

Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ for the Sake of Making Him Known

by John Piper

John Piper's sermon encourages believers to see and savor Jesus Christ, emphasizing the importance of evangelism and the role of the Holy Spirit in lifting spiritual blindness.

Duration: 44:46

Topics: "Evangelism", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of remaining steadfast in one's faith in Jesus, even in the face of threats or challenges. The speaker encourages listeners to be evangelists and share the message of Jesus with others, highlighting the uniqueness and significance of Jesus. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of prayer and relying on the Holy Spirit to magnify Jesus. The sermon concludes with the speaker discussing the upcoming summer season as an opportunity for outdoor evangelism and the need to present Jesus to others using the Bible as a guide.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God Ministries is available at www.desiringgod.org This morning's scripture text is from 2nd Corinthians chapter 3 verse 15 through chapter 4 verse 6 But to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart. But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of God, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. Just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, light shall shine out of darkness, is the one who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. So Lord, it's very plain, hardly needs any exposition, that if anybody is going to see Christ and savor Him, the veil must be lifted, the satanic blinding must be overcome, the blindness must be healed, and light, as in the beginning, must shine in the dark human heart.

And all of this is beyond us. We are dead, we are blind, we are complicitous with Satan's deceptions, and we hold the veil down, and therefore we pray, we don't just preach, we pray. Oh God, lift the veil this morning.

Heal the blind eyes of the heart this morning. Speak words of creative power, let there be light into dark hearts this morning. And save to the uttermost.

Leave us not to ourselves or our own designs, I pray. Come Holy Spirit, magnify Jesus, because we pray in His name, and on the basis of His great and glorious work. Amen.

Well, one more topical message before we return to Romans 7. Next week, Lord willing. So just like last week, I'll give you four reasons that lead me to this particular message. Number one, summer is coming with its golden opportunities of outdoor personal evangelism.

You know, Minnesota is a strange place. People live in igloos all winter long. We don't call them igloos, but that's the way it works.

You go nine months, you don't even see your neighbor sometimes. And then suddenly, you're cutting the grass, or you're sweeping the lawn, or you're planting some seed, or you're just sitting on a chair outside, and there's this human being that you haven't seen all these many months. What are you going to do about that? Or at work, you take walks.

Or we at church, we do things outside on Wednesday nights. Or we're going to have an outdoor Sunday morning service in a few weeks. And we do backyard Bible clubs.

And we do sports camps. And summer in Minnesota is unique. It's not unique in Southern California.

You can go barefoot to church all year long there. But here, it's unique. It is God-ordained for seeing and showing Jesus.

That's what summer's for. Especially when Jews for Jesus come to this city in August with the BYG, Behold Your God campaign, and hit the streets. That's number one.

Number two, I'll come back to these. The Dalai Lama has been here and gone. How did the mainline clergy, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, respond to the leader of Tibetan Buddhism? That's number two.

Number three, the appearance of this book this week. Seeing and savoring Jesus Christ. How does it relate to those two things? Dalai Lama, summer, Jews for Jesus.

Number four, 2 Corinthians 3, 17-4, 6, and the glorious truth that by seeing the Lord, we are being changed from one degree of glory to the next. This comes from the Lord who is the Spirit, and we see Him by a sovereign, creative work of God. Let there be light.

So we move through the first three and we wind up in the text. So let's go back and take them one at a time. At Bethlehem, summer has always been seen as a unique opportunity not to coast.

In fact, I have warned year after year after year, don't think coasting in summertime spiritually. It's deadly if you think that way. As a church, we shouldn't think of coasting.

Yes, recreation. Yes, vacations. I assume that a fourth of you will be gone most of the time during the summer.

But woe to us if we coast spiritually. Satan never coasts. And he knows when you are.

Behold Your God is a worldwide campaign in about 60 cities, chosen by Jews for Jesus because they are the cities in which most Jewish people live. In other words, the 60 cities that have the highest population of Jewish people in the world are being targeted this summer for the Jews for Jesus campaign around the world in all the nations of the world where Jewish people live. They will come in August.

They've already come and done some training. And they will do numerous things. One of the things they will do is put billboards up as well as make many, many phone calls to people with Jewish surnames offering this video, which I have watched now, called Survivor Stories of the Holocaust.

The Holocaust is the biggest stumbling block between Jewish people and Christian evangelism. And this is an amazing video of survivors of the Holocaust who came to Christ and tell their stories of how it helped them. We will have them meeting at this church.

