

Prize Christ

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[0 : 00] And we start out this morning with that quote that's on the screen. That's from the introduction of the book we've been taking a look at in these past few weeks.

! A quote from Thomas Watson, The soul being so precious and salvation so glorious, it's the highest point of prudence to make preparations for another world.

So it's beyond all dispute that there is an inheritance in light. It's beyond all dispute with us. For those of us who believe it's a wondrous treasure, a blessed hope that we have.

So he's stating what we do believe. It's beyond dispute that there is an inheritance in light. And it is most strenuously asserted in Holy Scripture that there must be a fitness and suitability for it.

That's how glorious this place will be when we are with Jesus Christ. It's a place where we must be fit to be who we are as people in character and so forth.

[1 : 10] We need to be made suitable in order to be there. And really that's what God's been accomplishing in the lives of so many people throughout the ages. He's calling a people unto himself and really outfitting them, us, for eternal life with Jesus Christ.

Making us suitable to be with him who is such a wondrous Savior, Jesus Christ. And really in that way that suitability means we are people who are beginning to share more and more in the holiness of God.

That's his purpose in us, transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Therefore we are becoming more and more godly. So what we will be throughout eternity is really what we're becoming now more and more.

I liked another quote from Watson's book. He says, Godliness puts a man in heaven before his time. So it's going to be a glorious place when we are completely like Christ in all of our character, even in time, resurrected bodies that we heard something of last Sunday morning.

But it's also something that we can begin enjoying now. Godliness is something that brings great joy, pleasure, happiness to the life, the soul of a person.

[2 : 39] So that's what we've been learning about these past few weeks. What does that godliness look like? What's the portrait of the godliness in that person's life?

And we've seen so far it's revealed in the person of Jesus Christ as we're being transformed more and more into his likeness. It means that we're characterized as people of faith, faith in Jesus Christ.

Certainly as we enter relationship with Jesus Christ, but as we saw even this morning in our memory verse, we don't leave faith at the door of our salvation.

We live by faith, not by sight. And also it's the godly persons characterized by growth in the knowledge of truth, growth in that knowledge of Jesus Christ, that relationship, knowing him more and more, and the truth of his word.

He's a person who's fired by love for God and is like God in his pursuit of holiness. He's one who is exact and careful about his worship and is one who is a servant of God, not man.

[3 : 45] And this week we continue taking a look at that portrait of the godly man and see that the godly man is one who prizes Christ and weeps.

You think, how do those two go together? Well, I hope to show you how those go together. But first of all, the bigger part of this portrait and package this morning is taking a look at this whole matter of the godly person prizing Christ.

Why prize Christ? Well, one, he is the only God. He's the only one true God that is there.

Jude 24 and 25. To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time, now and forever.

Amen. You see what Jude is doing here. So many words he lays upon, one upon the other, trying to communicate to us the richness and the splendor of this one and only God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is worthy of all these things, glory, majesty, dominion, and authority.

[4 : 56] When? Well, before all time, now and forevermore. Any period of time that there is, Jesus Christ is worthy to be glorified.

Timothy says something similar, or Paul says something similar in his letter to Timothy, in 1 Timothy 1.17. To the king of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor, glory, forever and ever. Amen. We're already beginning to get this picture of the wonder and majesty of this one, Jesus Christ, whom we are to prize. Even in the Old Testament, as people saw the God in some of his fullness, certainly we see Jesus Christ in a greater reality after his incarnation and death and resurrection and such.

And the word of God as it revealed him more and more. But believe these individuals, certainly in the Old Testament, understanding God three in one, are describing the person of Jesus Christ as well.

And so as Hezekiah was faced with a great challenge, Sennacherib coming before them, declaring certain defeat of the people there, Hezekiah goes to God and prays, So now, O Lord our God, save us from his, Sennacherib's hand.

[6 : 19] Why? That all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the Lord. So when Sennacherib's armies had defeated so many nations and were declaring to Hezekiah and others there that your God is like any other God that we've defeated.

How can you believe that your God will be any different? Hezekiah's prayer, Hezekiah understood himself that no, our God is not like any other gods that you have defeated.

Our God alone is God and our prayer is that He would be defeated, that all the world would know that He alone, O Lord, is the Lord.

Surprising Him because He is the only God. Carol and I once in a while like watching Antique Roadshow. There was one show an individual man brought in a pocket watch.

