

What Kind of Heart Does Christ Deserve

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the importance of responding to the greatness, beauty, and worth of Christ with a heart devoted to experiencing Him as the supreme treasure, leading to maximum satisfaction in this life and the next. It explores the concept of Christian hedonism, highlighting the need to glorify Christ by treasuring Him above all else and finding delight in Him. The sermon delves into various biblical passages and pictures to illustrate the fitting response of the human heart to the value of God in Christ, emphasizing joy, gladness, delight, contentment, desire, and satisfaction in Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 13:44, John 6:35, Matthew 10:37, Philippians 3:8, Philippians 1:21

Topics: "Christian Hedonism", "Treasuring Christ"

Description

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Transcript

So Father, we come now boldly into your presence asking that because Christ died for us and rose again, you might grant that souls would be saved, hearts would be strengthened, marriages would be mended, churches would be made strong, mission would be advanced by helping us see what Christian hedonism is. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, God, and the word was God. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth.

Jesus said, Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day and he saw it and was glad. And they said to him, you're not yet 50 years old. And have you seen Abraham? And Jesus said, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

Thomas said to Jesus, Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way? And Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father but by me.

And Philip said, Lord, show us the father. And Jesus said to him, have I been so long with you? And you don't know me. If you have seen me, you have seen the father.

Jesus cried out, whoever sees me, sees him who sent me, because Jesus is the image of the invisible God. In him, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

By him, all things were created in heaven and on earth and visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Jesus and for Jesus. He upholds the universe by the word of his power.

In him, all things hold together. And yet, though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant and being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form.

And he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. He committed no sin, none. Neither was deceit found in his mouth.

And so it came to pass by one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous. For God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

He bore our sins in his body on the tree. While we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. And when that time approached, he said, no one takes my life from me.

I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. So, after making purifications for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

God has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

God has put all things in subjection to him, all angels and all authorities and all powers. And now he is the head of the body of the church, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. He has authority to forgive sins.

He speaks and the wind and the sea obey him. He commands unclean spirits, they come out. He rebukes fevers, they depart.

He causes blind to see, deaf to hear, lame to walk, lepers are made clean. He commands the dead and they live. He suffers little children to come to him and scatters the proud in the thoughts of their hearts and brings down the mighty from their thrones.

He doesn't break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick until he brings justice to victory. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge no one ever spoke like this man. To know him is to know the unsearchable riches of Christ and he's coming back again on the clouds even as they saw him go, but this time with holy angels.

And with power and great glory. And he will deliver us from the wrath to come. And he will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him to subject all things to himself.

In that day, wonder of wonders, he will dress himself for service and have us recline at table and he will come and serve us. And he will still be meek and lonely in heart and yet his eyes will be like a flame of fire. His feet like burnished bronze refined in a furnace.

His voice like the roar of many waters and from his mouth will come a sharp two-edged sword and we will see his face like the sun shining in full strength and so we will forever be with the Lord and we will see no longer through a glass, darkly but face to face. Rejoicing in hope will give way to the joy of sight. The pleasures of every taste that bound us to Christ in this world explode into the pleasures of heavenly feasting.

And we will know finally, not in part but perfectly, that in his presence is fullness of joy and in his right hand are pleasures forevermore. So the question is, how do you respond to this Christ in a way that honors him as he deserves? What kind of thought process and heart response would be appropriate for that? Christian hedonism exists to answer that question but before I give you the answer, I want to lay some more foundation from scripture. So we began with this short, inadequate, precious, glorious biblical portrait of Jesus.

So let's consider how the totality of scripture brings forth and forms our response to the greatness and the beauty and the worth of Christ. So we've already seen that all the fullness of deity dwells in him. He is God, he is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature.

And we have, by faith, beheld in his word and embraced this divine glory. That's what makes us a Christian. If you've seen him as he stands forth from his word, you have seen God.

If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. Therefore, if you have met God as he is truly revealed in the Old Testament, you have met Christ. If you have met Christ as he is truly revealed in the New Testament, you have met the God of Abraham, David, Moses, Isaiah.

