

(Education for Exultation) Let All the Peoples Praise Him

by John Piper

The sermon emphasizes the importance of education for exaltation, which means exaltation among the nations, especially the unreached, and mobilizing missions to reach the 187 people groups that have no church or mission agency targeting them.

Duration: 44:24

Scripture: Psalm 67:3-4, Psalm 117:1, Matthew 6:33, Romans 15:7-11, 2 Corinthians 8:9

Topics: "Missions And Evangelism", "Christian Unity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of accepting one another within the church community. He urges the congregation to embrace a mindset of change and sacrifice for the sake of spreading the message of God's mercy to the nations. The speaker highlights the example of Christ, who became a servant to the Jewish people and ultimately died for the salvation of all. The sermon concludes with a call to action, urging the church to prioritize the exultation of God among the nations and to be willing to give up personal comforts and desires for the sake of fulfilling God's eternal plans.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God Ministries is available at www.desiringgod.org. Romans 15, 7-13. Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God, to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy, as it is written, Therefore I will give praise to thee among the Gentiles, and I will sing to thy name. And again he says, Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him.

And again Isaiah says, There shall come the root of Jesse, and he who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles hope. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Father, I am so thankful that you have not given me or us a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but a spirit of sonship whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. How could I dare to stand here if that Spirit didn't witness with my spirit that you were my Father, and that you would help me? I pray that that would be the experience now of every person in this room, that they would know by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ and faith in Him, that you are their Father. If any is not, grant, I pray, that this service would be a means to the quickening of faith in Christ.

And would you be pleased to adopt more children even this morning? Help me, Father, please, to speak this text with truth and with affections that are fitting the nature of the truth, and with an anointing and a fruitfulness that produces change in our church and in our lives so that the city feels the force of love in Christ and for Christ, and that the nations are reached, churches are planted, and worship ascends. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Now in about a week and a half, on Wednesday week, we will be calling all of you to, if you're part of Bethlehem, to a vote on a vision called Education for Exaltation. And a piece of it will be an 8.5 million dollar building program, to replace that old sanctuary over there. And a piece of it will be a crazy, radical, debt-free funding proposal.

A piece of it will be growing without growing, that will require a kind of mindset change for many of us for the next ten years or so. And we want you to say yes to it before we go for it. And that's why all this three-ring binder and focus groups and mailings and my job has been mainly to put biblical foundations under it on Sunday morning by preaching first on education for exaltation in God.

Secondly, in Christ, the Son of God. Thirdly, in the cross of Christ. Then in faith in the cross of Christ.

And then in the word that sustains the faith in Christ, who is the Son of God. And along the way, to lift up a visual reminder of what growing without growing will mean in sending away Rick Gamache and Randy Westland and their families and summoning as many of you as would be willing to go with them to Grace Church, Richfield. And we will send them away in two weeks.

That's my job is to put a biblical foundation under all those parts of the vision. And so today we come to another crucial piece of it. Namely, education for exaltation among the nations.

And in a nutshell, the point is this. The building, the children, the curriculum, the debt-free funding vision, the growing without growing by another kind of incubator service in that big multi-purpose thing that will be out there on the parking lot someday. The point of all of that is education for exaltation, not just our exaltation, but the exaltation among the nations.

Is that mission statement up there on the wall? Spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples. All we're doing is paraphrasing that with a catchy phrase. Education for joy among the nations, for exaltation among the nations.

So that's the theme this morning. Bethlehem has been now for 129 years a church radically devoted to mobilizing missions. I don't know the pre-1890 Bethlehem very well.

But beginning with 1890, I know the stories. And Ola and Minnie Hanson are the biggie at the turn of the century there who went to Burma and stayed there and translated the Bible for 30 years. And today there are 600,000 K'ichean believers.

And in 1890, there were none. And they came to our church to thank us back in 1990 at their 100th anniversary. They were seeking out the mother church.

And most of us didn't even know this story existed. So we know that for 100 years, God has been doing it through this church to mobilize missions. I just have to stop and tell you the emotional effect it had on me in the first service.

A little teeny thing. I don't know why things happen like this. I opened up this, getting ready to worship through it.

And it said there at the prayer of praise for the nations, Dan Porch, missionary. And I just was flooded. That is a great title.

That is a great title. Dan Porch, missionary. I just hope that that hits you like it hits me.

Because ambassador for King Jesus among an unreached people group. Go declare the amnesty, Dan. Go tell them if they lay down their arms of unbelief and swear fealty to King Jesus, they live forever, Dan.