I will give devotions in the morning for these missionaries. They will hit the streets. Jews for Jesus is an in-your-face kind of organization.

I like them a lot. And they are incredibly controversial and infuriating in this city. When we brought them here to do their training seminar, we received a letter of protest and warning from nine downtown senior pastors.

And I'll read you the protest. We feel that efforts by Christians to convert Jews are counterproductive, injurious to Christian-Jewish relations, and contrary to the true spirit of Christ. In an earlier letter, some of those same clergy wrote, unfortunately, arrogant is the right word to describe any attempts at proselytizing.

In this case, the effort of Christians to win over their Jewish brothers and sisters. Thoughtful Christians will dissociate themselves from any such effort. The warning sounded like this in the letter dated March 9 this year.

In the event of a citywide conversion campaign, please know that we will respectfully, but forcefully, make public our concerns in every way available to us. Obviously, dialogue before that time would be invaluable in maintaining the peace of the church and the strength of our shared mission. So, I was on writing leave when this letter came, and I went the next Sunday to the worship service of the man who drafted this letter to see how they do church, since they don't believe Jesus is necessary for salvation.

And then I wrote to him, and then I met him for lunch and talked to him. And the next thing I did was go to the most influential rabbi I knew and met him for breakfast. So you need to be able to say as you deal with people about this, we're in conversation.

They say, obviously dialogue would be helpful. It's done, and it isn't over. What's behind this? Well, the Dalai Lama sheds light on what's behind it.

So now we move to incentive two for this message. Rather than going into detail of what I learned in those two conversations, breakfast and lunch, I'll just go to the newspaper and what's public. The Dalai Lama comes.

The Dalai Lama is, quote, the spiritual leader of six million Tibetans who believe him to be the 14th earthly incarnation of the heavenly deity of compassion and mercy, close quote. That's from an interview with him in Mother Jones Magazine. Over at Northrop Auditorium, seven clergy, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, met with him before a packed house of thousands to hear him speak about interfaith dialogue and world peace.

And then the respondents responded. He said, quote, all religions have the same potential to serve humanity. All religions carry the same teaching, same goal, same potential.

None of the clergy disagreed. Since all religions are that similar and have the same goal and the same potential, it is therefore arrogant for any religion to mount a campaign to convert people from other religions. Specifically, it is arrogant and offensive to present Jesus to the Jewish people with the hope and the prayer that they would see him as their Messiah and receive forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life.

This was made very clear to me by the rabbi. This is not only arrogant, it is utterly offensive to them. God saves Jews without Jesus and God saves Christians through Jesus.

There are multiple covenants for multiple religions. This is what's behind this letter of protest and warning. As I've tried to think through what is common to the Buddhism, the Judaism, and the letters that we have received from liberal, I don't think that's a term of opprobrium.

That's a term that would be embraced gladly by the people I'm talking about. Liberal Protestants and liberal Catholics. What's common to this Buddhism, this Judaism, and this liberal dimension of Christianity is the effort to sever the fruit of love from the root of truth.

That's the essence of it as I see it. The effort to sever the fruit of love from the root of truth. Or to put it another way, the effort in the Twin Cities to build unity around a social agenda of good works with no necessary connection to Jesus as the only Savior and Lord.

In other words, Christians are welcome at the table of interfaith dialogue if they abandon the historic Christian faith that there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts chapter 4 verse 12. But if we believe that, we are not welcome at the table of interfaith dialogue for one very simple reason.

It's not dialogue anymore, it's proselytizing and that's arrogant. This is very clear, it's made very clear to me, face to face, this far away. Thus the Muslim Imam at Northrop Auditorium said, Converting people to one religion or another should not be our main objective.

Our goal should be to make the world a better place by using our various religions. This is pragmatism to the core. He's as western as any easterner could possibly be.

This is radical pragmatism. Use our religions to improve the world so that God will be pleased with us. In other words, we should abandon our convictions that there is a necessary connection between Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins and the transformation of sinners which can change the world.

Abandon that and you're welcome at the table. Hold that, you're not welcome at the table. That forgiveness, if it were necessary, and that transformation are possible in all religions.

That's the message which amazingly, stunningly, I say it with tears, is preached in ten churches within a quarter of a mile of this building. Maybe a mile. That's tragic, folks.

And I don't doubt they're going to get this tape. So brothers, it's tragic. There is one way to God.

Jesus. Not to tell people, is not humble, it's cruel. I said it in person.

Okay? I said it face to face. I'd love to tell you some of the things that were said. So number three.