God has no beauty that Christ does not share. Christ has no beauty that God does not share, for he is God. To know the beauties of Christ is to know the beauties of God.

To know the beauties of God is to know the beauties of Christ. No matter where they are revealed in the Bible, the word was and is God. Therefore, all the language of all the Bible that describes the proper affections of the human heart toward God is describing the proper affections of the human heart toward Christ.

All of them. So let's consider them. Let's consider the scope of this language of a heart's fitting response to such a Christ.

It is the language most prominently of joy. Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vine, the produce of the olive fail, and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation while I starve to death.

That's Habakkuk 3, 17 to eight. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy. Rejoice in the Lord always.

And again, I will say rejoice. And it's the language not just of joy, but of deep joy, strong joy, exuberant joy. Psalm 16, in your presence is fullness of joy.

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for great is your reward in heaven. It's like a lamb coming out of the stall when they persecute you. Shout for joy, O you righteous.

Psalm 33, it's the language of gladness. I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Be glad in the Lord, Psalm 32.

O Lord, you make him glad with the joy of your presence, Psalm 21. It's the language of delight. You give him to drink of the river of your delights.

Delight yourself in the Lord. It's the language of contentment. For the sake of Christ then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities.

It's the language of desiring and panting after and thirsting and fainting as a deer pants for the flowing stream. So my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

O God, you are my God. Earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you.

My flesh faints for you as in a dry and weary land where there's no water. Whom have I in heaven but you? And on earth there's nothing I desire besides you. It's the language of tasting.

O taste and see that the Lord is good. It's the language of sweetness. How sweet are your words to my taste.

Sweeter than honey to my mouth. It's the language of exalting. The poor among mankind will exalt in the Holy One of Israel.

Those who love your name will exalt in you. I will be glad and exalt in you, O Most High. It's the language of pleasure.

At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. It's the language of satisfaction. As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness.

When I awake, I shall be satisfied beholding your form. My soul will be satisfied when I remember you upon my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night. Satisfy us in the morning of God with your steadfast love that we may rejoice and be glad in you all our days.

It's the language of happiness. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him who brings good news of, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns. Therefore, since God has no greatness that Christ does not share, no greatness, no beauty, no worth that Christ does not share, all the language of the Bible about our hearts in relation to God describe our hearts in relation to Jesus.

If our heart is right. If our heart is right toward God, Christ is our exceeding joy. Christ is our gladness.

Christ is our delight, our contentment, our desire, our sweetness, our exaltation, our pleasure, our satisfaction, and our happiness. Christ Himself, not first His gifts. Christ Himself is everything.

God made the human heart for this. He made your heart and all human hearts for this. To relate to Christ in this way, that's why He made human beings.

If our hearts do not respond to God in this way, to God in Christ, we do not respond as we ought. We are falling short. How serious is that? When we turn to the New Testament now for confirmation and clarification of this affectional heart response that we've just seen mainly from the Psalms, but other places, when we turn to the New Testament for confirmation and clarification, I see at least five pictures, pictures of the proper Christ-exalting response to the greatness and the beauty and the worth of Christ.

I see a picture of a treasure. I see a picture of food and drink. I see a picture of family relations.

I see a picture of excrement. And I see a picture of a death wish. Let's look at them one at a time.

So the point of these pictures, as I see them, is to confirm that the kind of response we just described is in fact expected and crucial if we are to glorify Jesus as he deserves. Picture number one, the treasure. Matthew 13, 44.

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up, and then in his joy, he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field. That's a picture of what it means to embrace Christ as the king of your life. This is not about heaven in the abstract.

This is about the king of heaven offering himself and his rule in people's lives. It's essentially the same as when Jesus said, anyone who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. That's Luke 14, 33.

Anyone who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. So the path into discipleship and the path into the kingdom are one path. And what is the path? Jesus says it's the finding of a treasure and then with joy, selling or renouncing everything to have the treasure.

And for years, I overlooked the phrase *apotes caras*. In his joy, he sold everything he had. It's like David Livingstone saying, I never made a sacrifice.

You did, you did. You died on your knees in your tent, 13 years younger than I am. In the middle of Africa, all by yourself, you did.