Missionary. What a great title. And what a great prayer.

He prayed to catch us up into God's presence today. So. It's been a great church for 130 years of missionary mobilization.

We are people who believe that if a people doesn't know the name of Jesus Christ and put their faith in him as Savior and Lord, they are lost and will be sentenced to everlasting judgment. We are people who believe that God means to gather worshipers for himself among all the peoples and tribes and nations everywhere in the world. Therefore, we are people who care about statistics like these.

This is the January issue of Mission Frontiers. You can get this magazine free. Wouldn't cost you anything and keeps you right up to date with what God is doing around the world in missions.

Or you go online at Mission Frontiers dot org and get it there. But here on page 33 is a list of peoples and on page 34, 187 peoples. And what's unique about these 187 peoples who have populations of over 10,000 is that none of them.

Not only has a church that is, none of them has a church, none of them has Christians in their midst. But they don't even have any church or mission agency targeting them to reach. These are the 187, not just unreached, but on targeted people groups.

There are several hundred unreached churches besides these that are being targeted, prayed for, aimed at and sent mission plant church planting teams to. But these are the 187 that nobody has picked yet. And we are the kind of church, I pray, that says no, that will not remain.

That cannot stay unattended while we all go about our business having our nice jobs and our nice houses and our nice clothes. And our nice security and our nice comforts and our nice retirement program. And we don't even know this.

We're the kind of church that's just not going to be resting until that changes. And it is changing. It's changing fast.

And God is at work mightily in our day. When we say education for exaltation, we mean not just this event on Sunday morning. Not just exaltation in private devotions.

Not just exaltation in small groups. Not just exaltation in family altars. Not just exaltation in churches sent out from us.

Not just exaltation in your witnessing in your workplaces. But exaltation among the nations. Especially the nations who don't even have a voice of another Christian speaking the glorious gospel that is the power of God unto salvation.

It's those people for whom we educate. And if we don't, let's shut down. So education for exaltation is exaltation among the nations.

That's the theme of today's message. And we will give ourselves no rest until that changes. Three points I want to draw out by way of giving foundation in the Bible to this passion that we have as a church at this time.

So go with me now to the text and let me point out a few things. The first thing I want to do is draw out from verse 7 a point from the flow of the thought. I want you to feel and see the flow of thought in verses 7, 8 and into 9 following.

It's the flow here that I'm focusing on in point number 1. It's a flow from the nitty-gritty relational, personal, inter-church reality to the infinite, the glorious, the global. That's the flow. Now let's look at it.

It says, verse 7, Romans 15, Therefore, accept one another. Just stop there and let that penetrate. Christians love each other.

Accept each other. Welcome each other. Be kind to each other.

Be supportive of each other. Be helpful to one another. Cut flack for each other.

Be forbearing to one another. One young woman came up to me after the service and she said, I wish the title had been Education for Relationships for Exaltation. Lest we lose this very point in the institutionalization of things.

We who have crafted this vision, these 17 elders and the huge vision committee that surrounds them, I don't think have lost that. It didn't get into the title because it's just a nifty little title. Education for Exaltation.

It's not everything. So here we have in the text, accept one another, but now watch the flow. Watch the flow.

Yes, there must be that. There must be that. And then comes just as Christ also accepted us.

So he lifts this practical internal nitty gritty relational personal dimension of the Christian life up into Christ's acceptance of his church. He doesn't want you to just go from day to day doing your little horizontal relational thing. He wants you to think this has a significance much bigger than just what's going on here between two people or 10 people or 800 people.

This is a magnification of the way Jesus accepted me. And that's what gives acceptance to love relationships in the church of Jesus Christ. It's a portrait of something so much bigger.

It's like marriage is a portrait of something so much bigger than a man and a woman. But he's still not done. He keeps going.

Watch the flow. Keep the flow going. Accept one another just as Christ also accepted us.

And now he goes a step further to the glory of God. So he moves from the personal relational internal nitty gritty life of the church up into Christ and his accepting of the church and then up into the greatest reality of the universe. The glory of God.

And he's still not done. Keep following the flow of thought. He goes on.

Verse eight. And he says, Christ, who accepts us to the glory of God, became a servant to the circumcised. That's Jews.

That is, he became incarnate as a Jew to minister to Jews as Messiah, but not just to Jews to confirm God's promises to them. But verse nine at the beginning for the Gentiles to glorify God for his mercy. And now we're at the global Gentile nation dimension.

So here's the flow that I'm looking at. Internal relational personal church reality caught up into Christ, caught up into the glory of God, extended to the nations. In fact, notice the parallel between the word glorify in verse nine and the word glory in verse seven.