And of course, if you've ever seen it, the auctioneer takes the watch and does some research on this watch, the item, and then comes back to the individual and starts explaining the various aspects of this antique that the person brought in.

[7 : 31] Well, as it turns out, this man had a pocket watch that was one of a kind. There was no other pocket watch like his in the world.

And so what was prized to him, as he learned that truth about his pocket watch, that pocket watch became even more of a prized possession to him because he understood that his watch alone was a watch like that.

And so even more so, our God, Jesus Christ, in the person of Jesus Christ, there is no other one like him. And so understanding that truth, meditating on that truth, he can become someone that we prize even to a greater degree than we know of even right now.

Well, let's praise Him because He is the only God, but also because of the radiance of His glory. That really which stands out about Him, that which is magnificent about Him as the only God, the person of Jesus Christ.

Going back to that pocket watch, the auctioneer didn't stop there in letting this man know that he had the only watch like that. He went on to talk about the various elements of the watch and the jewels that made up the watch and the intricacies of how it was made, the little dials and the face of the watch and the design of it, the materials that it was made out of.

[9 : 08] And so in this man's sight, you could see the wonder more and more. Man, I do have something special. It's not just one of a kind, but it has all these features on it that no other watch has.

And so again, the application to our prize that we have in the person of Jesus Christ that would take lesson upon lesson for us to contemplate and consider the elements of the person of Jesus Christ that makes Him prized even beyond the reality that He is the only one God that there is.

when we consider His attributes, the Almighty God, some that have already been mentioned in some of these verses, omniscient, immutable, holy, love, merciful, long-suffering, just, gracious, faithful, even in some of the ways in which He's described in the Scripture.

It's a good shepherd, the bridegroom, light, resurrection and life. On and on we go as we see the various facets of the person of Jesus Christ shining forth just like that man as he sat there and

listened more and more of the descriptions of their pocket watch.

As we open the Word of God or come and hear the preaching of God's Word on the person of Jesus Christ, I would hope that our hearts are overwhelmed more and more of the splendor and majesty of Jesus Christ and we go away with greater wonder realizing what a prize we have in knowing Jesus Christ and not just knowing Him factually but also being in possession of Him and He in possession of us.

[10 : 51] It's like that man with the watch. I sat there in wonder of the watch but I didn't possess it. He possessed it. And so it was a greater prize to Him. I could enjoy hearing it but to Him He had it.

And so the person who is in relationship with Jesus Christ knowing that He is in possession of Christ and Christ is in possession of Him is something truly to be prized.

But also prized Him because of His part in God's glorious plan to save sinners whether it's in the past, the present, or the future. I'll go through some of these quickly but I hope the quickness by which I proceed through them we don't lose the wonder of the person of Jesus Christ.

Prize Him because of His work and His glorious plan of salvation to save sinners in the past His incarnation, Philippians 2.6 who though He was in the form of God did not count it equality with God a thing to be grafted but made Himself nothing taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men.

What a work of humility in the person of Jesus Christ when He could have stayed in the glories of heaven but He didn't consider those things something that He should hang on to that would keep Him from the place of humility being made in the likeness of man and eventually as we go on offering Himself as a sacrifice for sin but not just His incarnation His righteous life He faced extreme temptations yet was without sin.

[12 : 33] You know the verses we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.

So we can prize Jesus Christ for the righteous life that He lived. If He didn't have that righteous life we would still be yet lost and dead in our sins as well.

We wouldn't have His righteous life that would be imputed to us that makes us fit and suitable in order to be in His presence forevermore. Something to be prized about the life of Jesus Christ something we don't always hear when we hear the gospel presented I was sharing that with somebody this past week you know in the past I think of the gospel of death, burial, resurrection.

We think of the righteous life that was also necessary that we can prize Him for but also for a sacrifice 1 Peter 1, 18 and 19 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers not with perishable things such as silver or gold but with what kind of blood of Christ?

