

The Global Glorification of the Merciful God

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the importance of glorifying God for His mercy, highlighting the joy, hope, praise, and singing that should stem from experiencing His mercy. It delves into the foundational truths of God's faithfulness, the global mission of glorifying God, and the significance of being happy in God's mercy to truly glorify Him.

Scripture: Romans 15:9, Zechariah 1:78, Revelation 5:9, Psalms 67:3, Romans 15:11

Topics: "Glorifying God", "The Joy of His Mercy"

Description

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Transcript

So we ask for the miracle, Lord, of hearing, the miracle of faithfulness to your word, the miracle of the Holy Spirit's coming to North Campus and the South Campus and here downtown, that ears would be given, the eyes of the heart would be open, and that you would set in motion movements and missions at this church which would exceed anything that has happened in the last 150 years, so that our whole shift in focus after this year of celebration would be on the glories of the future and your faithfulness in it. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen. When you read the letters of the Apostle Paul, you discover that there's a trademark, and the trademark is he builds modest houses and then digs mild deep foundations under them.

For example, marriage is a modest house, how you treat each other, modest house. Paul builds that house in Ephesians 5, and then he puts the drill bit in place, and he drills a mile down to put a foundation under it that goes more or less like this. The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, infinite eternal God, having a bride by predestination before the foundation of the world, destined to be holy and pure and blameless, came into the world as the God-man, was crucified, dead, buried, alive, and he has purified her for himself, and beyond all the mysteries of Genesis 2.24, has made himself one flesh with her, one body, so that they might enjoy each other forever and ever and ever.

So this afternoon, guys, treat her well. There's another example of a modest house with a mild deep foundation built under it. Romans 14, the vegans and the meat lovers in Rome are quarreling.

That's what Romans 14 is about, and so Paul builds a little house, and the house goes like this. Get along and stop judging each other. That's the house.

It's a simple house, and then he fastens the drill bit, and he sinks this mild deep foundation under it that goes like this. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord.

So whether we live or whether we die, we belong to the Lord, for to this end Christ died and rose again that he might be Lord of the living and of the dead. Vegans, meat lovers, to which some impatient pragmatist might say to Paul, we're talking about vegetables, meat, steak. What's with this resurrection and death and lordship? Lighten up, for goodness sake.

You don't have to go get deep and theological about everything. Which brings us to our text. Please have your Bibles open, because you've got to see this.

You've got to see this. Don't take any preacher's word for anything. You have Bibles.

What a privilege. Open them. I know they're on your phone.

That's fine. The text starts at verse 8, and you will notice that the first word in verse 8 is four. Another name for that is a massive drill bit, this big, and so he fastens this drill bit and starts to drill, and he drills down a mile in this mission's text.

But what's the modest house that we're not preaching about? We could preach about the foundation, but what's the house? The house is verse 7. Welcome each other, Bethlehem. Welcome each other the way Christ has welcomed you. Fasten the drill bit.

We're going a mile down to support that. We're going to the globe. We're going to heaven.

We're going to hell under that little house. We often think the other way around, don't we? Well, we're supposed to get along with each other as a church so that we can support missions. Not in this text.

It's the other way around. This text makes God's global purpose for the nations what holds up getting along in church. You see that? You will see it if you don't yet.

The four, the drill bit at the beginning of verse 8 supports welcome one another. God's been doing this for 150 years at Bethlehem, making global missions the massive support for the church, not the other way around, only. Let's watch him do it.

Drill bit is fastened, verse 8. 4. I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised. So male circumcision was the sign of the covenant of belonging to Israel, the people of God. So he became a servant to Israel as the Jewish Messiah.

So that sentence, Christ became a servant to the circumcised, means Christ was incarnate as the God-man Messiah to Israel. So when the high priest said to him at the most likely moment, the almost unlikely moment, are you the Christ, the Messiah, the son of the living God? He said, I am. And they killed him.

As the Messiah, he said, I have come not to be served, but to serve and to give my life a ransom for many. Or the way Paul put it, he, he didn't count equality with God, a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself,

taking the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross. So now the sentence means Christ became a servant in dying for his people and rising again, namely Israel.

And he didn't do this under coercion. He didn't do it because he was forced to do it. Nobody takes my life from me.

I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down. I have authority to take it up.

So this service rendered in death and resurrection was free. I choose this for you. Why, why did the second person of the Trinity become incarnate as the God-man, the Jewish Messiah, laying down his life, taking it back freely for Israel? Why do you do that? Next phrase, to show God's truthfulness.

