

Treasuring Christ Together Above All Things

by John Piper

The sermon emphasizes the importance of treasuring Christ above all things and spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.

Duration: 53:05

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Peter 2:1-10

Topics: "Gods Supremacy", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the growth of their church and the desire to spread the message of God's supremacy. They emphasize the importance of proclaiming the excellencies of Christ and sharing the Gospel with others. The speaker shares a personal story about a conversation with a man named Frank on an airplane, discussing the loss of loved ones and the sovereignty of God. The sermon concludes with the speaker encouraging the congregation to continue speaking and spreading the excellencies of Christ to those around them.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.DesiringGod.org The scripture passage today is from 1 Peter 2, verses 1-10. That's on page 1014 on your pew bibles.

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn infants long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Father in heaven, you are precious to me.

Tu eres precioso para mi. We sang it here tonight. They've sung it in various ways in the morning.

Lord, You are precious to us as a church. That's why we talk about treasuring You. And so my prayer for us tonight is that we might treasure You more.

My prayer for us this morning is that we might treasure You more. Morning and evening, may the value that You have in our minds and in our hearts rise because You are infinitely valuable and our affections have not become infinite yet. And so I pray that You would stir and I pray that there would be an impulse in our lives to spread a passion for Your value.

Lord, make us a spreading church. Let us never have the demonic notion that we should keep this to ourselves. Oh, how happy Satan would be if Bethlehem just had nice worship services and never reached anybody but who already is here.

He would give us up quickly if he knew we would never bother any of his other captives. So grant, I pray, that there would be an impulse in this church. We exist to multiply our joy by extending it to others.

Lord, come, I pray, and work this deep down into our hearts as we talk about treasuring Christ together above all things. In His name I ask it, Amen. Half of this message is an exposition of Bethlehem and half of this message is an exposition of 1 Peter 2.1-10. So let's do the Bethlehem half first.

Bethlehem exists to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ. Let me just pick a few pieces of that mission statement. Oh, how I hope that over time all of you who count this church your home would be able to say that at the drop of a hat.

We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ. Let's just take that little phrase, passion. You can't have a passion for the supremacy of God that honors Him if you don't know the supremacy of God, if you don't know about it.

And therefore, teaching children and teaching youth and teaching adults the fullness of the meaning of the term supremacy of God is a huge part of what we are about here. Or take the phrase at the end, through Jesus Christ. That is so full of meaning.

Let me draw a couple of the meanings of what we mean by putting it there at the end saying all of this vision is through Jesus Christ. Here's a key verse. 2 Corinthians 4.6 God who said, let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

That's what happened when you became a Christian, believe it or not. You may not even know that. And be a genuine Christian and now you're learning what happened.

What happened is that by a spiritual awakening, spiritual light flooded or at least got through a crack into your heart and Christ was seen as God. The glory of God in the face of Christ. You saw God reflected off of Christ in a sermon, in a tract, in reading your Bible, in hearing the radio, in listening to Billy Graham.

Suddenly the veil was lifted and Christ became divinely necessary in your life as a sinner who needed salvation by such a Savior. That's how you got saved. Whatever words you put on it, the Bible calls it God

put light in your heart and it was the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

There's another way to say it. Verse 4, two verses earlier, goes like this. The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep that from happening.

That is, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. So verse 6 says glory of God in the face of Christ. Verse 4 says glory of Christ who is the image of God and calls it the light of the gospel.

So I draw two conclusions from those complex of verses about through Jesus Christ at the end of our mission statement. The first is that everything is through Christ because Christ is God. If you see Christ, you see the glory of God.

He is the exact imprint of His nature. He is the effulgence or the radiance of His glory. Everything is through God.

Everything is through Christ. Christ is God. And since we see that in the gospel most clearly, you see Christ shining divinely most clearly in the gospel that is, Christ crucified for sins and risen triumphant over the devil and hell and sin and wrath.

Therefore, through Christ at the end of that mission statement means that He bought us. He bought that mission statement. It was the gospel bloodshed on behalf of sinners like us that enables us to have a passion for His supremacy and joy in Him.