That precious blood of Christ like that of a lamb without blemish or spot even that descriptive word there's something prized here something highly valued that was given up for me for sinners like me and it was that precious blood of Christ prized Him for His resurrection God's stamp of approval of His sacrifice His resurrection is precious because it guarantees our justification and our future resurrection of those who are united to Him by faith would prize Him for that resurrection Romans 4, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification 8, 11 of Romans if the spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His spirit who dwells in you prize Him because of the ascension

[14 : 48] He's seated at the right hand of God the Father Peter writes who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels authorities and powers have been subjected to Him praise God that we have a Savior that now is at the right hand of God in all authority it's not an underling or an angel that is there but the one who we are in possession of that one who prizes us as well is at the right hand of God but also praise Him and prize Him for what He does in the present 1 John 2, 1 but if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous who what individual standing before a judge wouldn't prize one of the best lawyers there is to help him in that situation especially if he knows how guilty he is and that there is no way out of this that he could ever squirm his way out of let's say but that having a lawyer that can speak on your behalf and to hopefully gain your freedom well we have a lawyer and advocate such as that in Jesus Christ even though we as sinners deserve to die he has one who pleads his own blood before the Father and secures for us that position of being with the Father in Jesus Christ eternally but also in the future we again heard more of that this past Sunday 1 Thessalonians 4 16 for the

Lord

Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command with the voice of the archangel with the sound of the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise first then we who are alive who are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet who the one who prizes us to meet the Lord in the air and so we will always be with the Lord won't be for a short time you get to stay here for a short time you know this is your cabin for the week or the month that you can enjoy but you've got to go back to your house and not enjoy these riches and treasures that you get to enjoy on vacation no so we will be forever with the Lord what a prize that we have because of His work on the cross but prize Him as He is described as precious and of great value

He is described as a treasure Matthew 13 44 the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up then in His joy He goes and sells all that He has and buys that field the worth of the king and the kingdom really is hidden from many people Thomas or it's not Thomas Watson this time it's in the Reformation Study Bible a quote those who discover its priceless value however the kingdom of God and the king himself like a man who finds treasure in a field or a trader in pearls gladly sacrifice anything and everything to obtain it why would that be? because they know the surpassing worth and the value of this it's not like they didn't have anything before that they didn't value it's that in light of this new treasure that they have found all these other things that they considered of highly value cannot compare to the worth of this new treasure so to lose these things back here is not a big thing anymore because they know they have this greater treasure that they are in possession of forevermore and they cannot lose it you know we're tempted at times to give up and despair when something doesn't go our way we lose something whatever it might be you know what's important to you that when you lose it you find yourself spiraling downhill! and just this truth and reality well I may have lost this thing that I valued but I have to remember I have something still of surpassing value than this item so let me not despair in losing something of temporal value but let me rejoice that still I have something in the person of Jesus Christ that far exceeds anything let me prize that even in the midst of my loss a treasure he's described as myrrh in the Song of Solomon 1.13 my beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh myrrh was a precious spice used in the holy anointing oil used as a perfuming spice it was truly highly prized and so the writer here is trying to communicate something of the wonder and glory really of God and uses this terminology this something that they would be familiar with that was so highly prized well my beloved to me is like this still no comparison but

[20 : 19] I'm trying to put my head around something that I can't comprehend and it's fullness so I'll use terminology or description of things that are highly valued here hopefully to give me some understanding of the prize that I have in God and person of Jesus Christ 1 Peter 2.6 that cornerstone behold I'm laying in Zion a stone a cornerstone chosen and precious well let's keep going he's prized because he's held as precious by those who recognize his worth you know sometimes you go on vacation or you watch a good movie or something you're the only one to see it and you try and come back and tell everybody else who's never been there hasn't seen the movie you can't believe how beautiful this place is and you're right they can't they weren't there they don't know the wonder of it they're trying to picture it in their imagination and you're trying to bring them along to where you're at and beholding the wonder that you've experienced through experience but they just can't get there and yet we'll do it we'll keep showing the pictures trying to show them the wonder and so when we see passages like this we need to understand that here's somebody who has found something

I'm not comprehending it all in its fullness but there's something here that deserves my attention and so it was with Asaph he was tempted to prize other things above God you see there were things that were valued in his culture and he in a time of weakness was considering that those things are beautiful those things are wonderful and he's being drawn more and more to those thinking that truly I'm missing out on something here and these godless people are possessing something that I'm missing out on but when he saw the surpassing glory of God his affections again were corrected and he came up with this conclusion in Psalm 73 whom have I in heaven but you and there's nothing on earth that I can desire beside you he was there he was being drawn his affection desires were going that way more and more until he understood he was taken into the sanctuary of God confronted with the reality the prize of God himself in that conclusion we need to listen to conclusions like this from people who've gone through experiences like this and have been once again confronted with the reality of God and who

