

Are You Worthy of Jesus

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the importance of walking worthy of God by understanding and valuing His worth above all else. It delves into the concept of worthiness in relation to God, the kingdom, and one's calling, highlighting the need for a passionate preference for God's worth. The sermon also stresses the necessity of divine intervention in education to instill a deep appreciation for God's worth and the importance of being a worshiping community to express this preference for God's supreme value.

Scripture: Revelation 3:4, Matthew 10:37, Ephesians 4:1, Philippians 1:27, Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 2 Thessalonians 1:5, Luke 14:26, Matthew 22:1, Acts 26:20

Topics: "Worthy Walk", "Valuing God's Worth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of walking worthy of God by understanding and valuing His worth above all else. It delves into the concept of worthiness in relation to God, the kingdom, and one's calling, highlighting the need for a passionate preference for God's worth. The sermon also stresses the necessity of divine intervention in education to instill a deep appreciation for God's worth and the importance of being a worshiping community to express this preference for God's supreme value.

Transcript

It was good to spend 13 months in Corryton, Tennessee. It was good to have a big, wide front porch, looking out on a hay field, which we saw harvested, whatever you call the word you do with hay, twice as they baled them into round bales, coming out the back of that little machine. It was good to be with cousins, one a little way this way and one a quarter of a mile that way.

It was good to be at Christ Church, 60 folks on the weekend, loving Talitha to death and making our year great. And it is better to be back, worshiping in our little pew right over there on Sunday, and loving every minute of it. And if you say, doesn't it feel strange to be sitting there and not here? The answer is no, strange would not be the right word.

It feels wonderful. I love what's happening in this room, connecting with the living God on Sunday morning, such that how could you not be happy in his presence as such remarkable worship happens. And then to hear you sing again tonight, I said, that's it.

That's it. I don't care where I sit if that's happening. That is just so beautiful.

And I love teaching 16 seminary guys the Greek exegesis of Philippians. First class yesterday, first time I've done this in, what, 35 years to dig in with a class like that, and I just hope they enjoy it as much as I do, because I'm loving it already. And I love being the chancellor so that I can wave the little flag wherever I go.

This is a great school. Come on, get on board with this, and let's make it happen for a few hundred years if Jesus tarries. And I love working full time with desiring God who succumbs me over to Bethlehem College and Seminary.

So my life is very full. I have a full-time job right now, and I love every minute of it. I love being married to Noel in a big, empty house.

Good night. We have not been in a situation like this since she was 24 years old, which is 42 years ago. It feels amazing that all of our children are out.

So, can you tell I'm happy? And that you would not chase me away, but let me quietly be a part of this worshipping, serving community is a sweet thing. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we, Bethlehem, love Christ.

We love to sing Christ, pray Christ, teach Christ, live Christ. And so I invite you to come, Lord Jesus. You said, I will be with you always to the end of the age.

And I lay hold on that promise now that you'll help me be faithful to your word, say something that would be directive for our school and encouraging and helpful to everyone for the sake of Jesus. I ask this now in his name. Amen.

I want to talk about the educational implications of the call in the Bible to walk worthy of God. So, if you read the Desiring God blog, you may have noticed that at the beginning of this week, there was an article that I wrote called, Are You Worthy of Jesus? And my intention in this message is to take that article and apply it to this school. That's where we're going.

Let me give you two reasons why I was drawn to the subject of are you worthy of Jesus in relation to this school. Reason number one, the more I think about the implications of being worthy of God, worthy of the Lord, worthy of Jesus, worthy of our calling, worthy of the kingdom, the more the implications ripple out concerning education. I'll spell out three of those.

Second reason, we live in a time in at least little pockets of evangelicalism where the doctrine of sanctification is controversial, and the question of whether justification by faith alone apart from works of the law impedes the moral effort to be a pure and holy person, or releases power to be and to pursue moral purity, is up for grabs in a lot of people's minds. In the spirit of our time, is it appropriate to minimize or to highlight statements like this? Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. If you live according to the flesh, you will die.