And you'll see how it is that Christ is receiving us or welcoming us or accepting us to the glory of God. He's doing it by coming for us as a servant, pursuing us in missions and gathering Gentiles who will now glorify God for his mercy. So relate the word glorify in verse nine to the word glory in verse seven.

And you will see that it's all about missions here. He's receiving us by pursuing us and getting glory for his father, his father's mercy. So what's the point? The first point is this.

Oh, Bethlehem. Oh, Bethlehem. As you think about education, as you think about relationships in that education.

And yes, they are essential, absolutely essential. And as you think about a building and as you think about debt free radical funding ideas, and as you think about growing without growing in strategies to multiply churches. Let the flow, let the flow of your thought, let the flow of your life, let the flow of this vision be like the flow in this verse.

Internal relational up to Christ, up to the glory of God, out to the nations for a global perspective. That's what I that's my point. One, let the flow of this thought here be the flow of education for exaltation, which is why I say it's exaltation among the nations, not just exaltation in this room or in our own little private, happy lives.

I want to give you a couple of illustrations of this point. One from my own life and one from our church life and the whole idea of how how this vision relates to giving the missions and mobilizing missions. First, with regard to my own experience.

I'm finishing up now in the next few months, my first two decades of ministry at this church and will be entering a third decade. And I'm 54 and it raises the question for me, as I presume. Many of you at different stages of your life raise.

What do I want to do with the last 10 years or 20? But say if you let me minister here till I'm 65, 10 or 11 years to go, what would be significant? I look back over the 20 and they feel so fast. And I'm only half that to go now. And therefore, the issue of investment is really crucial.

I want to meet King Jesus. Finishing well. And so the words of of.

Jake Campbell White come back to me from where I quoted them in *Desiring God* 14 years ago in the missions chapter. He was the secretary of the layman's missionary movement in the early part of this century. He's a layman businessman like most of you are.

So. Here's what he wrote. Most men are not satisfied with the permanent output of their lives.

Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers except the adoption of Christ's purpose toward the world he came to redeem. Fame, pleasure, riches are but husks and ashes in contrast with the boundless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of his eternal plans. The men who are putting everything into Christ's undertaking are getting out of life its sweetest and most priceless rewards.

To which I say that's right. So I want in my last chapter to be invested in the biggest possible thing going for the glory of God, namely the finishing of the Great Commission. Therefore, my life hangs on education for exaltation, being exaltation for the nations.

If that doesn't happen, I'm out of here because the nations must be reached for God to get the glory that he means. He sent his son to die according to verse nine, that the nations would glorify God for his mercy. And we know there's at least 187 of them who don't even know him.

They've never heard the gospel. The purpose of the incarnation is temporarily aborting. This church cannot be indifferent to that.

Absolutely cannot be. Or many of us are just out of here. And I'm thrilled that we are not going to be indifferent to that.

We've never been indifferent to it. That's the first illustration. It really matters to many of us, hundreds of us, that education for exaltation be for the exaltation of the unreached peoples of the world.

Or we are a sham in our prosperity in this land. We are so rich and comfortable and secure. And there's only one reason that we are, according to Psalm 67.

We read it all together in the worship folder. God blesses us, yea, God blesses us that we may be a blessing. If we hoard, we die.

If we release our children and our funds and our prayers and even our lives, we live. Here's my other illustration. Somebody ought to ask, and there always is somebody who does ask.

You really think you should build an 8 million dollar building? Why not just have a big fund drive to raise 8 million dollars for missions? Why sink 8 million dollars in a building? Is that the best strategy? And you know what? I don't know if that's the best strategy. But I am not going to be paralyzed by the inability to

discern an A plus plan when we have a B plus plan that is prayer saturated and God besotted and has proven to work in the past. Let me explain what I mean.

I took myself back yesterday to 1987. Difficult wrestling days, three services. We've been into three services for five years in that old sanctuary and we were wrestling.

Should you build this thing? Here it is. We're in it. This building is here.

It's paid for. There's no debt in this church at all. And we didn't know whether to build this thing or not.

This was the parking lot. I'm standing where I used to park on Sunday morning. Should we have done this? Should we have done this? Or should we have... This building plus the building we bought down the street, the Masterworks building, cost 3.8 million dollars in 1991 when we finally bought it.

I mean moved into it. 3.8 million dollars for the Masterworks and this building. In 1991.

Was that a good idea? Maybe. Maybe. Maybe.