There is no mission statement. There is no church. There is no mission without Jesus Christ.

So that's huge to have that at the end of the mission statement. Here's one more question I'll ask about that mission statement. Someone might ask, I would.

I did. Why don't you say something about love for people in your mission statement? You've got passion for God. Isn't the second commandment like unto it? First, love God.

Then the second commandment, Jesus says, is love your neighbor as yourself. And where's that? That's big. Is that a gaping hole in your mission statement? To which I always answer, the reason this mission statement doesn't refer to love for people is because it is love for people.

It's the definition of love for people. You ask me, ok, love for people is a big issue in the Bible. Where is your definition? I would say, love for people is laying down your life to spread to them a passion for the supremacy of God in all things so that they enjoy with all the peoples of the world this everlasting satisfaction that comes through Jesus Christ.

That's the meaning of love, which is very radical because it says you can do a thousand nice things for people and if your heart is not bent on being spent to spread a passion for God's supremacy into their hearts so that they can enjoy Christ with you forever, you don't love them. I don't care what you're doing for them or what it costs you. If you don't care that people get into their hearts a passion for God's supremacy and have the joy of satisfaction in Jesus with you forever, instead of going to hell, call it what you will, I won't call it love.

It's cruel to do nice things for people and not spend yourself through those nice things and your open mouth for their passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus

Christ. So love is not missing. The whole thing is what love is.

I want to lay my whole life down by whatever practical means or verbal means. Love in deed and word to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples. Now, not only, as you see on the front page here, is there a mission which I just took a little bit to unpack.

There's way more to it. I gave eight messages on it in what, 95 or 96? There is also a strategy that we believe God has given us in the last four years or so called Treasuring Christ Together which has a three-pronged focus. Multiplying campuses, planting new churches, blessing the poorest of the poor around the world through the global diaconate.

That is the three-pronged strategy. And, as I pointed out earlier, the first page here is an introduction to the whole thing. Then the next page is campuses and you can see little pictures there, pages four and five, of people at the new campus which opens Sunday morning.

The next two pages, six and seven, are new churches. You see our church planters there and where we're investing money in church planting and more is on the way. And then the next two pages, eight and nine, the global diaconate.

I'll say more about that in a minute. That means that we are pouring money into projects that we have investigated and believe will spread a passion for God's supremacy among the poorest of the poor as we help them overcome obstacles in their lives. And then a couple-page letter from me and my zeal for this vision that I hope you'll read.

And then the last page, prayer on page 12 and the costs financially on page 13. So there it is again. Take it, read it, and get your head, I hope, into it.

I hope that it almost goes without saying that the terms multiplying campuses and planting new churches is shorthand for spreading a passion for the supremacy of God. I hope that goes without saying since it probably doesn't, I say it. If you spread a passion for God's supremacy in these two cities and their suburbs, if we're successful in getting into the lives of people that do not presently have a passion for God's supremacy and we display Jesus Christ and a supreme and glorious and worthy God effectively and they catch it by the work of the Holy Spirit, they need a place to worship, study, fellowship, strategize.

They're called church buildings. They're not the church. They're church buildings.

We dreamed and thought about only house churches. We canvassed every possible future we could think of. We don't think that's the way God's calling us to do it and therefore a lot happened four years ago.

Oh my, I remember the meetings. Elders on their face before the Lord. Elders in each other's face as they wrestled with all the futures that we could go before that building was built and before we even dreamed of a second campus or doing it that way or before we did video that you're watching now on Sunday morning.

They were on their faces for a year, two years saying, Lord, what shall we do with the blessing of people that are being inflamed with a passion for the supremacy of God? What shall we do? And we believe that the answer is not build a 5,000 person sanctuary downtown for goodness sakes. Keep everybody together. That's the way you do it.

There's a piece of property. We own everything from here to the corner almost. No.

The elders said, no. We don't think so. Well, plant churches.

Yes. Yes. And we never let that go.

But as a strategy for also handling the growth at the home base, it's not a sufficient strategy. It's a glorious strategy of spreading. It's not the only strategy.

