

# The Worth of Jesus

by Dick Brogden

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*Jesus is worthy of glory, and his worth is revealed through the worship of every tongue, the spread of the gospel, and the suffering of his people.*

**Duration:** 32:24

**Scripture:** John 12:23

**Topics:** "Jesus"

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## Description

In this sermon transcript, Dimitri, a prisoner, defies his jailers by singing praises to Jesus for 17 years. Despite facing ridicule, abuse, and threats, Dimitri remains steadfast in his faith. The church he forms in his home grows despite persecution, leading to him and his family losing their jobs and facing expulsion from school. However, Dimitri refuses to give in and continues to sing his heart song every morning. Through a vision from God, he finds strength to resist signing a false confession and remains faithful to his beliefs.

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## Transcript

If you have your Bibles, would you take them and turn to John chapter 12? I'm going to read from verse 23 through verse 28. John chapter 12, verse 23 through 28. But Jesus answered them saying, the hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it.

And he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also.

If anyone serves me, him my father will honor. Now my soul is trouble, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this purpose, I came to this hour.

Father, glorify your name. It can be somewhat pompous to claim to live dead. If the message is I am more consecrated than you, I am more sanctified than my brother, I am more adventurous or sacrificial or intelligent or devoted or daring, I am greater, purer, wiser than my sister or my colleague, then the point has been missed.

And we who espouse it live very much in delusion and darkness. But if the heart song is Jesus, Jesus is worthy of glory. Jesus is worthy of living.

Jesus is worthy of dying. If the message is Jesus, your name is great. Jesus, your glory is supreme.

Jesus, the nations are yet rebellious. Jesus, the ethnic are still lost. Jesus, my strength is so pitiful.

Jesus, if you do not live and speak and touch and rise through me, then Jesus, the giants are too strong and I am very much a grasshopper. Jesus, kill that within me which hinders you. Quench that within me that envies your unique glory.

Crucify the flesh in me that longs and strives to be known. Rise the woman's conquering seed. Bruise in us the serpent's head.

Jesus, life us with resurrection power. Illumine our minds, empower our speech. Make us dead to sin, dead to flesh, dead to fear, dead to devils, and make us alive to Jesus and his worth.

If that is the message, and if we, like Richard Baxter, preach as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men, then we very well might be onto something. Because Jesus is worthy of glory. And Jesus is worthy of living.

And Jesus is worthy of dying. I'd like us to look at those together tonight. Verse 23, the hour has come that the son of man should be glorified.

Jesus is worthy of glory by you, by me, and by every people. C.S. Lewis points out in his work, *The Four Loves*, that when a friend dies, those that remain have less of each other and not more. Take three close friends, lifelong soulmates, one of them passes away.

The two remaining might think that they have more time for each other, that their relationship will be fuller, and they will have more of each other, but the converse is true. For the missing friend draws out of each of them what they cannot mine for themselves. When the body is missing a member, all are disadvantaged.

And Jesus has other sheep that are not of our fold, not of our ilk, not of our culture, not of our color, not of our kind. In order to know and worship Jesus better, we need other perspectives. Others illustrate and illuminate parts of Jesus that I am blind to.

This is a vital aspect of mission, so often misunderstood. We don't have the fullness of Jesus until the fullness of the nations have him. And as long as there are unreached peoples, the bride is still disfigured.

And every time a new believer joins the fold, a new perspective of God is released into the Christian corpus. Think of it. Every time an unreached people group is reached, a massive, new, fresh revelation of God's glory is unleashed and revealed in the world.

And the progression of the gospel across the peoples is the progressive unveiling of majestic God to me. I benefit from the spread of the gospel. I am enriched when the kingdom is advanced.

Jesus is revealed to me when he is embraced by others. And the further the gospel spreads, the greater our God is known. And as the nations are reached, so the glory of God is unleashed.

And it is in the worship of every tongue that Jesus is further revealed to us. And so missions becomes heavenly hedonistic. For the greater the spread of God's glory, the more he is revealed to my limited perspective and the pure my worship.

