

Welcome One Another for the Glory of God (Video)

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the importance of welcoming and accepting one another as Christ welcomed us, focusing on glorifying God in all relationships. It delves into the concept of God-centered love, highlighting that true satisfaction and love come from exalting God above all else. The message challenges the worldly view of love centered on self and encourages a shift towards finding ultimate joy and fulfillment in glorifying God.

Scripture: Romans 15:7, Psalms 27:4, Ephesians 1:5, John 17:1, Romans 3:25

Topics: "Acceptance in Christ", "God-Centered Love"

Description

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Transcript

Before I pray, I would like to thank you and thank John Kim in particular for inviting me. You do need to understand that I meant what I said to some of you this afternoon, that to be here is not a sacrifice for me. It feels, I just spoke behind the scenes there, like a great honor just because I think wherever God is working, doing something extraordinary, to be invited in to be a part of that is a huge gift to me.

And so I go back with God on me because I have felt him among you. And so just know that for me to be here is a tremendous privilege. I really mean that.

I've got an anniversary coming up. My sons and my little girl are all gathering together starting tomorrow to celebrate our 40th anniversary, and so I just kind of stuck this in to do that. So they're eager for me to be home, and I'll be eager to be home.

I'll get on the plane early tomorrow morning, but to be here with you this afternoon and then tonight is a high point for me. So may I ask God's help that the minutes we have together would be anointed by him. Let's pray.

Gracious Father in heaven, it is before you I say it, a great honor to be here ministering the word of God in a context where so many people love the word of God and love the gospel and love the glory of God and love to worship God and love to pray to God and love to witness to God. And so I receive it as a gift from your hand, and I simply want to bless them. And to that end, would you help me? Would you fill me with your Holy Spirit? Would you keep me faithful to your word? Would you guard me from the fear of man and from pride? Would you free me from self-consciousness and allow me to be absorbed into the reality that you have appointed for me to talk about? And would you come and awaken a passion for your supremacy and a passion for your glory in this people and out from them? Would you ripple across this nation and around the world for the glory of Christ and for the joy of all the peoples? Exceedingly and abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, would you do a mighty work? In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

The theme for your year's conference here at JAMA is, Lord, let your glory come down, repentance, reconciliation, and revival. And I'm going to take two of those words, glory and reconciliation, and go to a passage of Scripture that draws them together and think with you about those words and those realities and how they're related. So the passage of Scripture I'm going to is in Romans 15.

In the dark out there, you probably can't see your Bible, but if you can and you want to look at it, that's where we're going. So Romans 15, and I'm going to read verses 6 through 9. Actually, I'm going to start at verse 5 so I don't start in the middle of a sentence. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another.

So there's the reconciliation idea. He's addressing Romans, Roman Christians. Some of them are Jews and some of them are Gentiles.

They don't eat the same food. They don't drink the same drink. They don't make much of the same days.

And there are conflicts in the church, just like in yours and mine. And he's pleading with them to live in harmony, and he relates it, as you will see now, to the glory of God. So I'm going to start over, verse 5. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Jesus Christ, that together, with one voice, you might glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So that's the first reference to glory, that you might glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus. Therefore, welcome one another, or it could be translated, receive or accept one another, as Christ has welcomed you to the glory of God. So there's the second reference, closely connected with harmony and mutual acceptance.

Welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you to the glory of God. Verse 8, for I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised, that is the Jews, to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs. So that's the first reason Christ came.

To confirm the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they're true, that Christ has come. And second, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God, there's the third reference to the glory of God, that the Gentiles, that's most of you and me, we're not Jews by blood, that we might glorify God for His mercy. So that's Romans 15, 5 through 9. Three references to the glory of God, all in the context of living harmony with one another in the church.

Welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God. Now, how do you do that? What does welcoming to the glory of God look like? That means welcome each other in such a way that you make God look glorious. I think that's what to the glory of God means.

So that you're welcoming each other, you're receiving people different from you in such a way that when people watch it happen, they conclude God is glorious. Now, that's tough to figure out a way to be harmonious and reconciled and welcoming across differences generationally and ethnically and in taste of music and food and leisure to welcome each other in such a way that people don't think you're good, but Christ is glorious. So that's what it says.

Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God. Be reconciled and reconciling with one another in such a way, namely the way Christ did it, that people will conclude God is glorious because of what they've seen. Go back to that text and just read you two other verses that might give you a clue how that happens.

This is verses one and two. I started at verse five. Let me go back up to verse one.

We who are strong, Paul says, have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, the reproaches of those who fell on you fell on me.