And then we hit upon shall we be one church on several campuses? And over long and torturous reflection, praying, thinking, discussing, not only the elders came to a mind on this, but a huge percentage of the people said in their vote, amen, let's do multiple campuses. One church. What do we mean by one church? Things like this.

One eldership. One mission. One strategy.

One budget. One God-centered, Christ-exalting, Bible-saturated theology, some of which you heard read here. One philosophy of children and youth ministry.

One army of missionaries. One unifying ministry of the Word each week, either in person or on video, but multiple campuses. We simply came to the conviction that as we read the New Testament, while there are essentials to worship, essentials to being church, there isn't a detailed dictation of how to be church in every culture.

There's a lot of wiggle room, a lot of freedom to be different ways in different times, different places, different cultures, and we felt the liberty to move forward with treasuring Christ together as multiplying campuses, planting churches, and the global diaconate, which I'll say more about shortly. There's a price, a personal price, a personal price to this. It is not the way you'd want it to be.

If it was perfect. I don't think video is the ideal way to do church. But it seems right for us in this era of our life together.

It's got a financial price because church planting has a financial price and building a big sanctuary down here would have a financial price. Everything costs money on planet Earth. And so there is a price to pay.

But I want to stress very, very clearly here that Christ has paid the main price for us. The big issues of this church, sin and the wrath of God and His holiness and the huge alienation between us and God, that bridge was bought by the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ and it is free! And nobody pays to come to church at Bethlehem. Freely we have received and freely we give.

You don't buy God. God buys you. 1 Corinthians 6.20 We were bought with a price.

But, something happens to a person's view of money when they start treasuring Christ above all things. Something happens. They begin to treasure Christ more than money.

Therefore, the very name of our vision is the key to how we are going to pay for it. The name of our vision, treasuring Christ together above all things, is the key to how we are going to pay for it. It is built into the name.

When you treasure Christ supremely, money becomes mainly a way of maximizing your enjoyment of Christ. Money becomes mainly a way of maximizing it for yourself, because it is more blessed to give than to receive, and for others because you pay for the spread of the Gospel. It is the best of all worlds when

you begin to have Christ as your supreme treasure, then you start to ask, well, what are all these other treasures for? I may not have much, but it is a little bit.

What is it for? What is my house for? What is my job for? What is my bank account for? What is my paycheck for? And the answer is real clear for those who have found Christ as their supreme, all-satisfying treasure. The answer is, I am going to use this money to make that as big as I can and to make sure others get in on it. That is all money is for.

You have got to buy a lot of things, you have got to have food, you have got to have a place to stay, you need some transportation, and all these things are necessary, but your whole mind is, my life exists to maximize my joy in my treasure and bring as many people into the enjoyment of that as I possibly can. That is the meaning of money. It is the currency of Christian hedonism.

And therefore, in my dream, this is going to get paid for without a lot of trouble. Let me give you an illustration of how this church thinks over the last three or four years. It is amazing how God worked.

Some of you are so new, you don't know the story at all. Some of you didn't know about it anyway, even though you have been here. The downtown campus, where we are now, is almost complete.

I say almost because there are a few portions of Education for Exaltation that are yet to be done, where we get all the kids out of the basement here and into there with the remodeled third floor. There are some things that need to be done. We will get to pay for that someday, perhaps sooner rather than later.

But it is almost done, and we never went to the bank for this building. This one we did 13 years ago, but for that one it cost \$7 million, and we never went to the bank. It was a thrilling thing to build that educational center, debt free, and there was a kind of energy as we began to do the multiple campus.

And then we bought the campus in Moundsvie, and we finished it yesterday. And it cost \$9.5 million to buy it and finish phase one, and we did go to the bank. And the energy was, okay, we are going to go to the bank, we believe in that, in this culture, we are going to use the bank for God's purposes.

Let's get that thing done fast. Let's just get this debt out of the way and move forward and have a clean slate and move on. You know what? Hearts that treasure Christ are very restless.

They are restless. And they are restless to do more than one thing. They are restless to do things.