The fuller our corporate praise, the greater his glory. Jesus is worthy of the glory of all nations, the growth of the body of Christ is my growth in the knowledge of God. And as the kingdom expands, my heart and my mind are lifted out of the parochial mud and I ascend the vistas of a unified, glorified city of God.

The joy of the nations in worship is my personal joy. For as the nations come to Jesus, Jesus comes to me. I therefore must be pro-peoples reached with the gospel because as the nations are reached by Jesus, he reaches further into me.

And this is why multinational teams are a must. LiveDead has three basic components. We will reach unreached people groups and plant churches amongst them through multinational teams.

And where would we be without the Germans and the Africans? And when the Filipino are gone, we are missing the Asian flavor and missing the Asians, we are missing a part of God. And this is why we embrace the Europeans and the Arabs and the Latinos, not for their sake alone, but for ours. Without them, we don't have the fullness of God.

Without them, Jesus doesn't have fully orbs human worship and Jesus is worthy of all glory. The absent worship of the Arabs will not be tolerated by God and it must not be tolerated by us. Jesus is worthy of the glory from Saudi.

Jesus is worthy of glory from Syria. Jesus is worthy of glory from Libya. Jesus is worthy of glory from Iraq and Qatar and Oman and Yemen.

Jesus is worthy of glory from the West Bank. If Jesus was born in Bethlehem and wise men purposely bowed in worship, do you think that Muslims in this now Arab city should not bend their knees and lift their hands in praise? The worship ascending to the eternal throne from the Arab world is pitifully small and the time has come that the son of man must be glorified because Jesus is worthy of glorious worship from the Arabs. Not only is Jesus worthy of glory, Jesus is worthy of living.

Verse 25, he who loves his life will lose it and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. You are going to die, all men do. Is your death worth living for? So live your life to come so instructed that the fear of death can never enter your heart.

When it comes your time to die, be not like those whose hearts are filled with the fear of death so that when their time comes, they weep and pray for a little more time to live their lives over again in a different way. Sing your death song and die like a hero going home. All men perish, you are going to die.

No denomination is vibrant forever. The assemblies of God is going to die. No man is intrinsically eternal.

We daily progress towards death. We all, should Jesus tarry, are going to die and upon your death, what will it be said that you lived for? Men think of the world, Tozer wrote, not as a battleground, but a playground. We are not here to fight, we are here to frolic.

We are not in a foreign land, we are at home. We are not getting ready to live, we are already living and the best we can do is rid ourselves of our inhibitions and our frustrations and live life to the full. This is the

blatant poppycock philosophy of the world and the tacit reality of millions in the church who think that they live, but because they live unto themselves are only dying.

When the record of history is released and when your life is reviewed before the all seeing judge, what will it show that your life stood for and to what end did you die? To live dead means that your life was lived and your death given as extravagant worship in all of its components to a worthy Jesus. They called him the angel in Ebony, we know him as Samuel Morris. As a child, he would speak in Sunday schools and the spirit would fall.

He'd speak in churches and revival would come. He was sent to Taylor University in Indiana. So many funds came in to help him.

It was enough to buy a new campus and the school relocated to Upland, Indiana where it is today. News of revival spread whenever he preached. People from far and near would come to see him.

This 21 year old, simple, uneducated child always kept his simple focus on Jesus. He got sick and died May 1893 when he was only 21 years old. Samuel was an African born in the Ivory Coast, the son of a prince.

He was given to neighborhood tribes as security to keep the peace. This happened several times, included torture. One day he was strapped to a log, whipped to a pulp, honey was poured in his mouth and he was left to die to be eaten by ants.

He saw a light and a voice came to him telling him to run. He was able to free himself and from his bonds escaped into the jungle. He lived on fruits and berries and walked through the jungle for weeks, made his way to Liberia.

He attended a Methodist church in service and he heard a missionary speak on Paul, the Damascus road experience. And little Samuel Morris said, that's what happened to me. He gave his heart to Jesus.

Little Samuel was ravenous, hungry for the Lord. One night he was filled in the Holy Spirit in that little bunkhouse. He woke everyone up by shouting.

They thought he was crazy. He asked the missionaries about the Holy Spirit. This was 1882.

