

Gravity and Gladness on Sunday Morning - Lesson 2

by John Piper

The essential heart of worship is the experience of being satisfied with God, and our joy and worship are a reflection of God's worth.

Duration: 46:48

Scripture: Psalm 117:1, Matthew 6:33, John 4:23-24, Romans 11:36, Colossians 3:16, 1 Peter 2:9-11, Revelation 4:11

Topics: "Pursuing Joy", "Spiritual Preparation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of pursuing joy in God as our highest duty. He believes that the problem lies in people filling themselves with trivial and worldly things, such as television and advertisements, which diminishes their hunger for God. The speaker encourages the audience to feed their souls with meaningful and enriching content, like reading the Bible or watching great movies, in order to cultivate a hunger for God's word. He also mentions the need for practical preparations, both on Saturday night and Sunday morning, to create an environment conducive to hearing the Word of God.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God Ministries is available at www.DesiringGod.org Okay, we're at point number two in the outline now. And I think we can get through this in 45 minutes or 40 minutes, if we start.

So, we will. Now, for those of you who've been around for a while, Bethlehem that is, this is a lot of repetition here, but I was talking to Chuck the other day about what he should teach on when he goes to Burma or Myanmar in January, because they want him to come over there with a team from here and teach about worship, because the sense that we have from there is that the church is old. It's a hundred years old since we sent out Ola Hansen, who translated the scriptures and brought the Kachin people to a saving knowledge of Christ, and there's been a great people movement to God, and yet the church is old enough now that a lot of it is just tradition.

And they don't have a real clear sense of why they do what they do. And why they sing what they sing and preach the way they preach and so on. And so Chuck and I were talking about what the curriculum might look like in another culture like that.

And he said, now, what of yours would you suggest that I read in order to be as ready as I could be? And I said, well, when all is said and done, the book *Desiring God* and the chapter on worship is about as basic as you can get and drives almost everything that I do. This issue of our pursuit of joy in God, being that by which God is most honored, is so much the warp and woof of everything I think that if I were going to teach on worship from scratch, that's what I would do. This is what I'm going to do here, because if I were to pass over this unit, then even though I might spare you some repetition, I would also leave out the essence.

The inward essence of worship. So here's my thesis. The essential, vital, indispensable, defining heart of worship is the experience of being satisfied with God.

Now, I said that at the beginning of the last section because I viewed these two as one. But all I did in that first section was show you how the New Testament moves from external to internal and formal to heartfelt and really stresses the inward life of the soul in worship as opposed to forms and external and local realities. But I never did in that argue that the essence of that inward experience is a particular thing, namely satisfaction in God.

That's what I'm going to do here. So here my thesis continues to be the essential, vital, indispensable, defining heart of worship is the experience of being satisfied with God. This satisfaction in God magnifies God in the heart.

This explains why the Apostle Paul makes so little distinction between worship as a congregational service and worship as a pattern of daily life. They both have the same root, a passion for treasuring God as infinitely valuable. The impulse for singing a hymn and the impulse for visiting a prisoner is the same.

A thirst for God, a desire to experience as much satisfaction in God as we possibly can. That's my thesis. We'll get to that last point.

Why worship services and worship living are both worship. And it's because they're both rooted in this issue of being satisfied in God. In your heart.

Now, question, is this biblical? The root of our passion and thirst for God is God's own infinite exuberance for God. And I won't read all the ones that I often read in perspectives class or are listed in the missions book. But let's remind ourselves of a few of them, that God creates us for his glory.

My point is that our passion for God's glory is rooted in God's passion for God's glory. Bring my sons from afar, my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, who I created for my glory. So God created us for his glory.

Now, where was I? Yes, I was with Ravi Zacharias last Friday night at his annual fundraiser in Williamsburg, Virginia. And I delivered a basic combination of all my Christian hedonism thinking to about 350 folks. And one of them, a professor of theology, was there and he heard me when I was saying God does all these things for his glory.

He heard me implying God becomes more glorious in doing these things. Because that's what we mean by beautify. When you beautify something, you make it more beautiful.

And when you glorify something, you make it more glorious than it was before. And so the word glorify is a very dangerous word. It's very prone to misunderstanding.

If by glorify God you mean fix him up so he looks nicer. Like beautify the sanctuary for Thanksgiving means put some pumpkins and vines and leaves and candles in there and it becomes more attractive. Is that what you do to God when you glorify God? Make him more attractive? No, you don't.