They want more than one thing to happen. When one mind says, let's get this thing, the capital drive, get it done, get this thing paid for, and other minds are thinking, church planting, global diaconate, the poorest of the poor, what about that? How does that all fit in? And as those things emerged, the leadership and the church in the fall of 2003 and in April of 2004 made two amazing decisions. Do you remember? One was, let's take every dollar that goes to treasuring Christ together and that could be used to pay down the 9.5 million dollars up there and let's take 10% of it and plant churches.

Just give it away to church planters and make churches happen that are not us, that have any connection with us except theology. And then, another vision emerged. Let's take 10 more percent of every dollar that comes in for treasuring Christ together and let's not just, I want to say this carefully now because I think we may not be saying it as well as we need to say it.

We're not just doing relief. Like, ok, there's a tsunami, send them \$25,000. Good.

That's not the point. The point as the vision originated was with these monies, and \$190,000 has been given now to the global diaconate in the last two years. With these monies, let's us be compassionate.

Let's have investigations and research and projects and let's our people go. Our people go with the money. And let's plant ourselves and let's wear the pain of the world and let's saturate this church with compassion for the poorest of the poor around the world and not just send our dollars.

In other words, there's a more pervasive feel and spiritual effect the way the global diaconate was conceived than just, here comes an emergency, there comes an emergency and we feel good about throwing our dollars at it. It's that plus. Way plus.

So God gave us those which now means, if you do the math, we need what? I wrote it down. \$11.8 million to pay off that campus because now you're going to take 10% out for church planting, you're going to take 10% out for the global diaconate and in order to pay that thing all the way down, you're talking \$11.8 million. And guess what? There's another campus on the way.

And guess what? Maybe another and another. And who knows what the vision might be? I just have this awful feel of church fatigue setting in, like growth fatigue. That's one of the terrible things that can happen in a church to say, okay, we really stretched, we really finished that building.

No. Campus. Okay, we really worked hard to get that campus.

We got it paid for. Let's rest. Let's just coast for a while.

No. As long as there are lost people who don't have a passion for the supremacy of God in all things, for the joy of all peoples, our work isn't done. And so, treasuring Christ together has no cap on it.

We do it until Jesus comes or we drop dead or become unfaithful. And I don't want to be unfaithful. I would be okay with dropping dead.

And I would be really okay if Jesus interrupted our plans. That's the first half of the sermon. Would you open your Bibles, please, now to 1 Peter 2? Because here's my reason for doing it this way.

Okay, I've just said all kinds of things about this vision called treasuring Christ together. It isn't going to happen unless we treasure Christ. And the only way God caused us to treasure His Son is His Word.

When you see the beauty and value of Christ in the Word, your heart by the Holy Spirit is awakened to count Him precious. I can't make you love Jesus. God can make you love Jesus.

And the instrument by which He does it is the Bible. So, you heard it read. Now, I wish I had about 18 sermons to unpack these verses.

But I'm just going to take a few minutes on four observations. Number one, we're at 1 Peter 2, verses 1 to 10. My first observation.

This text makes it crystal clear that treasuring Christ is God's response to Christ and therefore should be ours. Verse 4. As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious... You see that? In God's sight, the stone, Jesus who was thrown out on Mount Calvary as a useless stone to be crucified, God looks upon that gore and says, that's valuable to me. Really valuable.

That's the only reason we're saved, by the way. It's the value of Christ crucified that covers my forsaking of the value I was intended to have. I just threw it all away by sin.

I just threw God away. I threw everything away. If I'm going to be accepted in heaven, it will be the value of Jesus.

When God looks at me on judgment day or tonight when I die, when God looks at me and says, now why should I let you in here? I'm going to say, Him! Him! Him! Him! Please look at Him because I'm just holding to Him. That's my hope. He is my only value in your sight.

Or look at verse 6. He says it again. He's not going to let us off here real quick without repeating Himself. For it stands in Scripture, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious.

There it is again. Two times, whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame. My argument is very, very simple.