But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. Pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away, for it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. Do we live at a time to minimize those statements in the Bible or to underline them? That's the controversy. So, I'm drawn to this topic because

this issue of worthy of the Lord sheds light on that controversy.

And secondly, it's brimming with implications for how to do seminary and college education. That's why we're doing this. So here's where we're going.

Number one, let's get the biblical teaching on the table for everybody to see. Number two, let's talk about what does it mean? I mean, nice sentence, be worthy of Jesus. What does it mean? And third, what are those implications for this school and how we do it? You're not going to have time to look any of these up.

All these texts are online. Recording will be available. Listen with all your might.

Book of Revelation chapter 3 verse 4, Jesus is speaking to the church at Sardis, and he says this, You still have a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments. And they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. And that does not mean worthy with the imputed righteousness of Jesus by an act of justification.

It means they did not soil their garments. They were worthy of walking with Jesus. Matthew chapter 10 verse 37, Jesus, Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. That's virtually the same as what he said in Luke 14, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, Yes, his own life also cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Which means not to be worthy of Jesus is not to be his disciple. This is not a standard held up to show that no one can reach it.

This is a straightforward demand and expectation from Jesus, Love me more than you love anyone or you're not my disciple and you're not worthy of me. It's clear. Jesus is not vague.

These are not ambiguous statements. The Apostle Paul picks up the language of worthiness and makes more of it than any other writer. Ephesians 4, Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called.

Philippians 1, Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. Colossians 1, Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 2, Walk in a manner worthy of God.

2 Thessalonians 1, May God make you worthy of his calling and fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power. Your suffering is evidence of the righteous judgment of God that you may be considered worthy. This is happening through your suffering that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering.

The point of those texts is not being worthy of God is impossible for spirit indwelt Christians. It's just held up to make you know it's impossible and drive you to the cross. That's not what those texts are saying.

It's important to know that. They are straightforward statements of what normal Christianity looks like. Walking worthy of your calling, worthy of the kingdom, worthy of your father, worthy of your Savior.

That's normal Christianity. Twenty-two years ago, I asked Tom Steller to write an afterword for Let the Nations Be Glad. Anything you want, Tom, just write it.

He was the missions pastor, I think, in those days. Tom's had every job in the church. Been here 34 years now and he's had them all.

And when we didn't know if one should exist, we gave the job to him to see whether it worked. That's how I got Sam Crabtree. We needed an executive pastor because Tom took the job for a year and said, that works.

So I asked him, write that. And those of you who know the book know what text he used. He used 3 John 1.6, which says, You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.

He wrote a whole afterword on what does it mean to send from Bethlehem? What does it mean to send missionaries in a manner worthy of God? And then, beautifully, Tom unpacked the relationship between the worth of the name, which comes in the next verse, the worth of the name and the worthiness of the senders, of those who are going for the sake of the name. And to Jesus, Paul, and John, we could add John the Baptist, who said to the Sadducees and the Pharisees, You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. That's the biblical data.

That's the biblical teaching on worthiness. Question number two. What does that mean? What does it mean to be worthy of Jesus? If you love mother or father more than me, you are not worthy of me.

What does it mean to be worthy of Jesus? What does it mean to walk worthy of God, worthy of the Lord, worthy of the kingdom, worthy of the calling? What is this worthiness that we must have? What complicates things, as you know, is that there are other passages of Scripture where our unworthiness is highlighted. When the centurion said to Jesus, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Jesus said, I've never seen faith like that in all of Israel.

He liked those words. Yes, he did. At the heart of faith is that.

I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. It's a good thing to say. Well, that complicates things.

Ten chapters later in Luke, Jesus tells a story about a servant who was out in the field doing his job, and he came home, and instead of putting him down at the meal, you said, now fix my meal, and then you can eat. And Jesus said, Does the master thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, we are unworthy servants. When you've done all that I have commanded, still say, we are unworthy servants.