So I had to take half my dinner time after I spoke, clarifying my message for this fellow so he didn't think I was a heretic. And the most helpful thing I said to him was this little analogy I like to use in distinguishing the word magnify, whether you do it by a microscope or a telescope. If you say, oh, we should all magnify God.

Well, now that's either worship or heresy. It's heresy if you do it with a microscope. Because microscopes, you look at something very teeny and make it look bigger than it really is.

And if you try to magnify God that way, you blaspheme. He's so teeny and small. And I'll make him look bigger than he is.

That's wrong. But if you magnify him the way a telescope magnifies, then he looks teeny to a lot of secular people, smaller than a little dot in the sky called a star. And a telescope comes in to show what this dot is.

In fact, it's a hundred million galaxies. That's what that little dot is. And it's billions of light years across.

And if you magnify God that way, you honor him. So you can either magnify him by helping him look like what he really is to people who think he's small, which is right. Or you can magnify him, presumably, by helping him look bigger than he really is, which would be wrong.

So is it clear now that when I say, for his glory, God does things for his glory, I do not mean that his glory increases or that he becomes more beautiful or more glorious. I mean, display his glory, share his glory, show his glory, magnify his glory in the telescope sense. He elects Israel for his glory.

Jeremiah 33, 11, I made the whole house of Israel cling to me that they might be a people, a name, a praise and a glory for me. He wants to make them the display of what he's like. God saves them from Egypt for his glory, Psalm 106, 7 to 8. Our fathers were built against the most high in the Red Sea, yet he saved them for his namesake, that he might make known his power.

God restrains his anger in the exile for his glory. Isaiah 48, 9 and 10. For my namesake, I defer my anger.

For the sake of my praise, I restrain it for you. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it. For how should my name be profane? My glory I will not give to another.

He's so jealous for his glory and thus he's setting a pattern for us and giving us something to root our worship in. God sends Christ to the earth for his glory. Romans 15, 7 and 8. Christ became a servant to the circumcision to show God's truthfulness and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

Christ came so that nations might glorify God, display the glory of God and particularly the glory of his mercy. John 17, 1. Father, the hour has come. Glorify thy son.

Jesus prayed that the son may glorify thee. And God sends his son a second time according to 2 Thessalonians 1, 9 to 10 for his glory. Those who do not obey the gospel will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints.

He's coming to be glorified. He's coming to be glorified and to be marveled at in all who have believed. That's the reason for the second coming, that the son might get the glory and the marvel due his name.

So our calling now, therefore, is to manifest the worth of this glory in the world. Psalm 96, 3. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. I left out 1 Peter 2, 9 to 11, where it says he called us out of darkness into his marvelous light that we might declare the marvelous deeds of the Lord.

Psalm 117, 1. Praise the Lord, all nations. Extol him, all peoples. God's overflowing joy in his own glory is the root and basis of ours.

God is so exuberant about his glory that he makes its display the goal of all that he does. And therefore, so should we. All should be worship.

All should be the displaying of the glory of God to show its worth in the world. You were made to worship. I, I sometimes carry out a little exercise.

And I would encourage you to try the same thing. If that's true, if the whole creation happened at the word of God in order to display the glory of God and in like the heavens are telling the glory of God, the day of the day pours forth speech night into night knowledge. The firmament declares his handiwork.

Those kinds of texts or Romans one. They know God because they've seen him and the things that have been made. And yet they didn't glorify or thank him.

They should have seen his glory there in planets and clouds and at nighttime and daytime. And I think therefore, by implication, everything that exists. Exists to display something about God.

And our response to everything should be, in some sense, an echo of God's excellence perceived in it. So try walking home sometime, picking out any old thing. I was working on squirrels the other day.

I just I saw all these squirrels hopping around. This has been amazing season for squirrels in the Twin Cities. They're everywhere.

And they're quite plump these days as they get ready for for winter. And some of our local folks who've moved here from other countries don't know that you're not supposed to eat them. And so they look very attractive, evidently.

My father in law used to shoot and eat squirrel. I've only eaten squirrel once and it's there's not enough meat there to make it worthwhile. And they're so cute.

You should just leave them alone. Anyway, all the ones over here at the Twin Towers are tame because people feed them. So they'll walk right up to you.

I feel so bad walking over to church because they all come up to me and just kind of. Where's my peanut? But I was looking at these squirrels. I think they hop when they're in grass.

