

Word That Kindles Worship, The: Showing the Glories of God

by John Piper

John Piper emphasizes that the primary goal of preaching is to lead people to worship God by magnifying His glories through expository teaching.

Duration: 41:20

Scripture: Psalm 34:8, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 13:44, John 4:14, Philippians 3:8

Topics: "Kingdom Of God", "Biblical Worship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on Matthew 13:44, where Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a hidden treasure in a field. The preacher emphasizes the importance of directing the attention of the listeners to the text of God's word and not elevating their own words above it. He encourages the congregation to engage with the text and ask questions to understand its meaning and significance. The preacher highlights the value of the kingdom of God, challenging the listeners to consider if they are willing to give up everything to obtain it.

Transcript

If in the process of these talks questions come to your mind that I don't answer, I hope that you will write them down and come back for the question and answer session time tomorrow. I really do enjoy interacting with things, and so if you feel frustrated that I didn't get around to answering yours, come. Let me try to recap this morning's talk, even though it seems like we hardly took a breather.

The point I wanted to get across this morning was that the aim of biblical preaching is to bring people to worship God. And one of the ways I tried to justify that, especially there at the end, was to point out that in numerous Pauline texts, the aim of preaching is to bring people to faith, and then I pointed out that I believe both in Paul and in John, and I think we could show it elsewhere, the essence, the heart, the indispensable core of saving faith is to be satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus, and that this being satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus magnifies God. And that magnifying of God is worship, and therefore since the aim of preaching is faith, which magnifies God, the aim of preaching is worship.

That was the point this morning. So always in every text, however practical the issue is that you're taking up into God, the aim is that God-exalting satisfaction in God would be created in the hearts of your hearers. James Henry Thornwell was a great old preacher in South Carolina where I grew up in

Greenville.

1834, Henry Ward Beecher called him the most brilliant minister in the old school Presbyterian church, and he wrote a letter near the beginning of his ministry which captures this focus of preaching that I'm trying to capture, let me quote from him. I felt that a new era had commenced in my life in that I was no longer a citizen of the world, but an ambassador of God, standing in the stead of Jesus Christ and beseeching men to turn away from unsatisfying vanities of a fleeting life and to fix their hopes on the enduring sources of beatitude. It's amazing what you can say if you use flowery words.

It really means make people happy. But if you say that, people get upset at you. So I'll say it the way he said it.

To persuade people to turn away from unsatisfying vanities of a fleeting life and fix their hopes on the enduring sources of beatitude which surrounds the throne of God. You know, the text in the Bible is not nearly so squeamish in the language that it uses from which that's taken. Thou dost show me the path of life.

In thy presence is fullness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore. We say, oh, don't you mean joy? You don't mean pleasure, do you? Well, the Bible doesn't whitewash its happiness language all the time like we try to. It is indiscriminate in the slinging out of words like happiness and joy and pleasure and delight.

What Thornwell is trying to say is that the task of preaching is to warn people that they're not going to find satisfaction in the world and they need to find it in the living water that satisfies. You know this text. Oh, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.

He who has no money, come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and labor? For that which does not satisfy.

Hearken diligently to me and satisfy yourselves with abundance. That's preaching, Isaiah 55. That's the goal of preaching.

Turn away from what doesn't satisfy. Come to what does satisfy is what you say every Sunday morning as you spread the banquet table. The essence of preaching, the best way to glorify an inexhaustible fountain is to drink and drink and drink and drink and then stand up and say, ah.

And that ah is worship. And the satisfaction you feel is sanctification's power because the power of sex and drink and drugs and pride and popularity, power is broken by a superior satisfaction. The biblical way to liberate people from sin is to give them the expulsive power of a new affection as Thomas Chalmers in a great sermon once said.

The task of preaching, therefore, is to display the all-satisfying glories of God in such a way that the power of competing allegiances and competing satisfaction is broken and falls away and people are held captive by the presence of God and its joy and its pleasure. So what I said this morning, I just alluded to it in passing and we'll talk more about it now and especially tomorrow, is that pastors can make their own music. They don't have to have a synthesizer or an organ or drums.

