-24 "Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD, "and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.***

***Isaiah 6:3 "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."***

i) God created all heaven and earth

ii) God rules over all heaven and earth

iii) God rules over individual nations, even Gentile ones

Most of OT prophets have statements of God's judgment on pagan nations. God raises one nation up, lowers another... God watches all they do and judges them

iv) God chose Israel out of those nations... but His existence is not dependent on their existence

c. Christ is rejoicing in the sovereign rulership of His Father over all the earth... including Capernaum, Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom

He rules over them and can do whatever He wants with them without consulting them!!!

This title is the very thing that causes us to stumble... we don't want God to rule over heaven or earth, and especially not over us!! We want to be sovereign in our world and in our lives

But Christ DELIGHTED in His Father's sovereign rule over heaven and earth... His Father rules over Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum; if He wants them to live, they will live; His Father rules over Tyre and Sidon... if He wants Christ to do miracles there and for them to repent in sackcloth and ashes, it will happen

It is this very authority that will guarantee the success of the gospel

***Matthew 28:18-19 "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me... Therefore go and make disciples of all nations!!"***

If God were not Lord of heaven and earth, the gospel could not conquer this world!! But it will!!

3. First title: Father

- a. also a title of authority
- b. however, also a title of endearment, of relationship, of love
- c. God's sovereign rule is a LOVING RELATIONAL rule
- d. Christ delights in His love relationship with His Father... and He delights also in His Father's powerful rule over all the earth

## **6. Divine Preference: Concealing to Some, Revealing to Others**

***vs. 25 "I praise you... because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."***

1. God Can Will to Deal Differently with Some and Others

- a. the Lord of Heaven and Earth can do what He wants with His domain

- b. this is the essence of sovereignty
- c. if He wants to give the gospel “to the Jew first, then to the Gentile” He can do that
- d. if He wants to lavish Christ’s miracles on Capernaum, and do nothing in Sidon, He can do that

Christ embraces sovereignty as a gem, a delight, a joy... His Father conceals to some, His Father reveals to others. And Christ rejoices in whatever His Father decides to do!!

## 2. Christ Praises God for Concealing

**vs. 25 *"I praise you... because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned"***

- a. shocking to us!! We think God does nothing but reveal, open, demonstrate Himself, all while He implores, entices, and pleads with ALL sinners to come in
  - b. why would He EVER conceal
  - c. “these things” = gospel truths... the truth of the Kingdom of Heaven
  - d. “wise and learned” = arrogant, self-sufficient men
- E.g. Wise philosophers in Greece like Plato... they looked and looked, but they never found God
  - Mighty potentates like Caesar, world conquerors like Alexander, brilliant scientists like Charles Darwin
  - Arrogant religionists like the Scribes and Pharisees
  - Through their achievements, their learning, their earth-searching they never found God

Why? Because God was concealing these things from them!!

***1 Corinthians 1:20-21 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.***

God delights to conceal Himself from arrogant man:

***Isaiah 45:15 Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel.***

Man will never find Him if He does not reveal Himself... and God does not always choose to reveal Himself

Christ praises God for concealing Himself!!

### 3. Christ Praises God for Revealing

**vs. 25** ***"I praise you... because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."***

- a. it delights Christ that His Father conceals Himself
- b. it delights Christ that His Father reveal Himself
- c. to whom?? To "little children"

**Matthew 18:3-4** ***And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."***

**Matthew 5:3** ***"Blessed are the spiritual beggars, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."***

**Matthew 23:12** ***For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.***

**James 4:6** ***"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."***

This is a major, consistent theme in Scripture

- 1) God cannot be found if He does not want to be found. He is a God who hides Himself!
- 2) God actively hides Himself from the wise and learned, who think they can come to God in their own wisdom and power. Christ is delighted about this!!
- 3) God actively reveals Himself to little children... to those who humble themselves enough to ask Him to reveal Himself.

Who are the "little children" God reveals these things to?

- 1) Humble Jews, outcasts and the lowly broken-hearted sinners
- 2) Gentiles who know nothing and who will be the humble in the land, like Cornelius

## **7. Divine Pleasure: All Things Done According to God's Pleasure**

**vs. 26** ***"Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."***

1. What Christ Delights in God Delights in!!
  - a. totally harmony between Father and Son

- b. Father is delighted to conceal and reveal
  - c. Son is delighted in whatever the Father delights in
2. What was God's pleasure?? God is PLEASED to **conceal** and to **reveal**
  3. God constantly does what pleases Him

***Psalm 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.***

- a. God does not rule grudgingly or out of necessity
- b. God is not compelled or forced
- c. God rules according to all that pleases Him
- d. God rules in heaven and on earth according to His pleasure

***Psalm 135:6 The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.***

- e. Relationship between delight and will... what God delights in, He chooses
4. What God delights in can be shocking to us

Delighted to make Israel prosper if they obey, delighted also to destroy them if they don't:

***Deuteronomy 28:63 "It shall come about that as the LORD delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it.***

Delighted in making Christ suffer:

***[NASB/NIV] Isaiah 53:10 But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, and cause Him to suffer; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.***

And God delights in concealing from the wise and learned and revealing to little children

In all three cases, God does not delight in the suffering and condemnation of Israel, of the wise and learned, or even in His own Son at the cross... but He is delighted in the holiness of the universe that will result from the outworking of His perfect plan.

5. What God delights in means eternal salvation for His elect

***Ephesians 1:5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—***

***Philippians 2:13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.***

#### IV. Applications

##### 1. Be humbled

This doctrine has the powerful work of humbling the human soul. We recognize that we are not the ones calling the shots, sovereignly determining anything when it comes to knowing God. We cannot choose a greater revelation than what He has chosen to give us. He is a King and rules like a King. Spurn human wisdom which means nothing. Be one of those “little children” to whom God reveals these things.

##### 2. Repent and Live in the Kingdom

##### 3. Delight in God’s sovereignty as much as Christ does

Don’t resist, don’t rebel, don’t turn away from the plain meaning of the text. Rather, Praise your Father, who is Lord of heaven and earth, that He rules like a King. Be delighted in the Good News of the Kingdom of God!!

##### 4. Come to Christ

If you have never trusted Christ, I end this morning the way Christ did

***“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”***