So one of the ways that we welcome one another as Christ welcomed us to make God look glorious is that we do it in self-denying, other advancing ways. I deny some of my preferences in order to accommodate you. Now the way God comes in there, because that just sounds like a horizontal thing, the way God comes in there is that he is the one who in his glory is satisfying your soul, giving you rest so that you don't have to have your way all the time because God is your treasure.

God is your satisfaction. God is your joy, just like David has been singing, your soul, your joy, your life. So I can let you have your way even if it isn't my way because I've got Jesus.

Now, it seems to me then that the way this works is that we are called upon to welcome one another, be reconciled to one another, live in harmony with one another as Christ welcomed us so that God looks glorious. And the way we make God look glorious is by denying ourselves and dying for others so that they might know and be satisfied in the same God that I am. So it's coming from my satisfaction in the glory of God and it's leading to their supreme satisfaction in the glory of God.

Welcoming one another is from him and through him and to him. That's what it seems to me Romans 15, 7 is saying. Now, this is a problem, and here's the problem I'm going to raise and try to deal with.

There are a lot of people who don't feel loved if you tell them or show them that you're loving them, welcoming them, accepting them, like that. So here's what they might say. They might hear you talk.

They might hear me talk right now and they might say, so let me get this right. You're accepting me because you value the glory of God so highly and you are welcoming me into your church and your life and your family and your circle with a view to me also coming to value him. Now, get that right and you'd say, yes.

And they would say if they're a typical American, I don't feel loved by that. That's all about God. It's not about me.

His value is drawing you to me and His value is what I'm supposed to get and what about me? I thought love was about me. That's where all of us are by nature. I mean, just be honest.

When do you feel loved? And if you were honest, you would own that your natural bent is to say, I feel loved when you make much of me, make me the center, not God. You treat me as though God is the center and God is the supreme value and God is the reason you're coming to me and where do I fit in? This isn't love. We got a real problem on our hands and I think the way to address the problem is to ask whether when Paul said in verse 7, as Christ welcomed you to the glory of God, he really meant that.

Let me pose the question more clearly. Here's the verse. Welcome one another, accept one another, receive one another as Christ welcomed you to the glory of God.

Now, the question is, I think it's the most illuminating question, did Christ welcome us for the glory of God? In other words, when Christ died for us to cover our sins and provide our righteousness, was He doing it ultimately that His Father and Himself might be magnified? And if He was, was He loving me? Now, that's the question I want to answer because if I can figure out how Christ loved me, then I will know how I should love and if I have to destroy my whole natural bent to define being loved as being made much of, I will destroy it. I just want to know in truth, what does it mean to love and be loved? What does it mean to accept? What does it mean to welcome? What does it mean to receive in such a way that love happens and God is glorified? That's what I want to know. That's my contribution to this theme.

Let the glory come down, reconciliation. The glory will come down and be seen when we welcome one another like that. So that's where we're going.

Let's start in answering the question, did Jesus love me and save me and forgive me and justify me for the ultimate purpose of making much of Himself and His Father? My answer to that is a resounding yes, but I'll need to show you from texts. Let's start with the Old Testament, Psalm 106, verses 6 through 8. Around our church, Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, we talk a lot about being God-centered, God-centered. So every now and then, I try to make plain to our people, what do we mean by this? Is this just jargon? Has this gotten so old it doesn't have any meaning anymore? And I chose this verse to explain it a few weeks ago.

Here's the verse. Both we and our fathers have sinned, yet He saved them for His namesake, that He might make known His mighty power. You hear that? We and our fathers have sinned, so I need a Savior.

He saved them for His namesake, that He might make known His mighty power. So what does God-centered mean? God-centered at our church means we talk about salvation that way. God saved me for His namesake.

God saved me to show His power. We talk about it and we like it. We like it.

We really, really, really like it that way. And most Americans hate it because we, by nature, are so self-centered. For God to come to us and say, I'm saving you for my namesake, would turn most people off.

We want a God who puts us at the center of the universe and we're happy to bow down to God and be God-centered as long as He is me-centered, me, me-centered. If He will make me the center of the universe, I'll make Him the center of my universe because then I'm really at the center of His universe. And the Bible simply won't have it.

God won't have it. He'll brook no competitors to the centrality of God in His own affections. So the first text we're seeing is Psalm 106, verse 8. He saved us for His namesake that He might make known His mighty power.

Here's the next one. Just getting the Old Testament trajectory to take us to Jesus. Isaiah 43, 25, God says, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

I blot out your transgressions, God says, for my sake. That my glory might be known. Psalm 25, verse 11 teaches us to pray like this.

For your namesake, O Lord, pardon my guilt. I love to pray like that. I love to say, O God, show the magnificence of your grace, and your glory, and your longsuffering, and your patience by forgiving me.

