

Christ Magnified in His World Through Servants Satisfied in His Worth

by John Piper

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Scripture: Philippians 1:20, Romans 15:20, Colossians 1:24, Isaiah 52:15, Psalms 67:4, Romans 15:21, Philippians 1:21

Topics: "Satisfaction in Christ", "Global Missions"

Description

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Transcript

Let's pray. If anyone is going to be satisfied in Jesus more than in life, it will be a miracle, Father. If we're going to love Christ above all things, cherish Him, delight in Him, find Him supreme, it will be a wonder of grace.

So, Father, come and do this miracle, I pray. In Jesus' name, amen. So last week, Jason said that some wells were dug in the early 80s, the wells of the global glory of God, and what thrills me is that this church is still drinking at the wells of God's global glory.

A vision like 25 by 25 doesn't come out of nowhere, right? Trying to plant 25 churches, trying to reach 25 peoples, that comes out of a leadership, pastors, elders, who are drinking at the global glory of God well.

Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples, for great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. He is to be feared above all gods, for all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

Splendor and majesty are before Him. Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name. Bring an offering and come into His courts.

Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness. Tremble before Him. Tremble before Him.

Who? All the earth. These are the wells of the global glory of God, and you're still drinking. At Bethlehem, we do not worship a tribal deity, right? Jesus Christ is the firstborn from the dead, the very image of God, for through Him all things were created in heaven, on earth, visible, invisible, thrones, dominions, authorities, powers.

All of them created through Him and for Him. For Him. For Him.

Every galaxy for Him. All the planets for Him. The mountains for Him.

The rivers for Him. The oceans for Him. All institutions for Him.

All nations for Him. Every person created for the glory of Jesus Christ. We do not worship here a tribal deity.

Everyone created for Christ. Everyone in every people group on the planet created and by virtue of creation belonging to Jesus. You make it, you own it.

And not only does He lay claim on all the people by virtue of creation, but when the whole humanity fell, right, into sin and became hopelessly lost everywhere, in every people group, no hope because of sin, He comes. He comes into the world. The God-man, Jesus Christ, lives a perfect life, dies a substitutionary death so that He bears the wrath of God, carries all the sins of everyone who believes in Him everywhere in the world among all the peoples, rises from the dead, reigns in heaven today, will come back.

And He lays claim on the worship of every single human being on the planet, whatever people group and wherever that worship does not exist, missions does or should. Now, I praise God, therefore, that the leadership of this church is still drinking at the global wells of God's glory. What a deeply sweet and gratifying thing to me to sit under this ministry.

I'm not going to dig any new wells. No new wells need to be dug here biblically. I'm going to go back to one of the earliest wells, push some leaves off the water, get down with you, right, we're going to get down together, I'm going to drink, see what happens.

Now, when I say see what happens, I don't mean merely in these services today, because here's the way God works in Global Focus. This is the second culminating week of Global Focus, and we summon people at the end of the service, and I'll tell you about that in a minute. When I say we'll watch what God does as we get out on the ground and drink from this well, I mean this.

God, in the years before any of you came to Bethlehem, has been at work in your life. Amazingly at work. You may not even know it.

You may be utterly oblivious, like a teenager or an 85 year old, and you can't even point to it. You're so oblivious of what He's doing, but He's at work, oh yes, in your life. And then you came to Bethlehem, and you've been here a month or a week or 50 years, and in all those years He's been at work.

He's been at work in your life. And then comes Global Focus. And all that work, all that amazing work, starts to surprisingly, amazingly, mysteriously come to some kind of crisis head.

So when I say let's watch Him work now in the next 20-30 minutes, I don't mean He's starting. Well, He'll start this morning. God has been doing something in your life, and you better get ready.

Jonathan Edwards called the Great Awakening a surprising work of God. That's not an accident. So here's what we're going to do at the end of the service, all the campuses.

I'll close by telling you whom we want to come to the front to be prayed for. It's three groups. We've done this for almost 40 years.

Right, Tom? Amazing. Number one, any global partners in any of these services that are home for any reason, we want you to come. Good for our people to see you.

So you've been there, and we want you to come on, lead the way. Number two, anybody in our present nurture program. That is, you're on your way.

God has to stop you, because you're on your way through the nurture program to be in cross-cultural missions vocationally. Not short term, vocationally. You're on your way.