They can make their own music. And that music is the singing of the soul over the truth of God that they are preaching and the sound is worship. And therefore, all true preaching not only tries to beget and

sustain worship, but all true preaching is worship.

And if you don't see worship happening in the pulpit on Sunday, you're probably not seeing genuine preaching. One of the reasons people do not buy into what the preacher is saying is because it doesn't look like he's bought into it with his heart. His passions are not engaged.

He woke up and watched the news on television. He went to bed watching something that's on TV Saturday night. I've been preaching for 14 years.

I taught six years before that. I've never had a TV in my house. You do not have to have a television to be relevant.

Believe me, you don't. My people have never accused me of being out of touch or irrelevant. I know my weaknesses.

I know the power of television. It is a deadly instrument in America. It kills preachers.

That's not in the paper. You can make your own music. It doesn't need to be with an instrument.

When the worship-seeking word comes, it needs to come worshipping. In other words, James Stewart. Remember him? A great Scottish preacher.

He wrote a book 20 years ago called Heralds of God. In it he says this, If in a congregation one soul here, another there, may be receiving, as the sermon proceeds, some vision of the majesty of God, some glimpse of the loveliness of Christ, some revelation of personal need beneath the searchlight of the Spirit, is the ministry of the word to be minimized or regarded as less divine than the other parts of the service, is not such preaching worship? And I would say it is worship, not only because it is begetting or sustaining it in the people as they're listening, but it is it because the delight that it is trying to create in the people is being expressed through the preacher. That sense of being satisfied in God is not only happening in the hearts of the people, it is being expressed through the voice and the demeanor of the preacher.

And it makes a difference. That song will awaken the hearts of the people. I'm going to talk about that tomorrow.

Tomorrow is the worshipping of the pastor. But before we get to that, today, this afternoon, I want to focus in on this half of my definition of the preacher called expository. I define preaching as expository exaltation.

We talk about the exaltation tomorrow. And we talk about the expository now. The song that the preacher sings while he's preaching over the truth that he's preaching is a song that has spiritual God-given power only when it is a song sung over truth.

If it isn't being sung over biblical truth, it isn't God's song and it isn't genuine worship. And therefore, truth matters. Expository exaltation is necessary.

My definition of expository I take straight out of John Stott's book On Between Two Worlds, and I'll read it for you. I think it's excellent. I can't improve on it.

He says, It is my contention that all true Christian preaching is expository preaching. Of course, if an expository sermon is meant a verse-by-verse explanation of a lengthy passage of Scripture, then indeed it

is only a possible way of preaching, but that would be a misuse of the word. Properly speaking, he says, exposition has a much broader meaning.

It refers to the content of the sermon, biblical truth, rather than its style, a running commentary. To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. The expositor pries open what appears to be closed, makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted, and unfolds what is tightly packed.

The opposite of exposition is imposition, which is to impose on the text, verse, sentence, single word, what isn't there. It could equally be a paragraph or a chapter, a whole book. The size of the text is immaterial, so long as it is biblical.

What matters is what we do with it. Whether it is long or short, our responsibility as expositors is to open it up in such a way that it speaks its message clearly, plainly, accurately, and relevantly. That's excellent.

And it's what I believe exposition is. So when I call preaching expository exaltation, I mean that by expository. It says to expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view.

Now, what is mainly there is God. In every text, on every subject, whether commanding, warning, promising, teaching, the main reality of every text is God. And wherever God is present, He is supreme.

And wherever He is supreme, He is to be worshipped. And therefore, every sermon is about worship. Every sermon is meant to gather the affections of the people, satisfy them in God, and lift their hearts to God for whatever the topic is that you are dealing in.

When we ask, therefore, as every preacher ought to ask, what the aim of preaching is or how can I awaken the slumbering passions of my people so that they say that the surpassing worth of God satisfies them or they say with the Apostle Paul, I count everything as rubbish for the surpassing value of just knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and fellowshiping in His sufferings and joining Him in the resurrection. How do you bring people to feel that in their hearts so they count everything as loss for the surpassing value of connecting with Jesus? The answer is going to be at least this. In our preaching, we must display from Scripture the glories of God in Christ.