And John the Baptist said, He who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. So, this is why our school exists, to figure this out. This is what we teach men and women to do.

I think the key to the mystery is found in the phrase that Paul and John the Baptist both use. Paul in Acts 26 20, and John the Baptist in Matthew 3 8, where they both say, bear fruit worthy of repentance. Because that can't mean the fruit earns repentance, or merits repentance, or deserves repentance.

Repentance is already there, bearing the fruit of the deeds that are worthy. There can't be any thought of the word meaning, Oh, if you're worthy of blank, you deserve blank, you merit blank, you earn blank, won't work. Right? Won't work.

Worthy of repentance can't mean, I just bore the fruit of repentance, and therefore became meritorious of having it. Doesn't work. It just produced the fruit.

The tree is repentance, and the fruit are the deeds worthy of the tree. Worthy doesn't mean merit, deserve, earn. Worthy of repentance means, repentance is so worthy, so valuable.

Repentance has such worth, that the fruit it produces, shares in the worth. Fruit worthy of repentance means, there's a suitable, commensurate relationship between the fruit and the tree. The value of the tree and the value of the fruit have a commensurate relationship.

It's fitting. This is a fitting fruit for that kind of tree. And if that tree is super valuable, what would this fruit have to be in order to show that? What is repentance? Repentance is turning to God as supremely valuable, away from all else as supremely valuable.

Let me say that again. Repentance is a mind and heart change, turning to God as supremely valuable, away from everything as supremely valuable. No competitors with God once you repent.

Repenting is a shifting of the values of the soul onto the supreme value of the universe, God Almighty, and away from everything else as a competing value. They have their place, but not there. And repentance is the movement of the soul toward that, the changing of the mind or the heart.

That turning. That turning of the mind and that change and that repentance is beautiful. It's what humans were made for.

It is worthy of God. Suitable, fitting, appropriate correspondence to God. Right? It's suitable that the human mind would turn away from everything as its supreme value to God as the supreme value.

That's a suitable response to the infinite value of God. And therefore, this suitability is its worthiness. That's what worthiness means.

A suitable echo of the value of God. So, being worthy of repentance does not mean being deserving of repentance as if you could earn it or merit it. It means an appropriate, suitable, fitting response to the worth of repentance, which is a suitable response to the worth of God, which is why the ESV translates performed deeds in keeping with repentance.

You won't even see the word worthy in your translation. I had to change it because it's the same word everywhere. In keeping with means the translator said, and they're right, to be worthy of repentance means to be in step with it, in sync with it, a proper reflection of the value of it.

When Nixon resigned in 1975, what did it mean to say he was unworthy of the presidency? What did it mean? Or put it the other way around, what did it mean to say he was not worthy of his office? This shed enormous light for me on this biblical issue, because I saw right away, oh, this is really an odd use of language. It's true in Greek, it's true in English. We say he's worthy of the presidency not when he has great worth, but when he honors the great worth of the office.

Right? That's the way we use the language. It's odd. We say you are worthy of the office when you are behaving in such a way as to show that the office is worthy.

It's the office that has massive value. Either you are worthy or unworthy of that by whether you act in a way that shows that. That was very helpful for me.

He failed. What did he fail? He failed to see, and he failed to feel, and he failed to embrace the superior value of the office over his sinful. Now, let's apply this to Jesus' words, see if it works.

Jesus said, whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And I'm now inferring, oh, he doesn't mean is not deserving of me, is not earning me, is not meriting me, all of which are true. That's not what he's saying because that's not what the phrase means in that kind of construction.

When Jesus says we are not worthy of him if we treasure our parents or children or self more than him, we're not worthy of him if we cherish something else more than him, he means he is of infinite worth. Like the presidency, far above parents, far above children, far above self, he is of infinite worth and there's a commensurate response to that. What? Prefer him! See him that way.

Savor him that way. Embrace him that way. That's fitting, commensurate, suitable, worthy.

It calls all attention to his worth as we treasure him, embrace him, love him over everything. That's being worthy of infinite worth. So here's the most important sentence I'll give you, I think.