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness for the sake of God's truth. Christ came into the world as the Jewish Messiah to prove to the universe God tells the truth, nothing but the truth, always the truth. He never lies.

Everything he says happens. That's why I came, to show that, to make that crystal clear. Every word of God comes true.

Then at the end of verse 8, you with me? At the end of verse 8, beginning of verse 9, Paul drills down into two purposes as guaranteed by that truthfulness. Because God is absolutely truthful, two things are going to happen. One, at the end of verse 8, God's promises are made to the patriarchs firm.

He confirms. He makes them firm. They're going to happen.

He doesn't say he does them all. He just makes sure in dying, in rising, they're going to happen. They are firm.

They're confirmed. My blood, my resurrection makes them firm. All the promises of God are what in Christ Jesus? Yes! No, maybe.

That's the first purpose. Second, verse 9, in order that the Gentiles will glorify God for his mercy. So let's read it all the way through.

Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness. One, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs. Two, in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

And you might jump to the conclusion that those two purposes are distinct and separate. Confirm the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That's one purpose.

Bring about the global glorification of the God of mercy is the second purpose. I doubt it. Because God's purpose for the Gentiles to be saved was in the promises to the patriarchs.

Right? We know this. We're Bible people. Genesis 12, verse 3, I will bless.

He's talking to Abraham. The promise made to the patriarchs. I will bless those who bless you.

And in you, all the families of the earth will be blessed. They're not separate promises. When the Jewish Messiah came to serve Israel, when he died and rose again to confirm the promises made to Israel, in that very act, he secured the global Gentile glorification of the God of mercy.

In the very act of dying for Israel. Confirming the promises to Israel. Because that's what God promised to Abraham.

Namely, the global glorification of his name for his mercy. So God is true. He keeps his word to Israel.

And that word promise to Israel includes promises to the Gentiles that they would be blessed through Israel. Never think, as mission focus rolls around year after year, never, never, never think that it doesn't include the Jewish people. Jesus came into the world to confirm promises made to the Jews.

And those promises are for a great salvation as they believe in Messiah Jesus. And that's coming. 15 million Jews live in the world.

15 million, give or take. 65,000 of them are in Minnesota. Almost all of them are here in the Twin Cities.

Some in Duluth. There are 24 synagogues in the Twin Cities. Some tiny, a few very large.

Their only hope is Jesus. Messiah Jesus. Every mission's focus that rolls around includes them.

Whatever the focus is, it includes them. I pause here to say to all campuses, some of you in this room, these rooms, are called, you will know this, to focus your lives on Jewish evangelism globally and locally. An unusual burden will be given to you, and you will find your call right here.

Join Christ the Messiah in confirming the promises to the patriarchs. Let's focus for the rest of our time on God's second purpose, which is included in the first purpose. Let's read it again.

Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness. First purpose, in order to confirm promises given to the patriarchs. Then, second, to make explicit what's in the first in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

And here's the way we do it at Bethlehem. I have three questions to ask, because questions open texts, and they shine. Question number one, who are the Gentiles? Question number two, what is God's mercy? To question number three, how do the Gentiles glorify God for his mercy? Okay, here we go.

Number one, who are the Gentiles? The answer is given in the four quotations from the Old Testament in verses 9 through 12. I'm going to read them, and you notice that Gentiles are mentioned in every quotation, but keep your eyes peeled for a clue as to who they are. Here we go.

As it is written, therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name. And again it is said, rejoice all Gentiles with his people. And again, praise the Lord all you Gentiles.

Let the peoples extol you. And again, Isaiah says, the root of Jesse will come, even he who rises to rule the Gentiles. In him will the Gentiles hope.

Why did Paul choose these texts? It's pretty obvious. To show that already in the Old Testament, the promise for the Gentiles is there. Like, the promise made to the patriarchs, it's not just Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the fathers, that's David, that's Moses.

The promises made to the patriarchs are so about the nations, the Gentiles. Oops, got ahead of myself maybe, huh? Why'd I use the word nations? So who are the Gentiles from those verses? And the answer is in verse 11, because of the parallel. Verse 11.

And again, praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let the peoples extol him. Now, peoples with an s is different than people without an s. Remember a little child came up to me one time, obviously well-taught, and said, people is already plural. That's a well-taught child.

Has a few things to learn culturally, globally, vastly important things to learn, but I thought that was a very good comment. This means when Paul parallels Gentiles with peoples, he means this. I'll tell you, Bible Bethlehem people, it's true that often the term Gentiles refers to individual non-Jews.