If God, who sees all things perfectly and feels all things perfectly, counts Jesus as His highest treasure, you should too. That's simple. I mean, a child can get this.

This is a six-year-old part of the sermon here. If God values Christ crucified and risen as His highest treasure, seeing His own glory reflected back to Him in His face, then we should also treasure Christ above all things. You know, I wish in English precious could be a verb.

I wish it could. It would be hokey if I tried to turn it into a verb. Let's precious Jesus.

Let's all precious Jesus. But isn't it wonderful that in God's providence the noun treasure is also a verb. I'm so thankful treasure in English is a verb because it gives us a mission statement.

I mean, how hard would it have to be a longer sentence with a relative clause and oh what a mess it would be if treasure could not be a verb. And all I'm doing is taking the word precious, giving it a new word called treasure and making a verb out of it. That's our mission statement.

We treasure Christ. Or it's our strategy under our mission statement. So just understand where it came from.

It came from biblical language that couldn't be made into a verb and so we chose a synonym and made it into a verb because it was already one. That's number one. Number two, second observation.

First one, God treasures Christ above all things. We should too. Number two, this text makes clear that treasuring Christ is more, not less than knowing Christ is precious.

Say it again. This text makes clear that treasuring Christ is more, but not less than knowing that he's precious, knowing that he's a treasure. Put it in a short form.

This text shows that treasuring Christ is a feeling as well as a conviction. Now where do I see that? Verses two and three. Like newborn babes, long for, another word would be desire, long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up to salvation if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

We move from milk to Lord. We move from longing for milk and I think the milk here is word because the preceding context in the end of chapter one is talking about the word of God and the word for spiritual here

really does, I think, mean spiritual in a word way. And so the milk here is the milk of the word not because it's not meat, that's not the point here, but because babies really want it.

Babies really want milk when they get hungry. You try to take a six week old baby and put something else in its mouth, it will try for about four seconds to make do with that and then that is not what I want. I want milk.

Milk is life to me. Give me my milk. That's the point.

The point is desire. But milk is not really the point because it shifts. You see the shift? Desire this milk if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Not if you've tasted that the milk is good. How do you put that together? You put it together like this. The milk is nourishing to the degree that it reveals the Lord.

That's the only use of the Bible. If the Bible is all about stuff and not about Christ, what good is it? It's no good at all. The Bible is valuable because it's God's inspired revelation of a person.

And through the Bible we taste. So I've got two verbs here now. Long for and taste.

Long for and taste. Desire and taste. Treasuring Christ is not just coming to the conviction, well I guess He must be precious so you tell me to embrace Him, I'll embrace Him.

That's like somebody who has a jar of honey and they taste it to see if it is honey and they say, whoa, that's sweet and that's good and you believe them. And they say, well here have some. No, no, I believe you.

I believe you. That's honey. That's the way a lot of people do Christ.

You taste Christ. You fall in love with Christ. He's good.

I believe you. I believe you. I just, no thank you.

That doesn't save anybody. A lot of people in church who have heard the language and know the sentences, they know the conclusions. Honey is sweet.

Honey satisfies. Honey makes the eyes bright. No thank you.

I'll just go to church. I'll just say the sentences. Honey is sweet.

I'll even sing them. But I've got no heart for Jesus. He's not a treasure to me.

I really, really like, fill in the blank. So, the first thing is, it's a feeling, not only. If it's only a feeling, it's not enough.

It's got to come from real revelation, real knowledge, real conviction. And, I should add here, I don't think I said it in my point, it's a feeling and it's acting like he's a treasure. I'm getting that from verse 1. Acting like he's a treasure.

Put away all malice, and all deceit, and hypocrisy, and envy, and all slander. Now just think of these connections here. Here you are.

You've just been invaded by the Holy Spirit. Christ has been shown to you as a beautiful person, a glorious Savior, a mighty Lord, and you have yielded to Him. That means you've been converted.

You're now a Christian. He's your treasure. And an opportunity for deceiving somebody arises.

It says, put away all deceit. So why would you deceive anybody now? What's left in your heart if Christ is your treasure that would incline you to mislead anybody about anything? It's just gone. It's gone.