They could not answer his questions. One missionary by the name of Miss Knowles had heard about a man in New York named Merritt, Stephen Merritt, a pastor. And she said, I think you can find more about the Holy Spirit from Stephen Merritt.

So little Samuel Morris went down to the quay and began to beg this captain of a ship to take him to New York city. He wouldn't take him, he's just a little kid. He begged and begged and begged.

Finally, the captain gave him passage. He was beaten up by a Malaysian Muslim giant who was overseeing this ship. He was treated badly by the crew until they all got deathly sick.

And little Samuel Morris prayed for them. They were healed in Jesus' name. They came to the Lord, including the captain and that big Malaysian giant.

They landed in New York. He got off the boat. He went to the first man he saw who happened to be drunk.

And he asked him, where can I find Stephen Merritt? The drunk happened to know him. Took him through New York city, took him to Pastor Merritt. Samuel walked up to him.

He said, I am Samuel Morris. I have come from Africa to talk with you about the Holy Spirit. The pastor said, wait a minute, turned his back to run an errand.

And when he came back, 17 grown men were on their knees crying, repenting of their sin because of the preaching of little Samuel. Pastor Merritt took Samuel into his home, put him up in the bishop's room. And the next day took him to a funeral.

Two other pastors came along and it was obvious that they did not want that little black boy in the carriage with them. Pastor Stephen tried to cover the awkwardness by pointing out all the sites of New York city. All of a sudden Samuel interrupted Pastor Stephen.

Have you ever prayed in a carriage? He asked. No one had. We will pray, said the lad.

And Mr. Merritt stopped the horses and knelt. And Sammy talked to God. And this is what he said.

Father, I wanted to see Stephen Merritt so I could talk to him about the Holy Ghost. He shows me the harbor, the churches, the banks and other large buildings, but says nothing to me about this spirit I want to know more about. Fill him with thyself so that he will not think or talk or write or preach about anything else.

Let's not talk of buildings and banks and harbors and monuments. Let's not waste our time talking about how much money we've given to missions. Let's not waste God's time showing off the edifices and projects of men.

Let's not waste our lives existing just so that our children can exist after us. Let's stop the carriage of an empty life and let's get down on our knees and let us ask the Father for what is our right? More of Jesus, more of the Holy Spirit, more of the Father, because Jesus is worthy of our living. Jesus is worthy of our desire.

We all know the pull of addiction. I awake and email seduces me. My computer embraces me and will not let me go.

There is a compulsion in my being to awake and rush into the arms of my betrayer. I live for tasks. I live to be important.

I live to be the answer. I live to be the deliverer. I live to be included.

I live to be essential. I live to be dependent on. Why do I not thus desire Jesus? In Luke 22, 15, Jesus says, "With fervent desire I have desired "to eat this meal with you." And the Greek word is epithumia.

It means passionate, longing, lust, desire. It is not that our desires are too strong, says Eli Gutro. They are too weak.

They are weak for they are so easily satisfied by what is temporal and by what is wicked. But where is the raging desire? Where is the epithumia? Where is our sanctified lust for him? Why do I not awake with a desire for Jesus? Why do I not turn from my slumber, shaking in eagerness to be with the Savior? Why do I not rush to my abiding place, rush into the arms and the presence of Jesus? Is Jesus not worthy of my

life? Is Jesus not worthy of my affection? Is Jesus not worthy of our desire? If I do not desire Jesus, how do I expect my Muslim neighbor to hunger for him? If Jesus is not my desire, why should a wayward Arab world forsake her abusive lovers for him? If Jesus is not the desire of his church, how can we possibly believe that he will be the desire of all nations? Stop the carriage. Let us not talk of numbers.

Let us not talk of structures or the strategies of man. Let us not talk of programs. Let us not talk of methods.

Let us not talk of others. Let us most certainly cease to talk so endlessly about ourselves. Let us hate what we have been deluded into calling life and let us live a life that desires him.

Oh, for men and women sick of pretension and show. Oh, for sons and daughters disgusted by shallowness and self-promotion. Oh, for churches and districts devastated at the lostness of man, willing to pay any price, willing to live any life for the worth of Jesus.