To try to find out whether it was a workable and helpful idea given this passion. I went back and I took every one of the annual reports for the last 13 years, 1987 to today, and I simply tabulated all the mission giving in those 13 years. And it came to 6.6 million dollars.

Now, that's not all the mission giving that's gone through this church. Not by a long shot. Paul Johnson, our financial secretary, produces a list at the end of the year of all the money that has gone around the budget into mission coffers in this church.

I would guess, I have no idea what that would be, but a lot more. So, I say to myself, okay, I don't know if this is the best plan. I'm not into A-plus as the only option in life.

I have for now 20 years sat through so many staff meetings and so many committee meetings and so many council meetings where we are paralyzed by our inability to discern the A-plus plan when in fact there's a good, solid B-plus plan on the table that I simply don't worry about it anymore. And the main reason theologically I don't is because of the cross of Jesus Christ. If I didn't have the cross to cover my B-minuses and C-minuses and D-plus life, what would I do? And so, I got to get out of this head the thought that we produce A-plus plans, lay them before Jesus, and he says, oh, that's good enough.

I'm going to have to do something about that. I'll get on board with that. That is not the way I think.

You know what I think? I think mercy, mercy, mercy. God, if we seek him, if we humble ourselves before him, if we saturate ourselves with the word and do the best we can biblically, his mercy covers the whole thing. So if you ask me, should we be doing this? Is it the best plan? I answer, I don't know if it's the best, and yes, we should be doing it.

Because we have walked so incredibly eager after God in it and searched his word so fully for it. And our history, this debt-free building where you right now are hearing the word of God and giving to missions, I just can't believe the way you people give. I can't believe the way you people give.

I opened the star. I don't get any private communications about the giving in this church. The same way you do, I open the star.

And you gave a week ago \$62,000 on one Sunday morning. I said, how in the world is such a thing possible? You are an amazing, amazing group of people. So, B plus, B whatever, it's mercy.

It's mercy all. I'm excited about it. And the last two are shorter.

Here's point number two, very briefly. Verse eight, Christ became a servant to the circumcision. Notice the word servant.

He left heaven. He's a missionary. He's leaving all of his security, all of his comforts, all of his glory, all of his wealth.

He became poor for your sake that you might become rich. And he comes down. He serves as a Jewish carpenter and then a teacher and then a Messiah, a dying lover of our souls.

Why? Verse nine. For the Gentiles to glorify God for his mercy. What's another word for glorify God? Exalt in God.

So it's all about exaltation for the nations. So, all this point does is underline something in the first point. Namely, that when we educate for exaltation, not only is there a flow of thought that should get us outside of ourselves, but we need to make crystal clear we are about producing a certain kind of servant.

Namely, dying servants who live for the glory of God among the nations. What do I mean? Let's just put it real starkly. Parents, we want your kids.

We want your kids. For Jesus. Totally.

Or let's put it more controversially yet. If in this church, we parents, you, me, any of us. I got a 26 year old.

I got a four year old. So I cover the whole spectrum. If we parents prefer that our children grow up, get a nice job, with a nice house, in a nice neighborhood, and a nice car, with nice children, giving me nice grandchildren, and having nice retirement programs, and very accessible to nice hospitals.

Over, they're becoming missionaries. You are out of step with this church. If that's your preference.

You are out of step with this church, and you're going to have several possibilities. One, change. That's my preference for you.

That's why I'm preaching this sermon. You can change now, as I'm preaching, and let the word of God land on you, that you will let goods and kindred go, goods and kindred, kindred, go, this mortal life also, and say, if my children were become missionaries to the hard places of the world, and I wouldn't see my grandchildren, but once every four years, I would praise God with all my heart. Or, you can stay here and be very uncomfortable.

Or you can leave the church. Those are your three options. You can change, you can stay here and be uncomfortable, or you can leave.

But you need to know, we want your kids, we're going after them. And if you don't want them, you better leave. Because we're going after your kids.

And we're going after you. You see those big signs around the church? Finishers, finishers, that means people my age, who have about ten years to go, who have made enough money, most of you, many of

you, maybe not most, many of you, you don't need to work anymore. You're free to do anything you want to do, and you finish by going to the hard places of the world, or helping other people get to the hard places of the world.

We are going to educate to produce radical, risk-taking, leave-it-all, joyful, Christ-exalting, people-loving children, who when they grow up, will leave this Disney world called America, and go to the real world where the needs are. And we want you on board. If you just want a comfortable, easy, country club kind of Christianity, change, or leave.

Because we don't want it. It's a disrepute to Jesus. It's a dishonor to our Father in Heaven.