We must display from Scripture the glories of God in Christ. Now, it won't do here. I know this is partially jargon and can go easily in your ear and out the other.

I want to bank here for a minute. It isn't enough to say briefly, my preaching is for the glory of God and the passion of our church and the mission of our church is that God be glorified and then hasten on to talk about other things that you really like to talk about and you know your people like to hear about. That will not do.

That will not do. Oh, how many preachers in pulpits, how many teachers in seminaries and colleges and how many counselors in clinics give an account of their God-neglecting sermons and God-neglecting teaching and God-neglecting syllabi and God-neglecting counseling by saying, oh, we believe that the glory of God is the foundation of everything. We assume that.

We take that for granted and everything we are now saying in this sermon, in this class, in this counseling is built on that. That will not do. Absolutely will not do to say that we take it for granted or we assume God.

More and more in recent years I have become so deeply persuaded God does not like to be taken for granted. He does not like to be assumed as the unspoken premise. He created the universe to what? Display His glory.

The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmaments declare His handiwork. Day unto day pours forth speech about God.

He did not create the universe to go secret. Nor did He do redemption or send His Son into the world so that He would be buried underneath as the unseen foundation of everything else we like to talk about and show where our heart really is. No, I have come to see that once I was wrong in the use of an analogy about this reality of God, namely the analogy of foundation.

He is the foundation of my courses. He is the foundation of my counseling. He is the foundation of my preaching.

Do you know the problem with that? Nobody thinks about the cement blocks in their basement. Nobody. It won't do to say He is the foundation under our church.

He is the foundation under my syllabi. Oh, I'm sorry I didn't mention Him, but we all know that He's there. I think it's an offense to God to enjoy the food in the kitchen and the TV in the den and the sex in the bedroom, and now and then remember, oh yeah, there's a foundation under the house.

That's right. Let's give tribute to the foundation. When you really like the food, you really like the TV, and you really like the sex, He's not honored.

He's not honored. So I beseech you, stop using that if you use it as the warrant for a God-neglecting sermon or a warrant for a God-neglecting class or a warrant for a God-neglecting counseling session. It will not do.

God does not like to be taken for granted. He likes to saturate everything. He will be displayed.

He wants to be on the agenda all the time. That's the burden of my life to say that to as many people as I can. I have never ever met anybody who displays, knows, loves, cherishes, worships and thinks about the foundation in their house.

It's an inadequate image, even if true, because the house will fall without it, but you can be an idolater in it while it stands. We will awaken worship in our people when we stop treating God as an out-of-sight foundation for all the other things we like to talk about and begin to talk about God. The glories, plural.

I'm using plural to just break the synapse in your brain which allows glory to go zap-zap. Glories. We must talk about glories.

The glories of God and Christ. And we must get specific. We must get specific.

It won't do to just stand up and give a broad, vague generalization at the beginning of your message that you're going to talk about the glory of God or you really hope that people will come to delight in the glory of God and then talk about everything else but the glories of God. That won't do. We must talk about His value and His worth.

We must talk about His triumphs past, present, and future over sin and death and hell and Satan. There's a series. We must talk about His knowledge.

We must talk about His knowledge that makes the Library of Congress look like a little matchbox and makes quantum physics like a first-grade reader. You must talk about His knowledge and you must talk about His wisdom which has never been, never will be counseled by anybody. We must talk about His authority over heaven and earth and by whose permission Satan cannot... He can't move an inch without that permission of God's authority.

He has absolute authority over all the demons in the world. We must talk about His providence without which not one bird in the dark jungle of Africa falls dead to the ground and not one hair on this 48-year-old head turns gray. Not one without His sovereign, providential permission.

And we must talk about His Word that upholds the universe and keeps all the atoms and molecules together. Everything coheres in His Word. We must talk about His power to walk on water and to cleanse lepers and to heal the lame and open the eyes of the blind and open the ears of the deaf and to still storms and to raise the dead.