God doesn't need bribes. How dare we think that the Lord of heaven can be bought? How dare we think that sin and immorality can be atoned for by an annual missions project? How dare we think that missions giving or going relieves us of the responsibility of a crucified life? How dare we parade ourselves and trample on the blood of Jesus and preen and perform on platforms such as these and then think that God's disgust is assuaged and his wrath appeased by the size of our pledge? God does not want your money, not if it is a putrid and laughable effort to cover sin. He wants your life.

He wants it all. And Jesus is worthy of our living. Jesus is worthy of glory.

And Jesus is worthy of our living. And Jesus is worthy of our dying. Verse 26, if anyone serves me, let him follow me to the cross.

And where I am, the cross, there my servant will be also. If anyone serves me, him my father will honor. Now my soul is troubled and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.

Save me from the cross. But for this purpose, the cross, I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.

Hebrews tells us that Christ's body was the veil. The tearing apart of incarnate God on the cross establishes the means for the unleashed presence of God among the nations. The torn veil connected forever the torn flesh of Jesus and the spirit unleashed on the world.

The nations must have their Calvary before they have their Pentecost, said Samuel Zwemer. As must we. Jesus is worthy of our dying.

For when our God-dwelt bodies are poured out like drink offerings, when our God-dwelt temples are torn apart, the fragrance of Jesus is re-released into the world. Something in suffering releases the tangible presence of Jesus. Jesus is worthy of suffering.

Jesus is worthy of death. Suffering elevates and elucidates the realization of his worth. It sounds repetitive, it's actually ascending.

Suffering releases the presence of Jesus. Suffering establishes his worth. And because a fallen world is in rebellion, a worthy Jesus is persecuted further.

And further persecution releases further fragrance and further worth. And the more the body of Christ suffers, the more Jesus is lifted up. Ergo, Jesus is worthy of our suffering over and over and over and over again.

Suffering is not one and done. We are not to have a traumatic experience, get our persecution badge, write a book and join the lecture circuit. No, the worth of Jesus calls us to a lifestyle of suffering.

We are invited into a fellowship. And what shall we say then when we enter suffering and death? Father, save us from this trial? No, but for this purpose, we have come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name.

Nick Ripken in his new book, *The Insanity of God, I Encourage You to Buy It*, tells the story of Dimitri. Dimitri started a church in the Soviet era, reading and singing to his children. The neighbors heard and came to join him in the house and security accosted him.

They said, Dimitri, you've started a church. How can you say that? He argued. All we're doing is reading and talking about the Bible, singing, praying, and sometimes sharing what money we have to help out a poor neighbor.

How can you call that a church? We don't care what you call it, they said. It looks like a church to us. And if you don't stop it, bad things are going to happen to you.

The church grew to 50 people in that little home. Dimitri was fired from his job. His wife was fired from her job.

Their kids were expelled from school. Little things like that, Dimitri called them. The church grew to 75 villagers, cheek to cheek, crammed into that home, standing around the windows outside.

Officials stormed in one day, threw Dimitri up against the wall and rhythmically began to slap him across his face. We warned you and warned you that if you do not stop, this is the least of what will happen. One old grandmother in that congregation accosted security and wagged her little finger in their face.

She said, you have laid your hands on a man of God and you will not survive. That was on Tuesday. That Thursday, the official dropped dead of a heart attack.

And the next meeting in the house church had 150 people. The authorities could not let this happen. So Dimitri went to jail for 17 years.

For 17 years in prison, every morning at daybreak, Dimitri would stand at attention by his bed. And as was his custom, he would face the East and he'd raise his arms in praise to God. And then he would sing a heart song to Jesus.

Yes, the reaction of the other prisoners was predictable. Laughter, cursing, jeers, bang metal cups on the iron bars to shut them up. They threw food at him, they threw human waste.

But for 17 years, every sunrise, standing at attention with his hands raised, Dimitri would sing his heart out to Jesus. He'd forge in the prison for scraps of paper with charcoal or a stubby pencil. He'd write out any verse he could remember, any character of God.