If Christ is your treasure, all the impulses to be a hypocrite are gone. I've got nothing to lose. He's my treasure.

Why would I deceive anybody if Christ is my treasure? Or just go down the list. Pretend. Hypocrisy is listed.

Why would I try to be something I'm not when I have Christ as my everlasting, infinite treasure and envy? Envy? I mean, you talk about insanity. Here you have the whole universe and the One who made it, Jesus Christ as your treasure, and you're going to go, envy a car? Envy a house? Envy a job? I mean, what is Christ to you if you are envying? I mean, this idea of Christ being our treasure is so absolutely transforming. It's amazing.

Or slander and malice. What would drive you to say untrue things about people? I mean, everybody slanders. Not mainly, I don't think, to hurt others, but mainly because it feels so good to run somebody down you don't like.

It's the last word. Put them in the worst light. It feels good to your old, wicked nature.

But if Christ is a sweet, satisfying, dominating treasure, you've got some problems with that. I mean, the old spirit of vengeance, it's just going to go. Or at least there will be a battle.

There will be a battle. And you'll say, that's not who I am anymore. I'm going to renounce that thing.

So, treasuring Christ together is massively transforming and practical. Number three. This is significant.

This text shows that treasuring Christ together defines a new race of people. And I choose the word race provocatively and intentionally and because it's in the text. So let's go to verse nine and try to understand the implications of being a new race.

Verse nine. But you, who's the you here? I'm going to say, you for whom Christ is the cornerstone. You who don't stumble over Him.

You who count Him and feel Him as precious. You who treasure Christ. That's the you at the beginning of verse nine.

You who treasure Christ are a chosen race. A royal priesthood. A holy nation.

A people for His own possession. Do you notice three words? Race, nation, people. Ginos, from which we get genealogy.

Ethnos, from which we get ethnic and ethnicity. Loos, from which we get laity and lay person. The three Greek words that Israel laid claim to to be.

We are the people. We are the nation. We are the race.

Peter takes them from Israel and says they belong to those for whom Christ is now the cornerstone of the new building. They are the people. They are the race.

They are the nation. Now what shall we make of this? This is huge. This is huge in its practical effects, I believe.

Here's the way I would put it. Those who treasure Christ above all are a new race, a new ethnicity, and a new people group. The implications of that for the reality of racial and ethnic situations in America is very great.

How easily, however, at this very point it would be to make a mistake. Here's what I think a mistake would look like. You would say, oh yes, we're a new race, a new ethnicity, a new people group.

Therefore, in the church, race, ethnicity, people group differences don't count and we should be color blind, ethnic blind, people group blind. I think that's a mistake. Now, be careful.

It's not a total mistake, is it? Because the most thoughtful people who say that mean, I think, something true. And here's what I think they mean, what I would mean if I said that. They mean every ethnic person, and I'm including myself in that, whatever ethnicity you happen to be, whatever color, race, culture, whatever you happen to be, nobody in any group likes to make ethnicity the topic of conversation in every single situation.

Nobody likes the first thought in every relationship to be, oh, I'm going to position ourselves here as black or white or yellow or black. Everybody's thinking, how do I orient myself in this racial situation? And there's kind of a self-consciousness about all of our... Nobody wants to live that way. And I think that's the best meaning of we want to be color blind.

Nobody wants to kind of walk through life always on tiptoe about, am I black, am I white, am I Asian, am I Hispanic, or whatever. We'd like to relax. Some have a lot easier time relaxing, especially if they're in the majority all the time, than others do.

But that's not the main reason I say it's a mistake. The reason I say it's a mistake is that God did not create the indescribable abundance of differences in the world to simply be ignored. God did not create the abundance of ethnic, racial, people group differences in the world.

It is an untold variety. All you have to do is go to an airport. Right? Or anywhere.

Untold variety in the human being. Race singles. And God didn't do that just in order to create something to be ignored.

I don't think so. It would be like saying the best way we can honor a thousand species of flowers is by being colorblind. Really? I don't think so.