Our passionate preference for Jesus' worth is our. That's the key sentence in this message. Our preference, embrace, treasuring of Jesus as supremely valuable is my value.

To be worthy of infinite worth is to see it, savor it, and prefer it as infinitely. In fact, stir this in, one aspect of the beauty of Jesus, the worth of Jesus is that he is gracious towards sinners. In fact, we would rank the glory of his grace just about at the top of his beauties and the things we value about him.

So how are you worthy of a gracious Savior of sinners? Being worthy of a gracious Savior of sinners would necessarily include the confession of your unworthiness. Like the centurion, like John the Baptist, you become worthy of grace. You become a suitable beneficiary of grace when you see your need for grace and embrace the infinite value of the gracious one as your supreme treasure.

Therefore, woven into your worthiness is a profound sense of unworthiness. A suitable, fitting, appropriate, commensurate beneficiary of an infinitely gracious God knows it needs grace and embraces him as infinitely valuable more than anything in the world and thus becomes worthy of a gracious one. Jesus confirms this.

I keep asking myself, am I on the right track here? Am I tracking with Jesus? See if this doesn't confirm it. He told a parable of a wedding feast. Remember? Matthew 22.

The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son and he sent out his servants to call, to invite those who were invited to the wedding feast. Come freely. You don't earn this.

Come. It's open. Oh, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.

You who have no money, come buy and eat without money, without price. Come and enjoy the supreme pleasures of my son's wedding. They wouldn't.

Why? This is one of the most horrifying sentences in the Bible. They went off, one to his farm and another to his business. And the master of the feast said to his servants, you go beat the bushes.

We're going to fill this house. You get to every people group on this planet. You get to the poor.

You get to the lame. You get to the blind. You get to the helpless who won't argue that they got better things to do than my feast.

You go get them. But before he said that, you know what he said? Here's what he said. The wedding feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.

What does that mean? They preferred their farms over the infinite value and worth of the banquet with the Son of God. Millions of people in America like that. So, what does it mean to be worthy of the feast? Want the feast.

See the feast. That's way better than a farm. Way better than a business.

Isn't it exactly the same thing Jesus said? If you love mother or father more than me, you're not worthy of me. Here he just says, if you love farm or business more than me, you're not worthy of me. Meaning, I invited you to come to the greatest pleasures in the universe with my Son and you preferred refuse? That's the definition of unworthy.

Don't recognize worth. I'm infinitely worthy. Not to see and savor and prefer.

My worth is the meaning of unworthiness. And to see it, savor it, want it, embrace it as a desperate sinner who loves grace is to be worthy of it. The principle is the same whether it's farms or business or mother or father or son or daughter or your own life.

Worthiness of the feast, worthiness of God, worthiness of the Lord, worthiness of the kingdom means to prefer Him over everything. Now, if we had time, we could go one by one and oh, the light that would shine. Worthy of our calling, worthy of the gospel, worthy of the Lord, worthy of God, worthy of the kingdom.

Those are all phrases from the Apostle Paul. We could go one by one, apply this truth to that and it would explode with meaning and relevance. But we don't have that time.

We turn finally to the implications for education. Three, number one, we must teach, we faculty, and by implication, everyone who has any kind of teaching role at all, mom, dad, we must teach not only what is, but the value of what is. Which is not quite the way I want to say it.

That's the first way I thought of saying it. Here's the better way to say it. No.

We must not only teach what is, but must teach and awaken a suitable affection for the value of what is. We must. We must teach what is, reality, seen for what it is, and we must teach and awaken affections for the value of what is.

Hatred for the ugly, love for the glorious. Why? Because you can't be worthy of a God or a kingdom or a calling that you do not know the worth of. If you don't know the worth of God, the worth of the kingdom, the worth of your calling, you cannot walk worthily of it, because walking worthily of it means esteeming it, cherishing it, treasuring it as supremely valuable, which you can't see if you haven't been shown.