And defiantly, he would stick it up on the pillar within his Siberian prison room. Guards would find it, tear it down and beat him. He would write and post the word of God again, full of scripture, full of praise.

Security worked at him day after day after day. Finally, they got to him because they told him that his wife was murdered and his children taken by the state. You win, he admitted to the guards.

I'll sign any confession you want. They arranged the next morning for him to sign a confession. But that night, God appeared to him in his despair and let him see a vision of his wife and children praying for him.

And he physically heard their voices as they prayed. So when they came the next morning with his confession, he refused to sign it. Every morning, he continued to sing his heart song.

One day, he found a whole sheet of paper and a pencil by it. He rushed back to his cell. I know it was probably foolish, he said, but I couldn't help myself.

I filled both sides of the paper with as much of the Bible as I could. I reached up and stuck that entire sheet of paper on that wet concrete pillar. Then I stood and I looked at it.

And to me, it seemed like the greatest offering that I could give Jesus from my prison cell. Of course, my jailer saw it. I was beaten, I was punished, and I was threatened with execution.

They dragged Dimitri from his cell. As he was hauled down the corridor, the strangest thing happened. Before he reached the door leading to the courtyard where they were going to shoot him, 1,500 hardened criminals leaped to their feet, stood at attention by their beds, turned to the east, lifted up their hands, and began to sing Dimitri's song.

And Dimitri said it sounded like the most beautiful choir in all of human history. 1,500 criminals praising Jesus, the song that they had heard for 17 years. Dimitri's jailers released hold of him in horror.

They stepped back from him and they said, who are you? And Dimitri straightened his back and stood as tall and proud as he could. I am a son of the living God and Jesus is his name. Dimitri had sung for 17 years that Jesus was worth dying for.

These last six months in the Arab world have not been easy. Mark mentioned at lunch that we've had a friend imprisoned in Jordan. We have colleagues that have been abused in Yemen.

Young men that I have discipled have been tortured in the Sudan. A brother in the work was martyred in Libya. Christians have been murdered in Egypt and all of them, every one of them would say if they were standing here tonight that Jesus is worth dying for.

It will not be my death that reaches the Arab world. It will be yours. It will be ours.

Because only a martyred church will exhibit enough of Christ's worth to see the Arabs rise from the dead. John Woolman, more than Wilberforce, more than Lincoln, this unheralded saint did more to abolish slavery than any other human. 100 years before the American Civil War, he turned the Quakers against slavery and to their own cost and economic hurt, they released their slaves and the wheels of justice were set in motion to slowly grind ever fine.

Woolman wrote this in his journal. In a time of sickness, a little more than two and a half years ago, I was brought so near the gates of death that I forgot my name. In that state, I remained several hours.

I then heard a soft melodious voice, more pure and harmonious than any I have heard in my years before. I believed it was a voice of an angel that spoke to other angels and the words were, John Woolman is

dead. As I lay still for a time, I at length felt a divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak and then I said, I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And then I perceived there was joy in heaven over one sinner who had repented and that the language, John Woolman is dead, meant no more than the death of my own will.

Jesus is worthy of glory from every nation. Jesus is worthy of living of all of our desire. And Jesus is worthy of dying and there is great joy in heaven when we come to the end of our own will.

It is a sweet heavenly voice that bids us die and then lets us know that we are dead. Samuel Zwemer landed in Cairo, the heart of the Arab world in September 2012, excuse me, September 1912, a hundred years ago to the month before the start of Live Dead Cairo. What we're trying to do is not new.

Many have walked this path before us. Many have lived a cruciform life. This district has commissioned many, many pioneers.

And Zwemer just put it succinctly this way for us tonight. Does it really matter how many die or how much money is spent opening closed doors if we really believe that missions are warfare and the King's glory is at stake? Now, our hearts are troubled and what shall we say? Father, save us from this hour. But for this purpose, we have come to this hour.

Father, glorify thy name. Would you close your eyes? Jesus, would you help us? To live lives that show you are worthy of glory and you are worthy of living and you are worthy of dying in Jesus name.

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