The book. There it is. 130 pages.

Imperfect. Not the Bible. Shouldn't be standing up there so bold probably.

What's that about? What's that got to do with August? With the Dalai Lama? It's the first book I've ever written about Jesus and it warms my heart. I just like him. I love Jesus.

It's my best effort in a short space to describe Jesus. It's designed in 13 chapters. There are about seven pages.

You can read them in 15 minutes. Out loud. The ultimate aim of Jesus.

The deity of Jesus Christ. The excellence of Jesus Christ. The gladness of Jesus Christ.

The power of Jesus Christ. The wisdom of Jesus Christ. The desecration of Jesus Christ.

The anguish of Jesus Christ. The saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The mercies of Jesus Christ.

The severity of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ. And the second coming of Jesus Christ.

What have I done here? Why am I writing this? I'm writing it because of a conviction I have about how people get saved. Apologetics and evangelism. Here's my conviction.

Listen very carefully. I spell this out in detail in the preface so you can understand what the deep underlying conviction behind the book is in how people get saved. Most people do not get saved by being persuaded by a long chain of rational arguments or historical arguments that the Bible is reliable and therefore you can bank on it.

Most of you did not come to faith that way. And most of the people who will come to faith through you will not come that way. Now I believe in that way.

Page 131, note 3 lists all the books that do it that way. And I lean on them. I love them.

I love these books. I'm so glad there are scholars called to do that. They provide structures for us.

But I'm a pastor now, last 21 years. Used to be one of those types. Wrote those kinds of things for a while.

Now I'm a pastor. And I look out on about 22, 2300 people each Sunday and know they're not going to come that way if they come at all. They don't have the time.

They don't have the resources. Hardly anybody can come that way. So either God has blown it or there's another way to come.

What's that? What's a way into sound, reasonable, solid footing faith in Jesus Christ and his word as the way to heaven? Which will free you from this moment through the summer to boldly present Jesus. What is that? And it's very simple. We take the Bible as it stands and we draw out of it the fullest portrait of Jesus we can to share with people.

That's what this book is. This is my attempt. It is saturated with the Bible.

There's hardly five lines in this book without a Bible verse in it. And so I've taken the Bible and I've just spread it out to try to say there he is as he's presented in the Bible. There he is as he's presented in the Bible.

Look at him. Look at him. Because I believe with all my heart God almighty through the Holy Spirit, by the agency of his word, through faithful portrayals of this Jesus, authenticates his own glory in the hearts of people and gives them an unshakable confidence for which they will die that is rooted not in private revelations, but in the revelation of God in his word.

Therefore, I do not encourage people, well, read the Bible, then close the Bible and ask God to tell you whether it's true or not. Don't do that. Don't do that.

I would never say to an unbeliever, listen to my testimony or read a few pages in the Bible, then close the Bible and ask for God to whisper in your ear whether what you just read is true. Why don't I do that? Why wouldn't I want that to happen? Answer. Because then the whispering has final authority and not the word.

Then the little vibration in your brain and the chills in your palms and sweaty hands and the fluttering eyelashes become authoritative, not the portrait of Jesus Christ standing forth with self-authenticating power and glory saying, I am who I am and there is no other. I will always instead direct you to the portrait. Back to the portrait.

Back to the portrait. I will not direct you to private revelations. If I cannot point to a public revelation in the Bible and to a picture that is spelled out there, which itself authenticates itself, I won't point you anywhere.

So how do you evangelize? How are we going to evangelize in the face of this kind of incredible controversy? I tell you, this church is going to be abused this summer. Is that okay with you? It is perfectly okay with me. Because when you read the book of Acts, he goes into a synagogue first and preaches Christ as the Messiah.

A few believe. Most don't. Drive him out.

And he goes to the Gentiles. He goes to another city, goes into a synagogue, preaches Jesus as the Christ. A few believe.

Most don't. They drive him out. He goes to the Gentiles.

It was a program to the Jew first and also to the Greek. It is still a program. And until the veil is lifted, there will be resistance.

And oh, how we pray. Now, at this point, I'm going to give you five steps that I would say to the rabbi, to the liberal Protestant, to anybody. Okay, you evangelical, Bible-thumping, fundamentalistic, narrow-minded, intolerant Christians, how do you think you should go about this? Number one, renounce all violence.

True Christians, in spite of our deplorable Christian history, we admit it, we own it, we grieve it, we repent of it. I have the Crusades and other things like that in mind. In spite of that, true Christians do not take the sword to spread or defend their faith.