I get the forgiveness, you get the glory. And I want it to be that way. I think that's the mark of being born again.

New Testament examples, that's the Old Testament trajectory that shoots the arrow now into the New Testament where the cross finally happens, and we find out more immediately why Jesus died for us, why Jesus saved us. Did Jesus welcome us, accept us, receive us for the glory of his father? Ephesians 1, verses 3, following, goes like this. I'll start at verse 5. In love, God predestined us for adoption as sons according to the counsel of his will through Jesus Christ unto the praise of the glory of his grace.

God predestined us through Jesus Christ, that means through his work on the cross and his resurrection, he predestined us to adoption through Jesus Christ, why? Unto the praise of the glory of his grace. So there it is, as clear as you could ask for it. Why did he adopt me? Why did he send Jesus Christ in order that my sins would be paid for, righteousness would be imputed to me, and I could be welcomed into the father's family? Why? To the praise of the glory of his grace.

So if the person is asking me, now you're telling me that the way Jesus loves me is that he dies for me in order that his father might look great. So I'm just saying, unto the praise of the glory of his grace. And I would say, yes, that's exactly what I'm saying.

Christ died for you so that he might make the father look magnificent to you. Or Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 to 11, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant and being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross.

So now there's the eternity to the cross plan. Incarnation, humility, obedience, death, crucified. Next verse, therefore, God has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name.

Why? That at the name of Jesus, every knee would confess Jesus as Lord, bend the knee and confess him as Lord to the glory of God the Father. Now, sum that up. Christ left heaven, was massively and perfectly obedient to his father, was voluntarily executed on the cross in order that every knee would bow to him and bring his father glory.

So now the person asked me, let me get this straight now, you're telling me that the reason Jesus came into the world and the reason he was obedient and the reason he died for me is so that all knees would bow and every tongue would say, great Lord Jesus. And his father would be shown to be great and

glorious. And I would say, yes, that's why he did it.

He did it for that reason. Or take Romans 3.25, God put Christ forward through his blood to be received by faith as a propitiation. This was to demonstrate God's righteousness because he had passed over former sins.

This was to demonstrate that at the present time, he is righteous and that he might be both righteous and the one who declares righteous him who has faith in Jesus. Now, sum that up. Why did the father offer his son on the cross in that text? Answer, to prove to the world that God sweeps nothing under the rug but that he deals with all God-belittling sin.

And the way he deals with it is by proving he is just and righteous by sacrificing his son in the forgiveness of sins, that it might be plain, God brooks no indignities against his glory. He is righteous through and through, and he is just. And therefore, if sins are going to be forgiven, there will be an atoning sacrifice and Christ will pay the penalty.

So, the person says, now let me get this right, you're telling me that the way Jesus loves me and the way he dies for me and welcomes me and receives me and reconciles himself to me is by acting in a way to prove that his father is righteous. Yes. Jesus, in the last prayer with his disciples in John 17, prayed some amazing things for you.

The very first thing out of his mouth in that magnificent prayer in John 17 is this. Father, the hour has come, glorify your son that the son may glorify you. He's praying for you.

This is called the high priestly prayer, meaning he's interceding as a priest for you with the father. And the first thing out of his mouth is, Father, the hour has come. What hour? The hour of his death.

Father, the hour of my death has come. Glorify your son that the son may glorify you. This is a conspiracy.

God's going to glorify the son and the son's going to glorify the father and that's what's happening on the cross. So, the person says, let me get this straight now, you're telling me that when Jesus prays for me that I might be accepted with the father and have everlasting life and be welcomed and be received and be forgiven and go to heaven that he prays like this, glorify me that I might glorify you? Like, where am I? You read the first five verses of John 17, you're not there. Not there.

God is there and the son is there and they're dealing with what's going to happen on the cross. Father, glorify your son and the son will glorify you. And there's nothing new there.

Back in chapter 12 of John, he was so in agony. Listen to these words. This is John 12, 27.

Now is my soul troubled and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. The hour of his death, save me from this hour. No, but for this purpose, I have come to this hour.

Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it and I will glorify it again.

Okay, now there are the texts. Old Testament texts, a trajectory toward the cross, New Testament texts, all of them saying the same thing. Namely, when Paul said in Romans 15, 7, welcome one another, accept one another, receive one another, be patient with one another, love one another, forgive one another, be reconciled to one another as Christ welcomed you.

And then he added, to the glory of God. He meant that's the way Jesus welcomed you, to the glory of God. So this is not an issue between you and me.