There's a year's worth of glories. We must talk about His purity never to sin. We must talk about His trustworthiness never ever has will break one promise nor will one eona fall to the ground.

He is absolutely full of integrity and trustworthiness which is a rare thing today and therefore is relevant. We must talk about His justice. This is so fantastically important when you talk about family systems and who will have the last say and what will we do with that guy who abused my kids and the justice of God which will call and settle every account either in hell or on the cross.

There's a series, The Justice of God. And we must talk about His patience to endure people like me decade after decade of half-heartedness and failure and irritability with my wife and out of control with my children and failing to follow through and the awesome patience of God slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. And we must talk about His endurance.

Have you ever had anything like a nail driven through your hand? And to choose it to choose it to embrace it to keep there instead of pulling off and leveling them with His voice. What an endurance! And we must talk about His wrath one of these days. One of these days the Lamb is going to stand forth and people are going to cry for rocks and mountains to crush the life out of them so they don't have to see the Lamb.

There's a series. The wrath has to be seen in its glory and we must talk about His grace that justifies the ungodly and His love that dies for sinners. In other words, brothers and sisters, if you want to beget worship in your people you can't use vague generalities about the glory of God.

You can't do it. You've got to be specific about the contours. There's a contour to our God.

It's in this book. The contours. You make enemies with contours but you flame people with contours.

You hold up a vague cloud and call it glory, they'll see it. You've got to show the contours. You've got to blow the cloud away.

You've got to let the diamond shine with its sharp edges. God has edges. And we are called upon to clean the diamond off and blow the cloud away and turn it before our people and let them see the preciseness of

our God.

There are glories to be magnified. Every Sunday our people need a fresh picture of why God is the all-satisfying treasure of their lives. They need to be reminded.

I know that because that's where I live. I tell my people again and again I've got to get saved every morning all over again. Which simply means the devil sits on my face when I wake up in the morning.

And the only way I can get him off is with the Word of God. If I were to wake up in the morning and do anything but quote Scripture, I would be a goner at the breakfast table. I don't know how people neglect the Word of God and neglect the battle with the evil one and expect to be God's person.

Our people need to see some particular concrete, stunning representation of His greatness. Some fresh angle on the old glory that makes people say, I count everything as loss for the surpassing value of knowing Jesus. I want my people to say that every Sunday as they leave.

However the topic has been. Let me give you an example about this concreteness. Last week, I'm reading my devotions and I'm reading in John 8. And I use this just because the way the Lord used it.

What are we, Tuesday? The day before yesterday I did the pastoral prayer and this came. I was reading on Friday, I think it was, last week and Jesus spoke powerfully. He said to me, this is the only way Jesus has ever spoken to me, naming the words of Scripture.

I wish He did other things and I believe He can do other things, I just don't happen to have the gift of prophecy, I suppose, like Wayne Grudem says I'm supposed to have. But God spoke to me very powerfully. He said, truly, truly I say to you, if anyone will keep my word, he will never see death.

I don't even see it. I mean, it just hit me like a ton of bricks. Who on television today could look out over America and say, if anyone will keep my word, he will never see death.

Ha! Now there's a text on authority. There's a text on power. Who do you think you are? You either put people like that in jail or you bow down and worship.

So I was praying my pastoral prayer on Sunday. I was praying for the children. I was praying for the teenagers.

Let me tell you what I said to the teenagers. This is absolutely irrelevant to this point. But I'll tell you what I said.

I said, Lord, I just thank you so much that Christian teenagers can say yes, your majesty to the king of kings instead of following everybody else who says yes, your majesty to the mirror. I thought that was really proper. But nobody laughed.

And it wasn't supposed to be funny because it's a tragedy. And then I got to the single people and I prayed for them. I'll tell you what I said for the single people.

And I got to the old people. And I said, Lord, I just beg of you for the saints who count their days not in decades now or in years but in months, that you right now would speak to them this word. If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.