Now here's the third wildcard group. I want to define it carefully. We talked this over, because we don't want everybody to come forward, okay? You can give some invitations that are so broad.

Like if you want to do the will of God, well that's crazy, because if you sense that God is leading you toward vocational global missions, not short term, if you sense that God is leading you towards vocational global missions, and you intend to pursue that leading till he leads otherwise, we would like you to come. We're not asking you to be infallible, okay? You don't know with absolute certainty whether that leading that you sense is going to actually culminate in getting there, okay? Got that? So we're expecting a lot of obedient people not to come to the front at the end of our services. Those are the three groups.

I'll come back to them at the end. Let's go to the well. January 27, 1980, my candidating sermon.

This building didn't exist. The building that did exist is gone. It's over there.

You can see pictures of it sometime. And I preached on this text, the one that was just read. And we dug down to the water table of this truth.

Really sweet water. Christ is most magnified in you when you are most satisfied in him, especially in your suffering and death. And today in Global Focus we're simply going to draw out the missionary implication of that.

Christ is magnified in his world. This is the title, you can read it there in your worship folder. Christ is magnified in his world through servants who are satisfied in his worth.

That's more than poetically cute, especially in their suffering and death. In other words, the peoples of this world will come to magnify Christ, glorify Christ, honor Christ, worship Christ through servants who are so satisfied, so soul satisfied in Christ that this soul satisfaction in Christ carries them through all missionary suffering. Let's read it again.

First part, verse 20, Philippians 1. It is my eager expectation and hope. I tell you, when I read an apostle talk like that, I want on board, I want in. Okay, if that's your eager expectation and hope, I want it to be mine.

I hope you do too. That negatively, I won't ever be ashamed. But positively, with full courage, now as always, Christ will be magnified, honored, glorified in my body, whether I live or whether I die.

I love that text. I love that man. I love that vision of life, how not to waste your life.

What that verse established in 1980 and establishes now, right now, is that Paul's great passion in this world was to see Christ magnified. Is that clear? Everybody see that in the text? Passion, Christ to be magnified, Christ to be glorified, Christ to be made much of, Christ to be great in the world, seen, trusted, loved as the greatest treasure in the world. Remember he said in chapter 3, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth, that's why I got the word worth in the title, the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

So when that happens, when Christ is so valuable to us that everything is lost by comparison, he's looking great in our lives. He's looking great. He's looking magnificent, especially when that happens as you die or suffer.

And we know he meant it globally, right? Because chapter 1 verse 5 of Romans he says, my ministry is for the sake of Christ among the nations. It's not just like, I want to have a little private worship party here between me and God, make him look great, just me and him. Not the way he's thinking.

Or Romans 15 20, I make it my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named. So we know when he said my passion is that Christ would be magnified, honored, glorified in my body, he didn't just mean me and him. He meant I want my life to count for the magnifying of Christ among the peoples of the world, all the peoples, all the nations of the world.

Now, here's the question. How does Christ come to look magnificent in us if we live or die? How? How does that happen? So you're sitting there and you feel, I'm just so absolutely ordinary. It's just not going to happen.

Oh, yes, it will. And I'll show you how it will. It's not beyond any of you.

The answer is in verse 21. Half the answer is, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death, because, for, to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. So Christ will be magnified.

He'll look great. He'll be magnificent in my body because to me to die is gain. Now that almost makes sense.

It doesn't yet, right? There's a missing piece in the argument. It doesn't make sense yet. Okay, die is gain, and when that happens, Christ looks great.

It doesn't make sense. The missing piece is in verse 23, second half of the verse. My desire is to depart, and that is to die, which he just called gain.

He's explaining how it's gain now. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. It's gain.

Death is gain because he gets more of Christ. Now the argument makes sense. Oh, mind-blowing sense, life-changing sense, church-revolutionizing sense, world-reaching sense.

What an argument. Christ will be magnified in my death because I will experience death as gain because I'm going to be with him, and he's everything to me. Way better than life.

So argument, Christ will be magnified in my death because Christ is more precious to me than life. If you don't get that, I don't know how to preach to you, except to keep saying it again and again, keep lifting them up as more precious, more precious. I'll say it again.

Christ will be magnified in your death, the way you die, the way you suffer unto death, the way you walk the path of dying in obedience, Christ will be magnified there because Christ is seen as more precious to you than life. So here's my paraphrase to bring out the meaning of the ever-nourishing, missions-empowering well that was dug 40 years ago. Christ is most magnified in Paul when Paul is so satisfied in Christ that the loss of everything in this world is called gain because death brings in more of Christ.