We spread our faith with persuasion and suffering. And if we don't, we don't have a right to call ourselves Christians. So we renounce all violence and all hate crimes.

Is that clear? Number two, we honor all human beings in every religion as created in the image of God. That's why we persuade with words rather than coercion with force. Animals can be beat into submission.

Human beings cannot, dare not, should not be coerced into any convictions. We speak the way Paul does. 2 Corinthians 5.20, we beseech you.

Isn't that a sweet word? It's an old-fashioned word. Beseech, yearn, plead, exhort. We beseech you on behalf of Jesus, be reconciled to God.

That's all we do. And then give reasons. Give a portrait.

Say, here's the book. My pastor wrote this book. I don't know the Bible as well as he does.

He has lots more time on his hands than I do. And so he writes things like this. And I've read it.

I really like chapter 7. Why don't you start there? That's why I want you to get these. We'll just make them as cheap as we possibly can to make these useful for that. Number three.

So first, we renounce all violence. Second, we honor all humans as created in God's image by persuading them and not coercing them. And thirdly, we will love our friends and our enemies by longing and working for their eternal good and being willing to suffer for it, including having our motives questioned as arrogance instead of love.

We will just accept that. We will not become bitter. We will not become bitter about that.

God helping us, we will not. We will come again and again with love and say, you may call it arrogance, I love you. I will tell you one sentence from one of the conversations.

One of the men said to me, the table's about this big, you know, we sit across from each other. He said, I have a place for you and your faith in my heart. Why don't you have a place for me in your heart? He said that to me.

And I leaned over like this, but 18 inches from his face. And I said. When the apostle Paul said.

My heart's desire. For them. And my prayer is that they might be saved.

And when he said, would God that I could be accursed and cut off from Christ for my kinsmen, according to the flesh. He had a huge place in his heart for them. Don't question the place in my heart for you.

That's what I said. Language is tricky, folks. Language is really tricky.

Be careful. Be careful. The linguistic agenda is almost always skewed.

So as to give the moral high ground to universalism. So that as soon as the interfaith dialogue word comes out of the mouth. Any demurring from it sounds arrogant.

It is really tricky. You must not let the agenda that is set. Determine what happens in your brain.

Go to the Bible and come at it another way. That's the way Jesus responded all the time. He would be asked a question.

And the agenda for the question was such and such that he couldn't respond to it without losing. He had to come at it another way. Because the agenda set a losing agenda for the dialogue partner.

Be as wise as serpents. And as innocent as doves. Number four.

So I've said, renounce all violence. I've said, honor all human beings as created in God's image. I've said, love your friends and love your enemies.

By working for and longing for their eternal good. We know that we're sinners. Oh, how we should be broken.

But we do not believe it is arrogant to offer salvation. By presenting Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. Number four.

Therefore, do everything in your power to present Jesus to people. Do everything in your power to portray as full an account of Jesus and his work as you can possibly portray. Don't fret first about arguments for why it's true.

You need to go home this afternoon, get out on your knees and just say, God, do I believe it's true or not? And if I do and I'm willing to die for it, and I can't remember in a moment of conversation all the reasons that I do, would you give me the courage to speak the truth? You just got to decide this. Because if you halt between two opinions over and over and over again for fear that you can't think of all the reasons why you do believe it's true, you know what? You may not believe it's really true. You got to decide.

Am I going to die for this and live for this? Or am I just playing games because there's air conditioning there on Sunday morning? Or nice music? If I'm alone somewhere and I'm really threatened, will I be a Christian? Will I hold to Jesus no matter what the cost? And if you say yes, God's at work in your life. I promise you, God's at work in your life. Bringing forth from His Word a self-authenticating glory that you have recognized that you simply can't abandon Him.

You can't abandon Him. And so this fourth point is be an evangelist this summer. Be an evangelist.

When I say present Jesus, I don't just mean the name Jesus, not the word Jesus. Buddhists, by Jesus. Jews, by Jesus.

Liberal Protestants, by Jesus. Liberal Catholics, by Jesus. There's something about this Jesus.

Everybody wants Him on their side. To get Him on their side, what they do to Him is incredible. And this is written to try to just portray who He is.

So get it into the hands of thoughtful, inquiring unbelievers. Read it yourself to know Him and love Him. That's number four.

Number five is to pray. After you present Him, pray. And here I'll simply draw your attention to the Olive Tree Project.

We pray because you can't make a Christian out of anybody. You can't save anybody. You can't open the eyes of the blind.