And I said, when death raises its hideous face in that last split second and reaches out its horrid tentacles in that last split second, the Lord Jesus comes. Pow! And you're gone. You will not see it.

Isn't that awesome? You won't see it in the split second of that last whatever it is. None of us has ever gone there in return. We pastors have watched people die.

And we think we've seen death. We've not seen death. The only people who fear they'll see death is when they're about two seconds away from it and it is opening its jaws.

And if they're Christians, He comes! He comes! And they do not see it. They don't see it. And I just prayed that reality down upon the old saints of our church.

And my hope right now, there's an element of preaching in praying. And that's not unbiblical. You can make it unbiblical by turning a prayer into a sermon and slipping in your little points that you couldn't make any other way.

But when Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14, if I pray in a tongue, how are they going to say amen? In other words, you want people to say amen when you pray. I mean pray. Same thing almost.

You want people to say amen. You are praying. I can't even separate the two.

You are praying. You are praying in a way that you hope to God that they are agreeing with. Because reality is being pressed on them by the Spirit in the name of God.

So that's an example of how in my life, last week a word came to me, a very specific contour of the glory, of the power and the authority of Jesus Christ to stand back and say anybody in the world who keeps my word will never see the biggest enemy that we ever had. I mean that's just incredible. You just take a nugget like that and you press it and you press it and you press it until they see it and feel it as glorious.

And so the point there is not merely that they are not going to die, but God is great. Jesus is great. That's the point of that text.

The sub-point is therefore you won't die. You won't die. Because Jesus is great.

You put a man like that behind bars or you bow down and worship. You don't trifle with him. One last thing.

There's a tendency today, just like there's a tendency to take the glory of God and His reality and put it underneath and call it foundation while we talk about what we really like to talk about, things that are on everybody's front agenda, front burner, and so we know we can stir them up good. And if somebody says, where was God in that sermon? Well, He was down here upholding the sermon. Just like there's a tendency to do that, there is also a tendency today to do the same thing with biblical texts.

That is to take the concrete text of Scripture and hide it as the unseen foundation of the sermon. There seems to exist the idea that if you open the Bible and read the text and then tell people to look at the text with you or quote it repeatedly in your sermon so that they hear the actual words of the text, it's academic, pedantic, and therefore associated with lectures which are always boring and therefore you shouldn't do it. Instead, maybe read your text but build on it.

Don't work with it because if you do, you'll sound like a scholar and a boring lecturer. Well, I don't agree with that, as you might guess. I don't think it has to be boring.

I don't think it has to be pedantic, and I do think it holds the attention of the hearer, and I do think it stirs affection and worship, and I want to plead for that in these last couple of minutes. Our people need to know that what we say about God is what God says about God. Because what I think about God is not worth anything! Nothing! Pastors who do not direct the attention of their listeners repeatedly to the text of God's Word are presuming that they should take His Word for it, which means they are elevating their word above God's Word.

We must not only believe that what we say is based on God's Word, we must, I believe, show people that it is so, that what we're saying comes out of the Bible. And that does not have to be pedantic. It doesn't have to be lecture-like.

We must show them the very words and phrases and clauses that give us this flame of love to God. Where did we get it anyway? From listening to loosey-goosey music in the morning? If we did, close our mouths! If our song has not been born out of the truth of Scripture, our song is fake! Our emotions, our emotionalism, the difference between emotion and emotionalism is where the truth is underneath and permeating the emotion. I'm pleading, in other words, not merely that what you show of Christ really be from the text.

Not merely that. That's crucial. But that it be manifestly from the text.

That it be obviously from the text. That your people walk out knowing that they have gotten your point from that book, not from your imagination. And if they don't see that, they're building on sin in taking your word for it.

I'll close with an example. Just pretend like you're my people now. And I'll give you a three or five minute sermon.

Our text is Matthew 13, verse 44. And if you were my church, I'd wait until I heard all the pages swishing. But you know this verse by heart.