That's true. It's just not the whole truth, and it's not the truth here. Here, the term Gentiles has its ethne meaning, that's what the word is in Greek, ethne, ethnic.

Here, it is those ethnic groups that are called peoples. This text, Psalm 17 verse 1, goyim in the first half of the verse, umim in the second half of the verse, both plural, Gentiles, peoples. So, on the wall up there, it's on the wall at the South Campus, it's on the wall at the North Campus.

We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things, for the joy of all, say it, peoples, through Jesus Christ. That's amazing. That's amazing.

Not one church in a thousand puts the word peoples in its mission statement. We're stuck with being a missionary church for the globe. It's in our identity.

That's been our mission statement since 1994. You wonder why there's a mission's focus and why it's in the blood of our people and why we talk it and pray it and long for it. God gave us an identity.

We exist for this, to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things. In this text, that would mean mercy for the joy of all peoples. So, my answer to the first question is, Gentiles, yes, means individual non-Jews, but here the focus is peoples, in order that God might be glorified by the peoples for his mercy.

Second question, what is God's mercy? Mercy and grace are overlapping realities in the Bible. You do a study of grace beginning to end, study of mercy from beginning to end, they overlap like this. So, overlapping realities means they're more than the parts that overlap, but where they overlap, right here, this grace, this mercy, where they overlap, they have the common meaning of treating someone kindly and helpfully.

That's the common meaning of grace and mercy, treating someone kindly and helpfully. Now, the difference is this, when mercy is drawn out, it's drawn out in response to misery, and when grace is drawn out, it's drawn out in spite of guilt. Are you with me? Which means you can show mercy to an animal.

Proverbs 12 verse 10, a good man is merciful to his beast. You can't show grace to an animal, because animals don't have the moral wherewithal to be guilty morally. We do.

So, these two words repeatedly in the Bible are used virtually interchangeably when it comes to human beings. When dealing with God's mercy towards sinners, he uses mercy and grace over and over again, because our greatest misery is hell. Suffering in hell forever cut off from the goodness of God, and our sentence to hell is owing to our guilt.

You can't separate human misery from human guilt. They are bound together. Our worst misery flows from our guilt.

Therefore, no human being except one has ever lived whose misery was not accompanied by guilt. Therefore, all of God's mercy toward humans is gracious. But here, Paul strikes the note of mercy.

Let that sink in. That the Gentiles, the peoples, might glorify, I mean verse 9, are you lost? I mean verse 9, your eyes on it? That the Gentiles, the peoples, glorify God for his mercy. Mercy.

When God came down on Mount Sinai because Moses wanted to know his name, tell me your name. I want to know your name. I want to know your character.

I want to know who you are. Do you remember what he said? I'm Yahweh. I'm Yahweh.

I am merciful and gracious. That's what he said. First thing out of his mouth after saying Yahweh, Yahweh, that's my name, is mercy.

The creator of the universe identifies himself first as merciful towards misery. Thank you. Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, was filled with the Holy Spirit in chapter 1 of Luke, and as he overflowed with the Holy Spirit, he said that Jesus is coming and John is coming, hear the words in verse 78, because of the bowels of the mercy of God.

That is a risky image. God has no intestines. So what's he doing? When Christ became a servant to the circumcised, he gave his life as a ransom for many, and they sang a new song in heaven when they saw it.

You were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. In other words, a tsunami of mercy was unleashed when Christ died to say, I'm true, I keep my promises. Bowels, bowels, intestines of mercy in God.

It surely means at least this, God doesn't just have brains of mercy, he has bowels of mercy. Some of you have brains of mercy and no bowels of mercy. You know it ought to be.

You don't feel anything when you see a poor person or the lost or the nations. Don't feel anything. God's not like that.

He's got bowels. He's got intestines, and they churn with mercy when he sees misery. Isn't that amazing? That's amazing.

I'm not making this up. So my answer to the second question is, what is the mercy of God? It's the gracious moving of God toward mercy, because Christ died for our guilt and our misery. Last question.

How do the peoples, the Gentiles, glorify God for his mercy? How? How do you? So this gets really personal right now, because you're one of these, right? We may have a few Jewish people listening, and I'm so happy if we do, but I'm thinking most of you are in the second purpose here. You exist as a Gentile to glorify God for his mercy. How do you do it this afternoon? Because that's why the gospel got to us in the West, okay? The answer to that question is going to be found in verses 9 to 12 again, but let me make sure, if your eyes are with me on verse 9, that you see what it does not say.