They hop. They don't like to walk. They don't like their belly being scraped by the grass.

And I was just looking at them hop. And I was looking at their legs and how they can go up a telephone pole and walk across a telephone line and balance their little tail. Keeping their keeping their balance.

And I was just trying to think now, what is it about God I'm supposed to see here? What of God's ingenuity? What of God's wisdom? What of God's playfulness? I was I was a romantic literature nut in college. I was a literature major and the romantic poets were my favorite. And I can remember the impact that one of Wordsworth's lines had on me.

Something to the effect of this daffodil blooming in a mountain and dying unseen by human eyes. I don't remember the line exactly, but that's the point. Tens of thousands of them.

Field upon field of glorious beauty. Nobody ever sees but God and the angels. And then I thought of all the places where that's true, like at the bottom of the ocean.

My mother gave me a book called Fishes when I was about 13. Fishes. I love that book.

There are the most weird fishes in the world. They spit to knock insects off limbs and then grab them. They have electricity in their body, some of them.

They attach on to whales and get free rides. And I mean, the variety of what God has done is simply enough to keep us pondering a long, long time. Everything was made for God's glory and everything was made to kindle and awaken worship.

But question putting it that way doesn't quite get to the heart of the matter. To get to the heart of the matter, we need to ask why it is a loving thing for God to be so self-exalting and why, if we come to share his satisfaction in himself, it is the essence and heart of worship. Here's the answer.

Very familiar territory to many of you. The answer to why it is not vain and self-centered in a negative way of God to seek his own glory in creating squirrels and creating you and creating the church and doing all that he does is this. The answer to the first question, why it is loving for God to be so self-exalting that he does all that he does for his own glory, came to me with the help of C.S. Lewis.

He saw an utterly crucial thing that shows why this is not vain, but profoundly loving of God to do. Here's the all important insight from his book, Reflections on the Psalms. The most obvious fact about praise strangely escaped me.

I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows in praise. The world rings with praise. Lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game, praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians and scholars.

My whole more general difficulty about praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us as the supremely valuable what we delight to do, indeed what we cannot help doing about everything else we value. Continuing the quote, if we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise, I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses, but completes the enjoyment. That was a very major insight for me.

That praising God is the completion of something that had already begun inside in joy, completes the enjoyment. Praise is joy in consummation. And if it isn't, it isn't praise.

Your heart is far from me with your lips. You honor me, but your heart hasn't begun to enjoy me. It is appointed.

It is. It's appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers go on telling one another how beautiful they are.

The delight is incomplete until it is expressed. Therefore, I conclude, if God loves us the way the Bible says he does, then he would give us what is best for us. And what is best for us is himself, not just his gifts.

But if our enjoyment is incomplete until it comes to completion in praise, then God would not be loving if he was indifferent to our praise. And therefore, he must call for praise of himself if he would bring our joy in himself to consummation and thus be perfectly loving. God is the one being in the universe for whom self-exaltation is the highest virtue and the most loving act.

You dare not follow him in this. If you try to be self-exalting for the sake of others to see your greatness, that they may bow down and enjoy you. You have diverted them from the true source of satisfaction, which is namely God.

If you want to follow God in God exaltation, you participate in God exaltation, not self-exaltation. Now, that insight from Lewis, that praise is joy in consummation, set me to thinking that could it be then that my quest for joy and my quest for the glory of God are somehow very closely connected so that if God's praise is the consummation of my joy in God, then they're not different things. God's getting glory and my having joy are somehow the same.

And then I saw Edwards say it. My debt to Edwards here is so deep and so profound that I wrote a whole book on it called God's Passion for God. And the second half of the book is Edwards.

And the first half of the book is my debt to Edwards. And here's the key text. Everything flows from this.

Jonathan Edwards made the connection between our joy and worship like this. God glorifies himself toward the creatures in two ways. By appearing to their understanding.

So there's a knowing dimension of relating to God and by communicating himself to their hearts. So there is a feeling dimension to our relation to God. Let me read this carefully now.

In communicating himself to their hearts and in their rejoicing and delighting in and enjoying the manifestations which he makes of himself. God is glorified not only in his glory being seen, but by its being rejoiced in. Now if I were writing that, I'm a poet and would say by its being seen and being savored.

See, I like the sound of that. I'm always looking for sounds. When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it.