Let's keep it simple like this. Christ is most magnified in us when we are most satisfied in Christ, especially in our suffering and dying. It's in the hardships, not the sunny days that you make most of Christ.

Anybody can be cheerful on a sunny day, healthy, relationships all working, no threat to your life, piece of cake, the world is not impressed that you're happy on that day. It is in the hardships and the dangers and the risks and the losses and the suffering of the missionary life where they all-sustaining, all-satisfying greatness of Christ shines most brightly in the soul of the missionary servant who is so satisfied that that soul satisfaction carries him through all missionary trials. So hence the title of the message.

Maybe cut it out, put it in the front of your Bible, some of you especially. Christ magnified in his world through servants satisfied in his worth. Let's just say it like this.

The purpose of God in creation and redemption and mission, so the the total purpose. I like to have clear the purpose of the universe, Orphidian. The total purpose of the universe, all creation, all redemption, all mission, the total purpose is Christ magnified among the nations.

The essential means, purpose means bridge. The means of that purpose being fulfilled among the nations is nations so satisfied in Christ death can't break the joy. That's how it happens.

Let the nations be glad is not a clever book title. It's a quote from Psalm 67. Missions is let the nations be glad because gladness in God makes God look great.

He can't look great without it. Not in that heart, and we want people to make much of God in their heart. So the purpose Christ magnified among the nations, the means nations coming to be satisfied in Christ above all things, the bridge between the purpose and the means is missionaries.

Missions, and I'm arguing in this sermon that those missionaries are souls so satisfied in Christ that that soul satisfaction in Christ carries them through all missionary suffering. That's what I'm arguing. They take the unsearchable riches of Christ.

They love them. They rest in them. They are satisfied by them, and then they lift them up, and they speak them among the nations of the world.

So it's not incidental that the bridge between Christ magnified among the nations and nations satisfied in Christ, it's not incidental that that bridge consists of missionaries who are embodiments of Christ magnified through their souls being satisfied through suffering. Listen to Paul's amazing word in Colossians 1:24, I rejoice that in my sufferings for your sake and in my flesh, I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. That's a missionary statement.

What does it mean? He looks out, I rejoice that my calling is to complete, to fill up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. It's almost heresy, right? It's not heresy. My missionary trials are becoming an embodiment for the world of how they were loved by Christ in his suffering.

Paul and you complete Christ's afflictions not by making them better, but by making them visible in your body. It's a dangerous calling. When we invite you here, you're gonna die.

Listen, no, we're not playing games. You're gonna do missions or a vacation. Our missionaries have been in jail.

Our missionaries have been under gunfire. Our missionaries have lost their children. Our missionaries have had parents and siblings die while they're on the front lines.

Our missionaries have suffered demonic attacks. Our missionaries have suffered depression. Our missionaries have suffered, continue to suffer PTSD.

So, my my, we're not inviting you. Jesus is not calling you to something easy. You don't go into missions for an easy life.

You don't become a Christian for an easy life. I hate the prosperity gospel. How many times do I need to say it? Now here's my closing question.

How does it happen that people sitting in front of me right now, sitting here, will in five years be 10,000 miles away? And you don't even know it. You know it's a mantra here. There are only three kinds of Christians.

Senders, goers, disobedient. So, if you think that you can play indifferent to the cause of missions, neither goer nor sender, you're blind and you didn't wake up because the world has a hold of your neck and is making you unconscious about reality. It is very dangerous to go to sleep in this battle.

Got that? Very dangerous. So, my question is, how does this happen? I love thinking about this. It makes me happy to think about how God gets somebody who's just sitting there, happily selling real estate or whatever, good work, and they're gone.

They're just gone, right? So, the Indahars, they sat right in the second pew there, okay? They sat there for years, businessmen. They're gone. They're in Thailand.

David and Mary Decker sat about right there where Chris is. That's their pew. For years and years.

He was the manager of a footlocker. That's a store. And they're gone.

They've been in that, they were in that for decades. Right over there where it's dark. Now, I know that's not true for you down there south and north, but you can know what I'm talking about.

Right over there, the Thiebauds, for years. He was a sim student, wrestling. Oh, if you could tell the story about how God used the word prophet, you bang! He was gone.

They're gone. They're in Thailand. John, he was four years old when I came here in 1980.