God is and listen carefully to their conclusion Peter was the same way Simon Peter said to him Lord where are you going Jesus answered him where I'm going you cannot follow me now but you will follow me afterward Peter said to him you know that I love you Lord why can I not follow you now I will lay down my life for you I mean he was saying that sincerely we understand the struggle that he faced and he denied Jesus Christ but we cannot deny the sincerity that Peter is expressing here from his heart about his Lord I mean that's a prize he's prizing the person of Jesus Christ you don't give your life or even express it the way he did sincerely and genuinely for something that you don't consider a high prize yes he did deny and he wept bitterly because he did I mean that shows the anguish of his heart that he would deny someone like Christ he who he prized in that time and when Jesus confronted him later asking him three times did you love me it's always interesting you can empathize with Peter when he says the third time Lord you know everything you know that I love you yeah you couldn't deny that about Peter so we listen to testimonies of men like this and have to take him to heart this man knew something about the person of Jesus Christ that I need to pay attention to if I'm not prizing Christ like he is and so it was with Peter but also Paul been going through the book of Philippians recently and he in Philippians three he had listed a lot of accomplishments in his life prior to coming to Christ that really were highly valued and prized by the people of his culture and also by Paul himself but in his letter to the Philippians he writes as a changed man he's a new creature in Christ now he's seen with brand new eyes things he had not seen before he's got new desires that are ruling in his heart and he says in Philippians 3 8 9 indeed I count everything as loss because of what he doesn't just say the worth he says the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for his sake I've suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ you see how that perspective changes when a person sees the reality of the prize in Jesus Christ so we have to consider whether we're unsaved or even saved at times for other times that our eyes become bigger at things that maybe we're tempted to think of as greater treasures than [26 : 12] Christ and following Christ we have to consider testimonies like this from the apostle Paul when he was pressed between two choices whether to remain or to go and be with Christ he says my desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is just a little bit better no it's that surpassing idea and concept again it's far better than anything he was willing to stay and to serve because the benefit it would be for those saints there that they would grow also and enjoy this prize that he was enjoying what greater joy than to have others also enjoy this prize so Jesus Christ certainly is worthy to be prized so what do people do with Christ I mean here we have that prize like that man with that pocket watch you know sometimes people say they bring things on they learn the great value of it well this has been in our family for a long time and we're just going to hang on to it they usually turn to carol somebody somewhere along the line isn't that point that man was hanging on to the prize that possession that he had but not everybody sees it as a prize so what do people do with

Christ there are those obviously that don't prize Christ we were all there at one point in our lives we can't look on people that don't prize Christ now and think that we're better than they are only by the of God do we see the glory and the splendor of the person of Jesus Christ there was a time that we didn't prize the prize of Jesus Christ but there are those who don't prize Christ his own Jewish people he came unto his own people didn't receive him they didn't see the prize in the person of Jesus Christ they had a different understanding a different perspective of that one was that was to come and they missed out on the prize that came in a humble package person of Jesus Christ there are those who only acknowledge his humanity like Nicodemus and John 3 Rabbi we know that you're a teacher come from God well he indeed was that a teacher come from God but he was far more than that and so there are people in our society today that are willing to give us room that yes indeed historically I read an article this past week can't remember where people who are willing to acknowledge historically of course

Jesus was a man a good prophet a teacher did good things a time in his culture but as far as God no you Christians take it too far when you elevate him above the other gods and religions of the world you have no right to do that there are those who say that he is God but pursue greater riches Romans 125 they exchange the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who's blessed forever amen you can hear I'll say the confusion in the mind of the apostle Paul or the absurdity of it that they would exchange the glory of God for that which was created and pursue that rather than the one who is blessed forever there's no comparison

again and yet people do that it happened to

Demas one who labored with Paul for a while Demas in love of this present world has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica I don't know was Demas not true I don't know but we understand as believers that our hearts can be led astray at times to lesser treasures if we're not careful and lose the pleasure and enjoyment of the ultimate prize of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord while we're still in this world and there are still those who still put them off when confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ they turn away and say not today I'm not quite ready yet for this prize can imagine someone answering the door to find a representative from publishers clearing house with their balloons and their big check and whatever else they have there a check for hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars for this person and the person sees them looks at them and says well not right now [31 : 14] I'm placing a bet on online betting you know what would your thoughts I mean the thoughts would you probably couldn't express in our group here this morning I think are you crazy what you're looking to gain in an uncertain way is here at the door freely offered to you I mean in temporal things we see the reasoning of that but when it comes to the ultimate reality of the person of Jesus Christ the ultimate prize to the person who doesn't see the prize it makes all sense not right it doesn't make sense it doesn't make sense those who do not prize Christ are none of his for they have other gods they follow and prize Thomas Watson puts it this way he doesn't mince words many times in his book Jesus will say quote I know you not what a slighting word that will be when men cry