Ah, really? That when they delight in the glory of God, he is more glorified than if they only know about it. See it and know about it. His glory is then received by the whole soul, both the understanding and the heart.

God made the world that he may communicate and his creatures receive his glory. And that it might be received both by the mind and the heart. He that testifies his idea of God's, his idea of God's glory doesn't glorify God so much as he that testifies also his approbation or approval of it and his delight in it.

Almost everything I think about in worship comes from that quotation. Almost everything I do on Sunday morning and the way I do it flows from this. And when we get to number four on our outline, what unites us in worship, a philosophy of music and worship, you're going to hear echoes, head and heart and passion and zeal and a proper understanding.

All this head and heart thing that's here is so profound. And now we can see that the essence of worship is not just knowing about God and turning that knowledge into certain forms of performance, but is a heart delighting in rejoicing in God. And he gets more glory that way.

So I use this rhyming phrase. He is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. Or I change the Westminster Catechism by saying the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him forever, not just and enjoy him forever.

And all that comes out of Edwards insight there into the scriptures. Therefore, when God commands us to pursue joy in him, he is both loving us. And honoring himself.

Because he brings us delight in him. And that delight has as its consummation praise and a reflection of God's worth. He is seeking worshipers by calling us to seek our joy in him.

Philippians four, six, rejoice in the Lord. And again, I will say rejoice. Psalm 102.

Serve the Lord with gladness. Psalm 37, four. Delight yourself in the Lord.

Psalm 32, 11. Be glad in the Lord. Rejoice, you righteous one.

Psalm 16, 11. In thy presence is fullness of joy. Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore.

What is God doing in commanding us to act this way and feel this way? And the answer is he's loving. He's absolutely self-exalting. Be glad in me.

Don't be glad in my gifts. Mainly rejoice in me. That's a very self-exalting thing.

If I were to say that to my sons or my wife or you rejoice in me. I think I'll go to another church where they have some humility. But God talks that way.

And the reason is if I were to say it, it would hurt you. If I got you to hang on me, you'd be hurt by it. But if I can get you to hang on God, you'll be hurt by it.

You'll be satisfied by it. And God knows that. And so he's stuck with being God.

God is the one being who has to be self-exalting to be loving. He has to say praise me, love me, rejoice in me. I'm the only hope for your heart.

Your heart's made for me. It's got a big God-shaped vacuum in it. Fill it up with me.

So don't be like C.S. Lewis when he was 29 years old and stumbled terribly for months over these self-exalting words in the Psalms and said it sounded like an old woman who was vain wanting compliments and he couldn't stand God until he discovered what I quoted you there, namely that everything we enjoy, we praise. And if God is the most enjoyable being in the universe and he loves us, he's going to talk like this and he's going to tell us to enjoy him and praise him because he wants us to leave the mud pies in the slums and enjoy a holiday at the sea. Conclusion.

The essential, vital, indispensable, defining heart of worship is the experience of being satisfied with God, I argue. The reason satisfaction in God is the heart of worship is that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. This is why Jesus and the apostles were so stunningly indifferent to external forms and so radically intent on the inward, spiritual, authentic worship.

Without the experience of heartfelt satisfaction in God, praises are vain. If genuine praise can flow from a heart without satisfaction in God, then the word hypocrisy has no meaning. And Jesus' words are pointless when he says, they worship me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

Now, what's left to do in 15 minutes is to spin out four implications of this. I think what I just said in the last 20 minutes is the most important thing I have to say. So if you don't get that, you're going to get less important stuff, if anything.

All right, I've got four implications of this, and then we'll stop for tonight and pick it up at point three tomorrow. The pursuit of joy in God is not optional. It is our highest duty, which is why I entitled the book at the subtitle, the book called *Desiring God*.

I entitled it *Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*. I am all my life in pursuit of joy. I am in pursuit of joy.

Everything I do, whether it's repenting of a sin, whether it's getting up in the middle of the night to answer a phone and going to the hospital when you don't feel like it, is in pursuit of maximum joy in God. So I'm a hedonist. And the implication of everything is that if you want to glorify God, you've got to do that.

Because God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him. If you become indifferent to being satisfied in God, God is dishonored. Now, worship.

There are millions of Christians who have absorbed a popular ethic that comes more from Immanuel Kant than from the Bible, that it is morally deficient to seek our happiness, to pursue joy, to crave satisfaction, to devote ourselves to seeking it. This is absolutely deadly for authentic worship. I wish I could take every pastor and wring his neck over this issue because there's so many pastors, as you'll see here in a minute, who have a different diagnosis of the situation.