Verse 9 does not say, in order that the Gentiles might receive mercy. It's true, but it's not what it says. It does not say, in order that the Gentiles glorify God's mercy.

That's true, but that's not what it says. What it says is, in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. God's mission to the world is radically God-focused.

God's mission to the world is radically God-exalting. The end of all things is God, a God so great, uses the word glory, so glorious, so great, so valuable, so beautiful, that his glorious fullness overflows in mercy. Mercy is the stream, and God is the fountain.

Missions leads people to the stream and then up to God. I hope that's what's happened for you. I hope you're not just stuck at the stream.

My misery is over! My misery is over! God, it doesn't matter about God, my misery is over! How sad is that? Missions leads people to the stream and then up the stream to the fountain. The goal of all missions is that peoples would glorify God for his mercy. That's not the answer to the question.

I'm just clarifying the question. How's that happen? Okay, now the answer. I'm gonna read, while you read with me, I'm gonna read, not out loud, just read quietly.

I'm gonna read verses 9 to 12, and as I read there, I'm gonna emphasize the words that answer the question, and you tabulate them in your mind and think about how they're related to each other. You with me? Here we go. Verse 9. Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing to your name.

And again it is said, rejoice, O Gentiles, with these people. And again, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let the peoples extol him. And again, Isaiah says, the root of Jesse will come, even the one who rises to rule the Gentiles.

Then in him the Gentiles will hope. This gets really good. I think extolling and praising, in verse 11, are the same.

Okay, so I'm not gonna isolate extolling as a separate response, which leaves us now with this. Praise, sing, rejoice, and hope. Here's my question.

Of those four responses that glorify the God of mercy, what's at the bottom? That is, what is the reality of human response that authenticates, makes the others real and authentic, gives rise to the authenticity of the other three? Hear my answer. You judge. Joy is at the bottom.

Rejoice, verse 11, rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people. Joy is the root. Joy in seeing and savoring the glory of the God of mercy.

Second, hope. I'm building from the bottom to the top. Hope, what's that? Hope is the expectation that the joy gets better and better forever.

Never gets bad, never gets boring. Hope is joy in the future expectation. I just want more joy, more of this, more of this sweetness.

I want it to go on forever and ever. So we're hoping. We're rejoicing in God because he's merciful, and we're hoping it will go on forever and ever.

Third, I would put praise, because praise can be quiet and in your heart, and nobody see it, right? My heart right now, in fact, is praising God. I'm very excited about this text. I love the God of this text.

My heart is singing, but you can't hear it. Well, you hear a little bit, but so praise can be audible and can be quiet, but singing, that's audible if I'm putting it at the top. So how do the nations, the peoples, make God look glorious? First and most fundamentally, they are happy in him.

They are happy. Being happy in the glorious God of mercy is the fundamental requirement to glorify God. Being happy in God, the kind of God who is so full of greatness and beauty and worth that he spills over in a tsunami of misery-relieving mercy for the world, and then you don't ever want that to die, and so you hope.

And because you tasted how good he is and how merciful he is and how therefore glorious he is, your heart is praising him, and therefore when you get together here and hopefully in the shower and other places, you sing to him. Now we're almost done. Do you see where we are? Do you see where we've landed at the bottom of this mild deep? What does it mean that we've landed here, that we've gotten to this place in the message? It means that the way the peoples glorify God are by being glad in God for his mercy.

So here we are, a mild deep foundation under Bethlehem. Welcome each other, verse 7. Welcome each other the way you've been welcomed mercifully by Jesus. Welcome each other, and then go.

The drill bit is attached, verse 8, and he drills incarnation of the Son of God, service of Christ's sacrifice, declaration of God's truth, confirmation of his promises, and the global glorification of the merciful God. God has been doing this for a hundred and fifty years at this church. He has sustained us and brought us through worse times than the last year, believe me.

He has sustained us for the sake of the world, for the sake of world missions, but that's not the point in this text. The point in this text is God's mission to be glorified for his mercy among the peoples supports the church, not the other way around. So may God raise up many of you for the sake of the nations and for the sake of the church.

Let the nations praise you, O God. Let all the nations praise you. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, high prices have been paid to join you in this joy-producing mission of displaying the mercy of God to the world, and we praise you and thank you for the price that's been paid. Some of us are going to gather tonight at six o'clock for missions in the main hall and seek your face for your purpose in our lives, and I pray that tonight and when the pastors preach next week there would be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon this church for the sake of her 150-year-long global mission, and that the best, most fruitful days of global missions would be the next 25 years, far exceeding anything of the last 150.

We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

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