It's misleading and destructive to your children. There is no more dangerous place for children than America. I speak out a very, very, very good experience.

We want to produce John Patton's, and parents like John Patton's parents. I lectured on John Patton, the missionaries of the New Hebrides, who lived about 100 years ago, at the pastor's conference, and so I want to, I got to give you this, because it is so powerful. John Patton felt a call to be a missionary in Scotland when he was 12.

He went to Glasgow, and for 10 years he became an urban city missionary until he was 32. And then the call came for a replacement for Williams, and I forget the other missionary's name, who 17 years earlier had been clubbed to death on the island of Aramanga, and eaten by cannibals, and the church was ready to send another force back in there, and they asked for volunteers, and he looked around, and nobody was volunteering, and so he volunteered himself at 32 to leave his successful city mission ministry, and everybody thought he was crazy, you've got a successful ministry, what are you going to do that for? You'll be eaten by cannibals, to which he said, you're going to be eaten by worms. But he was torn to pieces inside, and so where did he go? He went to his father and mother, and he asked them, what do you think I should do? Now 17 years ago, that's 1983, friends eaten by cannibals.

And your son at 32, with a bride of a year or so, wants to go to the island. No Westerners. What do you say to him? Here's what they said.

When you were given to us, your father and mother laid you upon the altar. They're first born to be consecrated, if God saw fit, as a missionary of the cross. And it has been our constant prayer that you might be prepared, qualified, and led to this very decision.

And we pray with all our heart that the Lord may accept your offering, long spare you, and give you many souls from the heathen world for your hire. That's the kind of parent we want to breed, and that's the kind of child we want to breed. When we say education for exaltation, we mean become servants, love people, lay down your life, give up your kindred, give up your house, give up your securities, go far away from hospitals, far away from 911, into malaria-infested places, and risk it all in order that verse 9 would come true.

The nations would glorify God for his mercy. So that's my second point, and the last one is just a word, just an exhortation. How are you going to get that strength, parents? Some of you are feeling real put on the spot right now, because it isn't in you.

I had one young woman come up to me. She said, thank you for the reaffirmation. They just made the decision last week to do a mission thing for a year.

And she said, a year ago I was sitting here, and I was in the category of, that's the last thing in my head. And today, we've made the commitment, my husband and I, to go. That can happen.

So it doesn't matter where you are right now as you're listening. What matters is whether the Holy Spirit is at work in your life, and whether you will yield to his work and begin to pray and seek. You know, you've got three possibilities.

You can be a goer, you can be a sender, or you can be disobedient. That's all. There is no other alternative.

You can be a goer, you can be a sender, and you can be a radical goer and a radical sender. Or, you can be disobedient. So where are you going to get the strength to be the goer or the sender radically? And the answer is verse 13.

Now, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing. So believe this God of hope. We have a God of hope.

He's a God of hope, and he fills us with joy and peace in believing, so that we will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. The key is hope. The key is joy.

The key is peace. Oh, the road to missions is a hard road, not a joyless road. It's a hard road to the unreached peoples of the world.

It is not a joyless road. Just look at all those words in verses 9 following. Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles.

I will sing your name. Missionaries are singers to the nations. Again, he says, rejoice, oh Gentiles, rejoice.

Don't miss that word. With his people, and again, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles. Let the peoples praise him.

The word, the message of missions is, let the nations be glad. Psalm 67, 4. Joy for all the peoples is the point. We really mean exaltation.

The joy of the Lord, parents, is your strength. And the joy comes from hope. Hope for those kids to have significant lives, even if they only live 30 years.

Instead of insignificant lives and live for 70 years. I mean, which do you want? Really? You want 70 years of insignificant, posh security? Really? Give me a break. You don't want that.

You want 30 or 40 maybe years or less of real flat out. Give it all to God's significance so that when you stand by their grave, you know they lived it right. There are so many parents in this church who at the funerals of their 50 or 60 year old kids have to know they've just been carnal.

Sure they're secure. Sure they're well off. Sure they've got grandkids.

And it'll mean anything. It's so carnal. It's so worldly.

You don't want that. So get on board with the radical kind of education for exaltation that will change your kids and change your life. That's our heart's cry, Lord, in education for exaltation.

To spread, to spread, to spread through all the earth abroad, to all the 187 untargeted people groups. And all the hundreds of unreached people groups, as well as all the neighborhoods and all the families. The glory of thy name.

Lord, please, in mercy cover our B-plus plan. Prosper the work of our hands. And all the people said, Amen.

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