This is absolutely deadly for authentic worship. If you try to run away from the pursuit of your own joy to the degree that this ethic flourishes, this Kantian ethic that says it contaminates virtue and worship to pursue your own joy in it. To the degree that that flourishes, to that degree, worship dies.

For the essence of worship is satisfaction in God. To be indifferent to or even fearful of the pursuit of what is essential to worship is to resist worship. And some of you grew up in homes where you didn't have any good models of how to be happy or how to pursue a legitimate joy.

And so you're wired to resist it. Many pastors foster this very thing by saying things like, the problem is that our people don't come on Sunday morning to give. They only come to get.

If they came to give, we would have life in our services. That is not an accurate diagnosis, in my judgment. People ought to come to get.

They ought to come starved for God. They ought to come saying, as a deer pants for the flowing stream, so my soul pants for thee, O God. God is mightily honored when a people know that they will die of hunger and thirst unless they have God.

And it is the job of pastors to spread a banquet for them. So you'll never hear me on Sunday morning saying, the problem with this service is that people don't come here to give, they only come to get. That's not the problem.

You know what the problem is? The problem is that people stuff their faces with the white bread of the world and then they come to the banquet table of God's Word and they're not hungry. And I'm talking television mainly and a lot of other junk that we waste our time on. The world, as I look at it, is just filled with triviality.

It is trivial. Trivial, trivial, trivial. Almost all TV is trivial.

Almost all ads are trivial. They're silly. It's an epidemic of silliness.

So that the soul that feeds itself on this for an hour or two a night, or three, four, five, from what statistics you read, can't help but just shrivel up to the smallest capacities for real, magnificent, glorious joy. They just shrivel, shrivel, shrivel, shrivel. How many stick figures in silly cartoons? Silly stuff, just silly stuff.

How much of that can you watch before you begin to realize you're a stick figure? You're a puppet. You're just a silly little echo of the silliness that's coming through that tube continually. Read a great novel.

Read the Bible. Go to a great motion picture. I don't know what that would be, but surely there's one or two out there.

I did go to one recently. I go to about a movie a year. And what was I saying here? Oh yes, stuffing your face with white bread so that when you come to worship you're not hungry.

That's the problem. It's not that people don't come to give. It's that they don't come as hungry for God as they ought to come.

So the last thing we'll talk about tomorrow morning, if I work my outline the way I tend, is ten practical preparations for hearing the Word of God. And that's all about Saturday night stuff and Sunday morning stuff before you come. And what do you do? What do you do Sunday morning between get up and worship time? That's huge as to what happens in that room there.

And so Saturday night. So what you ought to be doing is pursuing maximum joy in God and getting yourself ready to be triggered by glimpses of His glory. Here's the second implication of what we've been saying.

Another implication of saying that the essence of worship is satisfaction in God is that worship becomes radically God-centered. That's one of our values here at Bethlehem. Radical God-centeredness in worship.

Nothing makes God more supreme and more central than when a people are utterly persuaded that nothing, not money or prestige or leisure or family or job or health or sports or toys or friends, nothing is going to bring satisfaction to their aching hearts besides God. See, I think the main challenge in life is to get that way, because really you're all wired and I'm wired to really believe that these things are the key to joy. If I can just have a little money, if I can have a little prestige, if I can have more leisure, if I can have a better family, if I can get a better job, if I can have more health, if I can play some sports, if I can have more computer toys, if I can have some good friends who won't let me down, then it isn't true.

It isn't true. You can have all that and go to hell and you can have all that and be very, very empty. God, you were made for God.

Thus getting the crevices, I sometimes think of the heart as a wheel with cogs and the cogs are meant to connect with God's wheel like this so that it just beautifully oils and the soul feels at home as God turns the wheels. And in between these cogs there is worldliness, just filled up with television and movies and money and job and prestige and desire for approval and lots of leisure and those things. We pack them in there trying to get happy.

And then comes the wheel of God and you can't fit in. One of the great things called self-mortification and called sanctification is to scrape that stuff out of there. It can be very painful, like Eustace discovered in the Chronicles of Narnia as he ripped off his skin, which is another image of the same thing.