This is an issue between you and Jesus. Not whether you like the way I love you, namely, with my satisfaction in God impelling me toward you and my passion that you would be impelled toward him so that he's the bottom of it, he's the top of it, he's the middle of it. You're quite secondary in this affair of love.

He's everything. If you don't like that way of loving you, you've got to deal with Jesus, not me. You've got to deal with Jesus.

There is so much in the evangelical church, I pray not as much in your churches in the Korean-American scene, I pray that your branch of that great body would not be as guilty as so many who are simply stripping the gospel of its God-centeredness. Stripping the welcoming teaching of its God-centeredness. Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you to the glory of God.

And Christ, therefore, we've seen in all these texts, did a dying work, a suffering work, and obeying work, a rising work in order that he might welcome you, and he did it all to make the Father look great. Now, let me close by a brief effort to bridge the gap between this Christian message that I just gave and the world who thinks there is no love for me if I'm not at the center of your love. If you put God at the center, God at the bottom, God at the top, you're not loving me, you're loving God.

I want to bridge that gap. I don't want to just make trouble. I don't want to just be hard for the world to understand.

I'd like to save the world. I'd like the world to experience glimmers of Holy Spirit given awakening and insight that would enable them to say, oh, oh, oh, that's what I've been missing all my life. That's what I would like to happen.

So, let me devote five minutes or so here to just try to make that plain. I haven't said it yet. You don't even know what I'm going to say.

Here's the way it works. If I understand the Bible, Psalm 27 verse 4 goes like this. You know it.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Now, here come the key words, to gaze upon or to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his tabernacle. Now, think on that for just a moment.

One thing, this is the way a person speaks who has been awakened to God and his son and his redemption. One thing have I desired. What is it? To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.

Why? Because when I see the beauty of the Lord, when I see the infinite grandeur and greatness and holiness of God, everything in me is finally at home and satisfied in him. And in that moment, in that moment, I am being deeply, profoundly, and ultimately satisfied, and he is being deeply, and profoundly, and ultimately exalted. And therefore, his exaltation and my being loved are the same thing.

They aren't at odds. Here's the key. Here's the key that just might unlock some of your unbelieving friends to what I'm saying that sounds so counterintuitive, countercultural.

It just might open them to point out to them things like, why do people go to the Grand Canyon? Why do people look into the sky at night? People don't go to the Grand Canyon in order to have their self-esteem

built up. People feel small on the edge of the Grand Canyon. People feel small when they look into the stars at night.

And yet people love to do it. Now, I think the reason they love to do it is because written on their heart still is the message, you were made not to be the center of the universe. You were made to have God at the center of the universe.

So there's this little hook that you might be able to get into their hearts like this as they perceive, you know what? Usually, I like to be made much of. I like the praise of my boss. I like the praise of my wife.

I like the praise of my kids. I like people to say, good job. Usually, that makes me feel good.

But you know what? When I'm going to sleep at night, that doesn't make me very happy. It's not big enough. It feels like it's stroking me, but it's not going very deep.

And you say to them, that's right. It's not going very deep because you weren't made to be stroked like that. And they say, well, what am I made for? And you say, you're made not to be unhappy.

You're made with your soul to expand big enough so that God becomes your treasure, God becomes your joy. Your ego is nowhere near big enough to satisfy what God made you for. He made you for himself.

And he means for you to enjoy him and be satisfied him and, therefore, to make much of him so that you get the satisfaction, and he gets the praise, and he gets the glory, and he gets the honor. And the two come together without any conflict anymore. And if God were in that conversation, that person simply might say, I never thought of it that way.

Would you teach me more? Would you show me more about how Christ or God being made much of is really what my soul will find most satisfaction in so that it becomes my joy to do it. So, let me go back to the verse. What I said I came to do was try to put two words together, glory of God coming down and reconciliation.

I chose the verse Romans 15, 7 to work on. And the verse says, I'll just apply this to your friends, the people you don't like very much, the conflicts in your church, whatever is your issue right now. Welcome, receive, accept one another as Christ welcomed you to the glory of God.

And the reason when you welcome somebody in order to make God look good, the reason that is loving to them is because what will satisfy them most deeply is for this God to be made big and to be made one, number one in their lives. Father in heaven, Father, I pray that as these folks in a day or so go home, that Romans 15, 7 will be big. That they would be, that the Korean-American church and all of its multicultural dimensions would be the most welcoming, accepting, loving, forgiving, reconciling ethnic group in this country.

Because they have caught on to the fact that ethnocentricity is damnable, and Christocentricity is magnificent, and theocentricity is glorious. So make their churches and my church radically Christ-exalting, radically God-centered, radically God-glorifying. So that when we welcome people on the basis of your glory and for your glory, they will discover what it really means to be loved.

I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

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