You can't lift the veil. You can't raise the dead. You can portray Jesus.

And you can love people and you can suffer for Jesus. You can avoid bitterness. You can come back again and again and tell them, I'm for you, I love you, I'm not against you.

You may say that's not what I am, but I am, brother. I'm in your face because I love you. But you can't save Him.

Only God can save Him. And that's why we pray. This is called the Olive Tree Project.

This is put out by Jews for Jesus. Olive tree taken from Romans 11. Because there's the picture of the olive tree.

The root is Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant. The natural branches are Jewish people. Salvation is from the Jews.

You know the only reason any of you is saved is because you're a Jew. That is, you are a Johnny-come-lately wild olive branch broken off of Gentile world and grafted into the natural olive tree sucking up all this wonderful benefit from the Abrahamic covenant through Jesus, the seed of Abraham. The only reason any of us is saved is because Jewish people exist in the world.

Salvation is of the Jews. To the Jew first and also to the Greek. And if they are unbelieving and they are broken off branches, God can graft them in again by faith in Jesus Christ so that we are all in one tree together called the olive tree.

All of us by the same means, faith. So, they're calling us to pray this summer. From now, please go to the table and get these after the service.

And on the back, I put the name of my friend here. I wish I knew more Jewish people. I don't.

But hundreds. One of our young teenagers came up to me after last Wednesday night's service. I don't know how old she is, maybe 13, 14.

And she asked me to pray with her about her Jewish friend she's trying to witness to at school. Yes! Amen! So, take that and put the name here. And then, pray.

And you'll see how the instructions are given here. So, let's be praying all through the summer for those that we love who are both Jewish and non-Jewish. Well, time is up.

And I should just point you to the text that everything has been built on. I hope it's come through even though I haven't done a systematic exposition of 2 Corinthians 3.17. But let me draw your attention to two things. Verse 18 of chapter 3. We all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another.

This comes from the Lord. So, there it shows that this text and seeing Jesus and savoring Jesus is the key to sanctification. That is the key to being transformed.

We need to be a certain kind of people here. You can't just blather away with your mouth and be a wretched, inconsistent, unkind, unloving person. You must be transformed.

How do you get transformed? Beholding the glory of the Lord we are being changed. But also, beholding the glory of the Lord is the way you do personal evangelism. Personal sanctification.

Personal evangelism. How do you do it? Look at verses 3 to 6 of chapter 4. 2 Corinthians. Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

In their case the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the likeness of God. So, what do we do? Satan is conspired. Their own unbelief is conspired.

And they are blind. So we say, oh, they're blind. Give them up to darkness.

Let's go home or find a more fruitful place to minister. No! You pray. For what? For verse 6 to happen.

It's a triumphant verse. If verse 6 were not true, if verse 6 hadn't happened, nobody in this room would be a Christian. Let's read it.

It is the God who said, let light shine out of darkness. Now that's a reference back to Genesis 1 where he said, let there be light. Let the God who said, let light shine out of darkness.

It is the God who said that. Now, a description of what happened in your heart when you got saved. Who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

I wrote this book to describe the face of Jesus. To give as clear a portrait of Jesus as words can give in my limited ability. This text says that if people are going to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus, God has to do that.

But you know what? He only does it when Christians are speaking the portrait. Or offering the portrait to be read. Either with that book or better, maybe, with this book.

The Holy Spirit saves nobody apart from a verbal portrait of Jesus. Indirectly or directly from the Bible. There's where the authority rests.

Jesus is the ultimate authority. He has inspired a word. When that word is faithfully rendered in other words, the Holy Spirit who loves the word he inspired and loves to exalt the Jesus of the word will work in the heart to illumine and lift the veil and give the light.

And they will come. They will recognize the voice of the shepherd. So, it's so plain what we're to do.

Let's not take the world upon our shoulders. Let's take the gospel upon our shoulders. And let us tell of Jesus.

Let us speak of Jesus. All summer long. Tell of Jesus.

I love to tell the story. The story of his glory. The story of his glory.

All summer long. And God will do the work. Don't hate anybody.

Don't misuse or coerce anybody. Just tell the story. Just one concluding exhortation.

Pray that God's hand would be upon this book. Bethlehem is a teeny-weeny little expression of the kingdom of God. There are people all over the world who have seen the portrait clearer than I have who are telling it in their own words.

This book will be out there in other places. Just breathe on this summer. All summer long with your prayers.

And open your mouths. God bless you. You're dismissed.

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