To which he would say, no, I got Jesus. Before I was a Christian hedonist, I used to think that it was the choice, the decision to sell all and follow him. I have decided to follow Jesus.

Summer camp, 1967. And now, I don't believe that's the decisive thing. I believe that Christ is properly honored most when we sell all with joy.

Because that's what it says. In his joy, he sold his books. Take anything else.

He did. And it was the joy, it was the joy that highlighted the value of the treasure. Not just the decision.

That's picture number one. Number two. The picture of food and drink, John 6, 35.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. So, come to me and I will satisfy your soul hunger.

Believe in me and I will satisfy your soul thirst. And I take that to mean that true, saving belief or faith is a spiritual coming. Not physical, but a spiritual coming to Jesus in such a way that your soul thirst and your soul hunger, I'm home.

I'm home. That's what it was made for, right here. Satisfied.

Jesus means that he's the only one, he's the only one who can be so nutritious and so beneficial to the human soul that we are satisfied in him. And to the degree that we enjoy Christ as our soul satisfaction, we magnify his life-giving fullness. Picture number three.

Family relations. Matthew 10, 37. 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. The love in view here is not the love of your enemy that you may not like, which is good. You should love your enemy that you don't like.

Jesus said so. Love your enemies. Pray for them.

It's not what this is talking about. This is love for mother and father and son and daughter. This is family affection of the sweetest, deepest, most intense and precious kind.

The kind of affection that makes you heave with sobs when he or she dies. If you love Jesus with less love, less affection than them, he says, you're not worthy of me. That's what he says.

If you don't have a family affection for me greater than the family you have, you're not worthy of me. What does it mean to be worthy of Jesus? Well, it certainly does not mean deserve Jesus. Be worthy of Jesus means, oh, finally I deserve Jesus.

Finally I deserve everything Jesus is and has for me. You don't ever deserve Jesus, ever. Not in all eternity will you ever deserve Jesus.

To be worthy of him is like Colossians 1.10. Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. It's a walk that is fitting. It's suitable.

It's a walk that is showing how much the Lord is worth for you. So, Jesus is saying, if you have an emotional bond with your most precious family relation that is greater than your emotional bond to me, your heart does not reflect my true worth. You're not worthy of me.

You are unsuitable to be my follower. That's pretty crazy, pretty radical. He talked like that all the time.

Nobody ever spoke like this man. Picture number four. A picture of excrement.

Philippians 3.8. Indeed, I count everything as lost because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as excrement in order that I might gain Christ. This is the only place in the Bible, the only place in Paul, where Paul uses scatological language.

And the point is not to show the intrinsic worthlessness of things, but the infinite difference in value between Christ and everything else apart from Christ. The difference in preciousness is so great that you can describe everything else by comparison as dung. When Paul said in the next chapter, Philippians 4, I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

He meant when I am in need, I don't lose my contentment by craving what I don't have. And when I have plenty and I'm abounding, which he had in this letter. Epaphroditus had brought him way more than he

needed.

He meant I'm not lured away from my contentment in Christ by the pull of this plenty. You can lose your contentment either way. The preciousness of Christ is put on display by the measure of our contentment in him with or without anything.

Picture number five, the death wish. Philippians 121 to 23. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart in Christ, for that is far better.

So my desire is to die, to depart and be with Christ. Why? It is far better. Three emphatic words in Greek piled up in a most grammatically awkward way.

Croissant, better. Malon croissant, more better. Palo malon croissant, more better by much.

To make the point, I wanna die, but I won't because I love you and there's more to be taken into account here than my private pleasures. I've got other kinds of pleasures to be had here for your sake. Those are my five pictures of how our hearts are to respond to the greatness and beauty and worth of Christ.

So let me sum up where we've been so far. Number one, we began with a sketch of the greatness and the beauty and the worth of Christ. Then we asked, how shall we respond to such a magnificent person in such a way as to properly draw attention to his magnificence? To glorify, magnify him.

And I answered, Christian hedonism exists to answer that question. And I put it on hold and said, no, let's go first and draw out of the Bible some language for how to respond to this God who is Jesus Christ. He should be our exceeding joy, our gladness, our delight, our contentment, our desire, our sweetness, our exultation, our pleasure, our satisfaction, our happiness.