That's not what it means to be a new race. Here's what I think it means to be a new race. A new ethnic, a new people group.

It means, first, the dominant trait of the new race is that they all treasure Christ above everything. That's the dominant trait of the new race. They treasure Christ above everything.

That trait has an effect. Namely, it transforms or maybe I should say exposes, reveals all alienating differences in the new race either as Christ belittling sins that should be forsaken or Christ exalting differences that should be treasured. I'm going to say it again because this is really important to me.

The highest defining trait in the new race called Christian or the church is they all treasure Christ above everything and that has a transforming effect on cultural, ethnic, racial, people group differences. Namely, first, it exposes or reveals which of those differences are Christ belittling sins to be forsaken by all groups or Christ exalting distinctives to be treasured by all groups. That happens through everybody treasuring Christ above all things.

It makes the differences serve the larger unifying identity of treasuring Christ together. Say it another way. What's new about the Christian race? Verse 9. What's new about it is that the infinite value of Christ is reflected in each member differently.

And therefore, the differences are not insignificant. Say it again. The main trait of valuing Christ, the worth of Christ, the treasure that is Christ is reflected off of every valuing member differently.

Male and female. Short and tall. Racial, ethnic, people group differences.

Whether you want it or not, you're going to, as you value Jesus above all things, you're going to reflect it differently. And therefore, since God likes His glory to be fully reflected, those different reflections are not insignificant. And therefore, I draw this conclusion.

Let us prize and pursue that diversity. Last brief point, and I'm done. This text shows that the heart act of treasuring Christ is meant to be spread.

The heart act of treasuring Christ is meant to be spread. Verse 9. The second half of the verse, but I'll read the whole verse. You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.

Here it comes. Purpose. Purpose for your life and our church.

That you may proclaim. You can put in the word spread there. That you may spread or proclaim the excellencies of Him.

The value of Him. The preciousness of Him. The treasure that He is.

The One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. His main excellencies are revealed in the Gospel. He died for us.

He rose again. He placated the wrath of God. He took away our guilt.

He forgave our sins. He clothed us with righteousness. He gave us eternal life.

And in all of that we see excellencies. We want to speak them. Do we not want to speak them? The excellencies of Christ.

I know I've preached a long time, but I want to tell a story about a guy on the airplane this morning. I'm going to do it. I'm sorry.

We've got no problems tonight, but you've got a problem in the morning with this. But I flew back with a guy. His name was Frank.

Tears running down his face on the airplane from Dallas. He had just been at a funeral in Dallas. And we got into a long and sweet conversation about the loss of loved ones.

And he said, it just looks senseless to me. And I had just spoken to 8,000 teenagers about eight hours before about nothing is insignificant. Nothing is by accident.

God is sovereign in everything. And I just tried to unpack for him my sermon from the night before. I gave him a copy of the... Which book did I give him? Passion.

The Passion book. And I turned to the last three chapters, which are on death. And the last chapter is Christ came in order to show that He can bring good out of the most horrible evil, which is the crucifixion.

And we just had a wonderful time. And I get off the plane, talk with David afterwards, and I feel like, that's why we're made! To spill over! To spill over! God has shown us so much. And there's a person on every plane and in every church and in every neighborhood and in every office who needs to hear what we sing! We sing excellencies! And they don't come here.

They don't know. That's why we say, and I'm done, we exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things. For the joy of guys beside you on the plane and at work and at home and in church and in school.

And our corporate strategy, as more and more people embrace, is we're going to multiply campuses, plant new churches, and we're going to get our arms around the poorest of the poor and not just send our money. Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you for the patience of your people.

Thank you that there's so many hundreds here who treasure Christ. Thank you that we've been unified for a long time at Bethlehem around sweet, powerful, deep, wonderful, glorious vision of your supremacy. And now we're unified around a practical vision of how to grow and spread in these campuses and churches and global diaconate.

I just pray for energy. I pray for generosity. There's an envelope in there.

Everybody knows what that's for. Grant, I pray that there would be everything we need just because Jesus is so valuable to us. In His name we pray, Amen.

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