And you don't have to have people have Bibles. You know, I.G. Fernando was here last week, right? I've had people criticize me on this point and say, you talk like a westerner because you don't realize that most of the preaching that's done in the world is done to pre-literate who don't have a Bible in their lap. And therefore, your way of preaching won't work in most of the places in the world.

I'm, hmm, that's an interesting thought. And I went to I.G. Fernando. And I asked him.

And I said, now you know he does most all of his preaching in villages to pre-literate people. And I said, is that true? Is my emphasis on taking your points from precise words and clauses of biblical text that people can see and know why you're getting your points from that text, is that something that won't work in cultures where they don't have Bibles yet? And he said, absolutely not. And then he proceeded to describe to me how he does it.

He said, I often have a person memorize the text with me or have a Bible, the book there, from the village. And I have them read it. And then I go verse by verse and I review it.

And I say, now say that one again. He reads it again. And then he makes his point.

You can do verbally what I'm talking about with a book. You don't have to have the book in your lap. I think in our land it is so awesomely precious to have the book that to have it in our laps is a glorious thing and we should encourage people to have it there.

But don't tell me, at least you write I.G. Fernando and get it from the horse's mouth who works in that kind of situation before you make that kind of criticism that the kind of text permeated preaching I'm pleading for is not possible in pre-literate cultures. Okay, back to the text. Matthew 13.44 The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and hid and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

And I say to my people, look at this. Look at this. Don't look at me.

Look down. Look at this. And I ask them questions.

They say, is that true? How valuable is the kingdom of God? Is the kingdom of God so valuable that you will part with your clothes and your wedding ring and your retirement portfolio and your health insurance and your house and your car and your computer and everything else to have it? Is it that valuable? Tell me from the text, people. And some of them will nod and say, yes, yes, it's that valuable. There it is.

We see it. He sold everything he had to buy that text. I say, yes, yes, so far so good.

But is that all? Is that all this text wants us to feel about the value of King Jesus and his rule in our lives and over this world? No, no. That's not all. There's more here.

Look at it. Don't miss the key phrase. We haven't seen the key phrase yet.

What's the key phrase here, folks? Where do we get the power to release goods and kindred and let them go? What phrase in this text has changed my life, John Piper's life, and underlies every book on that table out there and has transformed my preaching totally in the last 18 years? What phrase in this text do I want you to walk away with? Well, in my church, they'd all know what the text is, and perhaps you do, too. The text is, or the phrase is, and from joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has. It's the joy that drives him to sell everything he has to get that field.

The power to let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also. The power to destroy the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel, which is no gospel. The power that binds us to God and severs us from the fleeting pleasures of sin, and therefore the power of sanctification is this phrase.

From joy over it, he sold everything. From joy over it, he let everything go. He walked away from health, wealth, and prosperity.

From joy over it, he embraced the kingdom. From joy over it, the all-satisfying glory of the kingdom so filled him with joy that it broke the power of every competing satisfaction. Freedom from those sexual addictions.

Freedom from the temptation to commit adultery. Freedom from the need to rise the corporate ladder and neglect his family. And on and on and on.

The practical significance of a radical, God-centered orientation on the glory of the Lord is endless. It's endless. All sacrifice, all obedience, all worship find their impulse in this joy in God.

And therefore, the goal of God, the goal of life, and the goal of preaching is God-exalting, soul-satisfying satisfaction or pleasure in God. What I want to do tomorrow is talk about what the song is like that is sung while we preach. Let's pray.

Father, I pray that one of the effects of this message today would be that in hundreds of pulpits over the next years represented in this room right now and in classrooms and in counseling sessions there would be a reverberation of the glory, the glory, the glories of the Lord Jesus and of yourself, Father, and of the Holy Spirit. A reverberation in what we say, how we preach, how we teach, how we counsel. Oh, Lord God, forbid that we would hide you beneath all the other things we talk about and call you foundation.

In Jesus' name I pray. This concludes Dr. Piper's message. For information on other resources produced by Desiring God Ministries, contact us at the address or phone number printed on the tape label.

We at DGM want to help you make God your treasure because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2526.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/word-that-kindles-worship-the-showing-the-glories-of-god/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net