You've got to scrape and scrape to get all this years of stuff. You've been so hooked on pornography or so hooked on eating wrong or so hooked on staying up too late or so hooked on reading the wrong stuff or so hooked on working late hours or whatever that your adrenaline has got you persuaded that's the only place I get a sense of well-being is when I eat this or drink this or work this or do this. You've got to carve away at that and then begin to pour in God and all his glories until it fits.

They are not confused about why they are there, these people who are hungry for God. They do not see songs and prayers and sermons as mere traditions or mere duties. They see them as means of getting to God or God getting to them or for more of his fullness.

If the focus shifts onto our giving to God, one result I have seen again and again is that subtly it is not God that remains at the center, but the quality of our giving. And we are we singing worthily of the Lord? Are our instrumentalists playing with quality, fitting a gift to the Lord? Now, you may think those are good questions. Maybe they are and maybe they aren't.

It all depends. It all depends. That's why I use the word subtly here.

Subtly, God shifts from the desperate need we have as hungry, broken people onto she doesn't sing well enough or the pianist isn't good enough or the preacher stumbles a little bit in his speech or whatever. Are our instrumentalists playing with quality fitting? Is the preaching suitable offering to the Lord? And little by little, the focus shifts off the utter indispensability of the Lord himself onto the quality of our performances. And we even start to define excellence and power in worship in terms of technical distinction and artistic acts or of our artistic acts.

I speak whereof I know. Nothing keeps God at the center of worship like the biblical conviction that the essence of worship is deep, heartfelt satisfaction for him and the conviction that the pursuit of the satisfaction is why we are here. I tell you, when I think of choir members, worship leaders and lead worshipers, deacons, elders, ushers, greeters, I don't think first in terms of looks or first in terms of skills.

I think first in terms of passion for God. Because if that doesn't radiate out, it's going to lame the service. It's going to lame the service.

And I'll tell you, I have seen a metamorphosis of wonderful proportions in this church in the last couple of years in our choir. It's a new day. We always had a great choir, but there's a new spirit up there.

There's a freedom in the choir. There's a sense of their faces, their hands, their bodies. By and large, I feel coming from the choir these days, and that's really the only reason they ought to be standing up there, is something of God, something of the enjoyment of God, something of the treasuring and cherishing of God.

I'll tell you, choirs can kill a service. They can absolutely kill a service, both by their looks, their sound, their demeanor. Go ahead.

Yeah, you had to ask that question. Somebody had to ask that question. Because here I am dumping on giving, and not only do you say that, but the Bible talks that way too.

Give praise to God. Give thanks to God. What I'm arguing for is that that language has to be very carefully handled and thought through.

Giving thanks to God is an occasion, I believe, of bringing my joy to consummation, and thus is a receiving. Or giving praise to God. I'm using the word giving.

I'm willing to use it. The Bible uses it. I just tend to not use it in order to make my point.

Giving praise is the consummation of my joy in God as I give expression to it and release it in the presence of the congregation. And in doing that, my joy reaches its consummation. And thus, at that moment, the very moment of my giving, I am receiving the consummation of my joy in God.

So if you think of giving that way, OK, OK. But Acts 17.25 says, God is not served by human hands as though he needed anything, for he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. So when we talk of giving to him, we must think he doesn't need this.

I'm not enriching him. This is for my sake. And he gets the glory and I get the joy.

He gets the credit. I get the benefit. Go ahead.

Is it really giving? Well, if the Bible uses the word give, thanks, we probably should be willing to use it. But just understand that the word has been changed from the inside out. It isn't giving like if I were to reach in my wallet and give you \$10 right now.

That's not the kind of giving it is because you'd be richer and I'd be poorer. And that never happens in worship. God never gets richer.

I never get poorer. And so giving, we've got to change the meaning of the word a little. We've got to alter it.

Let me close in prayer. Father in heaven, these we want to come true. These truths, we want them to be life to us.

We want you to show yourself to us tonight. So as we go home thinking on these things, grant that our hearts would be sensitive as we meditate on your word. And as we look up at the night sky tonight going home, as we feel the coolness on our skin and see trees that are bare.

Oh, Lord God, grant, I pray that we would see you everywhere and let all things catapult our hearts up into the creator and not fixate on the creation. Get us ready for tomorrow's lessons and teach us. So make us worshipers in spirit and truth so that you will not only seek but will have found in this group worshipers according to your own heart.

In Jesus' name, amen. Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Feel free to make copies of this message to give to others, but please do not charge for those copies or alter the content in any way without permission.

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