Walking worthy means that an intellectual, an emotional, and a behavioral life suitable to the worth of God, suitable to the worth of the kingdom, suitable to the worth of your calling is what you live. You cannot walk worthy of a God you do not know and feel to be infinitely worthy. You cannot walk worthy of his kingdom if you don't know and feel the worth of his kingdom.

You can't walk worthy of your calling if you don't know and feel the worth of your calling. Therefore, we cannot achieve our goals as professors for our students if we do not teach what is and the value of what

is. Jesus said, teach them to observe all that I commanded you.

He did not say teach them to know all that I commanded you. Observe, keep, do. Teach them to do.

Teach them to keep. Teach them to observe. One of those commandments is love me more than your children.

How do you teach people to do that? By showing them his supreme value to them. Implication number two. Therefore, the highest aims of our education are impossible for human beings to bring about.

Without the intervention of divine power and therefore we should be crying out regularly for that power in prayer as a learning community. The point here is prayer. Desperate prayer for God to do the impossible.

Because you cannot make your students value the kingdom, value God, value their calling above their life and their children. You can't do it. Only God can do that.

Do you remember the rich young ruler? When he walked away preferring money to Jesus, Jesus said, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a man to prefer God over wealth. That's my paraphrase. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a man to treasure God more than a million dollars.

And when his disciples said, Then who can be saved? Jesus didn't make it easier. He said, With man it is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God.

It is possible for a man to love God more than money. If God does it, it is possible to see Him better than a billion dollars, to feel awesome satisfaction and desire in Him forever when you're offered the world, but only because it's a miracle that God works, which means if that's one of our goals at Bethlehem College and Seminary, which it is, we can't do it. So when I got Tom's email yesterday that we would be meeting at 1245 today to pray for our students, I knew where I'd be.

I have 16 guys. I don't know them well yet. Some of them are here.

I don't know where they are spiritually. I do know some of what they'll be up against in the next 50 years. And I know that if they don't value God, Jesus, the kingdom and their calling more than their wives and their children and their health, they won't make it because they will be unworthy of God.

Therefore, my goals for them are impossible. So it means I will hold up the supreme value of Jesus, and I will pray like crazy that God do what I can't do. Number three, and closing.

Since walking worthily of God, worthy of the kingdom, worthy of our calling means seeing and savoring and showing and embracing and preferring the supreme worth of God and the kingdom and our calling, this educational community should be a worshiping community, corporate worshiping community. Why? The essence of worship is a passionate preference for the worth of God over all things. Say it again.

The essence, not the act. The essence of worship is a passionate preference for God over all things, and the act of worship are the various things we do to express that preference. Therefore, if right at the top of our goal is that we be a people who are worthy of the Lord and the essence of being worthy of the Lord is to see and savor and prefer his worth, therefore, we will be a worshiping people.

Last sentence. May God use Bethlehem to awaken and instruct students about the supreme worth of God, the supreme worth of his kingdom, the supreme worth of his calling so that through all of us, thousands and thousands of people, all out of proportion to Bethlehem's size, we'll walk worthy of the Lord. Oh, Father, Father, thank you for your holy word.

Where would we be in beginning to understand what life is had you not spoken in this book? So thank you for the book. Then thank you for being a God of great grace towards sinners. Thank you for sending Jesus into the world and displaying in human flesh the most beautiful and most glorious value in the universe, namely, yourself.

And thank you for the Holy Spirit who has quickened our dead, blind souls so that we have seen and we savor and we prefer you over everything. Grant that thousands upon thousands of people would prefer you and thus be worthy of you because this school exists. I pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. I'm going to invite Rick Siegel, Vice President for Advancement here, and I just want you to listen. I have no idea what he's going to say except I know what his job is.

And I want to underline what you're going to say before I hear it because I love this school. I hope God gives me 10 good years teaching and chancelling. And then I hope there are a good century or two that it keeps on doing what it's doing.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/BnonO7dal1w.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/are-you-worthy-of-jesus/>

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