Lord Jesus save us and he says I was offered to you but you would have none of me you scorned me and now I will set light by you and your salvation depart from me I do not know you this is all that sinners get by rejecting the Lord of life prize him today while there's still time so where does the weeping come in how can anybody be weeping!

when they're in possession of such a prize as this well the godly man weeps after he gives in to indwelling sin Watson had a number of ways that he expressed this in his book I just kind of summed it up in this one!

glory glory of the prize of

Jesus Christ well there are also times that we can certainly have tears of joy as a godly person and that godly person has tears of joy when we contemplate the reality that Jesus would sacrifice himself for us and love us Ephesians 5 25 Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the words so that he might present the church to himself in splendor you see that prize that's there and how it spreads not just to himself he's not willing just to hang!

[36 : 02] but he wants his church his people to participate in the splendor of his glory without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish sorry about that misprint Luke 7 36 through 50 the woman whose sins were forgiven worship Jesus and wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair of her head she knew something of the prize certainly she she knew the reality of her own sin she was an outcast in her community and culture but she was one of the ones that also saw the exceeding worth the surpassing worth the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus and having her sins forgiven and it brought her to tears humility that she could know him in that way she was overwhelmed by

Christ and his love for her Romans 8 38 and 39 don't have all the verses nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord I trust that there are times that we contemplate that we're busy in life we're all busy in life but we're too busy that we don't have time to contemplate the riches that are ours in the person of Jesus Christ that prize then I would say we're too busy we're missing some of the glory and splendor of possessing such a prize of Jesus Christ now while we're in the world that's part of knowing the joy of possessing Christ now that all that we will enjoy in the future is not held in store for us in the future but that we can enjoy now and participate in some of those!

now well, our conclusion this morning is certainly let's prize Christ we thought and said in his book we cannot prize Christ to a high rate Ephesians 3.8 Paul tries to communicate this to me though I'm very least of all the saints this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the what the unsearchable riches of Christ I can't remember what movie it was maybe national treasure is that where they enter at the end of the movie and they light these torches and it just keeps lighting up and lighting up in this vast cavern and it just gets full and full of gold and it's like it goes on and on well even that is no comparison to the unsearchable riches that are found in Jesus Christ we won't mine them

empty for when we come to know

Jesus Christ now we can start that mining process we pick up the word of God read it meditate on it through the day pray that his Holy Spirit enlighten my mind oh Lord to the person of Jesus Christ show me the prize that he is that my heart would not be drawn to lesser treasures I'll enjoy some of these treasures you've given me but don't let treasure in the person of Jesus Christ and I be disappointed with the promises of the lesser treasures those unsearchable riches he shares with us now blessed in Ephesians 1:3 we're blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus but not only now as a ben saint the greater portion when we see him so we don't lose heart though our outer self is wasting away our inner self is being renewed day by day it doesn't matter what our circumstances are circumstances might be hard they might be challenging and yet they don't overcome the soul the spirit who's finding his treasure in the person of Jesus

Christ so we're not losing heart but instead where our inner self is being renewed day by day for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen but the things that are unseen for the things that are seen are transient but the things that are unseen are eternal all found in their prize the person of Jesus Christ so let's prize Christ pray that this morning as we go into the morning service we sing with a new exuberance of the prize of the person of Jesus Christ listen with ears ready to learn something of the prize of the person of Jesus Christ so that we can leave here ready to tell our children our grandchildren listen I've got a prize that I've got to share with you that you desperate you cannot live without this prize I'm going to help you get prepared for school college job marriage whatever but if you don't miss anything don't miss this and that

[41 : 32] Christ is to be prized above all else let's pray certainly father we need your help we only see in a small measure the prize of Jesus Christ and only that by your grace so we thank you for that and pray that as we go from here your Holy Spirit would continue that work moving us from one level of glory to the next so that we could honor you and point others to the prize of Jesus Christ as well in his name we pray amen thank you so