And then number five, to confirm that, we went to the New Testament and gathered up five pictures to show how the heart should respond to Jesus. He is to be so desired as a supreme treasure that we sell all to heaven. He is to be so desired as a thirst quencher, soul satisfier, that we turn away from all worldly fountains of food and drink in order to be totally satisfied in him.

He is so desired as a family member that our affection for him surpasses all our family loves. He is to be so desired as a supreme value that everything by comparison to him is dung. And he is to be so desired above all that life can give and death can take that we would rather be at home with the Lord if it was just our joy without regard to anybody else.

Or to sum it up one more way. First, Christ, supreme in greatness and beauty and worth. Second, scripture, God's word defining with absolute authority the fitting way that the human heart responds in a fitting way to the value of God in Christ.

Third, Christian hedonism. Implicit in these five pictures is a command from God. Live a life devoted to as much satisfaction in Christ himself as you can possibly have in this life and the next.

That is Christian hedonism. Or to be just a little more precise, Christian hedonism is a life devoted to experiencing Christ himself as our supreme treasure with as much satisfaction as possible in this life and the next. Now, for some of us, teachers, pastors, elders, theologians, this life of devotion to Christ as our supreme satisfaction involves us in answering a never ending stream of questions from people.

That's our job. That's why we study, teach, preach, write articles, books. Of all the questions that could be asked, these two I think are the most important.

One, is such a life that you just called Christian hedonism, devoted to maximizing your satisfaction in God as much as you can in this world and the next, is such a life essential, necessary in order for the human heart to glorify Christ as he deserves? Second question, if so, how does it do that? So I end with these. Let's answer them in reverse order. How does a life devoted to satisfaction in Christ glorify Christ? You all know intuitively that it does.

Yes, you do. Every single person in this room knows it, unless you're mentally ill. And I mean that seriously.

Mentally ill people don't grasp this kind of thing. It's tragic. You all know that to spend time with someone because you have to, is belittling to them.

And to spend time with them because you want to, honors them. Every single one of you knows that. You feel it.

Written on your heart. Dutiful dating is demeaning. Dating for joy is honoring.

Everybody knows this. You probably never, I mean most people have never articulated it to themselves. They just live it, they know that.

Unless they're sick. But how does it work? We all know it's true. It does work.

How does it work? Let me take you to a passage. I'll read it for you. You don't need to look it up.

A passage in Job, which I know it's spoken by Eliphaz. Bad guy. With very good theology.

Totally misused, okay. So 90% of what these guys say is right. And then they use it all wrong.

They hurt people with it. So if he hadn't used this sentence against Job, we would all sing it. And I am going to read it as true.

Because it's true. Here's what he said. If you lay gold in the dust, then the Almighty will be your gold.

For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty. That's Job 22, 24 to 26. This is the meaning of Jesus' statement.

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. If you stop seeing earthly gold as your treasure, and you start seeing the Almighty as your gold and your treasure, your heart will follow this new seeing with delight. Which means that you can do this backward.

You can trace this backward like this. Where a person finds supreme delight in God as his gold, God is shown to be a treasure. And the gold of the earth is shown to be inferior.

That is the answer. That is how a life devoted to satisfaction in Christ glorifies Christ. When you desire Christ above all things, you implicitly show that Christ is valuable, precious, desirable, a treasure.

And the more intensely you desire him, and the more suffering you are willing to endure without losing your satisfaction in him, the more valuable you show him to be. That is the meaning of glorifying Christ.

That's what it means.

The intensity of my treasuring communicates the worth of the treasure. That's what it means to glorify the treasure. Christ is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him.

Therefore, last sentence, yes, yes, Christian hedonism, a life devoted to enjoying Christ above all is essential for the human heart to glorify Christ as he deserves. Let's pray. And I believe, Father, that almost everybody in this room has that as their life goal, to glorify you, to make you look great and beautiful and worthy just like you are by the way we live, feel, think, respond.

So to the degree that what I have seen here and said is true, faithful to the Bible, would you work this miracle in us? I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

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