He was everywhere in this church. He goes to such dangerous places, they won't let you talk about it. Together with Carrie and the kids.

And now my question is, how does that happen? It is a great mystery how God turns goers, I mean senders, into goers. This is a great mystery. But just think about your life for a moment.

You're sitting here. You're sitting there. Why? Why aren't you in California? South Dakota? Virginia? How'd you get here? Where were you born? How did you grow up? Where did you go to school? How many hundreds of people have invested in your life? How did you get here? What a mystery that anybody is anywhere.

I love to think of the providences of God. You should be amazed that you're sitting there. You are sitting under this sermon right now, no accidents anywhere.

God reigns. That's a mystery. So I'm going to venture an answer to the question how God does it.

Okay, call it a mystery, then I'm going to tell you how it works. Oh, here we go. It's not the only way.

I'm just going to suggest one way. In a church where Christ is exalted week in, week out, not just in the pulpit, but in all the gatherings, Christ magnificent, all satisfying, is lifted up week in, week out, year in, year out. And the people's tide is rising of satisfaction in God, and their roots down into his worth and beauty and greatness are going deeper and deeper.

And they find themselves looser and looser from the things of the world because Christ is so much everything to them. In that church, it is very likely, more likely, that specific Bible passages, phrases, truths are going to take you and put your name on it, and it will be unshakable and turn into a call of God in your life. Here's why I believe that.

In Romans 15, verse 20, Paul says, I'm gripped by this ambition to preach where Christ is not known, so I want out of here. I want out of here. I want out of Minneapolis, Paul says.

There's 1,200 evangelical churches here. I want to go where there's no access to the gospel. I got to get out of here.

Where does that come from? Where does that ambition come from? Because some of you are going to feel it. You won't be able to resist it. Where does it come from? Now, he could have said, Damascus Road, good grief.

It's obvious in Acts where it comes from. You knock me off my horse. He said straight to me, eyeball to eyeball, I'm sending you to the Gentiles.

That's not what he said. He could have said it. He didn't say it.

He said what he said so I could say what I'm saying. Here's what he said. I don't want to build on another man's foundation, but, and then he quotes the Bible.

And everybody, not everybody has access to Damascus Road, but everybody has access to the Bible. I don't want to build on another man's foundation because those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand. That's Isaiah 52, 15.

That's not Paul's verse, or is it? Paul connects his personal ambition with a Bible verse from Isaiah, and doesn't have his name on it, or does it? Could apply to anybody, anybody. So here's my suggestion. As Christ becomes more and more precious to you, more and more satisfying to you, it's not unlikely that some truth, some scripture is going to have your name on it.

You won't act impulsively. You won't disregard counsel. You won't disregard gifting.

You won't disregard the church or the community, but you won't shake it. You won't. And we'll look back in 10 years, and you'll be gone, and we'll all be amazed.

How did he do that? So I'm done. I'm going to say again who on all the campuses are to walk to the front, but after I pray, the video will stop, and north and south, Mounds View and Lakeville, somebody will take over and finish the call there. But I'll tell you again now whom we're inviting to come just stand here and be prayed for as we close.

Number one, global partners. I know some of you in this room. I can see one or two anyway.

Number two, nurture program. If you're in the program, and you're aiming, and you're on your way towards vocational global missions, come on. You're already in once you're standing in that group, and then the wild card group.

I'll be very careful to say it again. If you sense, and you're not infallible, but you believe in this mysterious way that God works over the last 10 years, 50 years, I am talking to 60 somethings, 70 somethings. Noel and I still ask the Lord what the next chapter should look like.

I'm 73. I feel very good. I'm happy.

I think I could be happy out of this country, maybe happier. I'm a kingdom person. So I'm talking to 17 year olds and 87 year olds.

That might be pushing the limit. I could name a few 87 year olds that have it in them. Okay, who sense that God is leading you toward vocational missions.

Vocational, not short term. And who intend to keep on following that leading until the Lord directs otherwise. And who would like prayer for confirmation and guidance.

Father, every year now for almost 40 years, this has become a critical moment of confirmation and guidance. And so in Moundsview right now, and in Lakeville right now, and here downtown, I ask you to

keep on working just like you have been. And in the mysteries of your catapulting people into your harvest, would you be pleased to bring some sense of impulse that's from the Holy Spirit rooted in the scriptures to give guidance right now.

I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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