

Missions is for Worship

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[0:00] Well, this morning we're going to start a 10-week study of John Piper's book, Let the Nations Be Glad, The Supremacy of God in Missions.

And my goal today is straightforward. By the end of today, I want you to care about missions in a deeper way than you do right now.

I want you to go home and I want you to begin thinking and praying and talking with new fervor about missions. And if I can accomplish that by God's grace, I think that will be a good lesson.

So let me say, I know where most of you are at right now because I'm in the same place. You're working hard at home, on the job, you're raising children, you're living through pain.

So you're living through pain and sickness and moving, weddings, funerals, graduations. Life is full. Life is full.

[1:07] But I want to bring us all back to what is most important. What's actually the most important thing in our universe, in your life?

What did Jesus say? But seek first his kingdom. Jesus, the Son of God, your Lord, your Savior, says above all else, seek the kingdom of God.

God. This life isn't about building our little kingdoms, is it? It's about building God's big kingdom.

And missions, therefore, is not on the periphery of our life.

It's not on the outside. It actually needs to be right near the center of what your life is all about. And I think that might be a bit startling for a lot of us.

We're used to thinking of missions as sort of on the sideline or on the outside. You know, we might give it, we might say that it's important.

[2:16] But I'm afraid a lot of us, and I'll put myself in this category, we don't live like it's as important as it is. It needs to be right near the center of our lives, because missions is one of the basic ways that God grows his kingdom.

And if we're supposed to be seeking his kingdom first, then missions inevitably is going to be one of the most important things in our life. I'm not saying it's the only way that God's kingdom grows, but it's definitely one of the central, one of the most primary ways that God's kingdom grows.

And so in all your busyness, are you focusing on the most important things? Are you focusing on God's ever-growing kingdom?

Now where God's kingdom comes, there's always one thing that goes with it. Whether it comes in your life, someone else's life, in the nations of this world, there's always one thing that goes with God's kingdom, and that's the worship of God.

Where God's kingdom is, where God is king, he is worshiped. And so that leads us into our book. Let me read to you the first paragraph of the book.

[3:33] Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't.

Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more.

It is a temporary necessity, but worship abides forever. Missions exist because worship doesn't.

And so here's point number one. Worship is the goal of missions. Worship is the goal of missions. What are we trying to do when we send out missionaries? What are we trying to do when we ourselves go? We have lots of goals, and lots of good goals, but the number one, the preeminent goal, has to be worship.

[4:37] We're trying to bring, by God's grace, we're trying to bring the nations of this world into white-hot enjoyment of God's glory.

We want to bring about worship. And so right now, in this world, there are billions, billions of people who don't worship God.

So think of your neighbor. Think of your friends at work. Now think of the world. Think of that whole 1040 window.

The land that lies between 40 degrees north latitude and 10 degrees south latitude of the equator. Included in that window, in that area, are countries like India, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, much of Africa, much of China, most of the Middle East.

Billions of people, thousands and thousands of people groups speaking entirely different languages, entirely separated from each other.

[5:49] None of them are worshiping God. They're not worshiping God. They were created to enjoy God. They were created to see the glory of God and to love it.

But they don't. They don't. And so why should we seek to reach all these unreached peoples? Why should we pray through these unreached people prayer sheets?

It's because those people aren't worshiping God. They were made to worship God. God deserves their worship. And they don't rejoice in God's goodness. When they see the sunshine and when they experience the rain, they don't give Him glory.

They don't revel in His mercy in Christ. They don't happily sing His praises. So the goal of missions is the gladness of those people in God's glory.

It's their joy in God's glory and His greatness. And that's how the Bible talks about it. That's how the Bible talks about it. So turn over to Psalm 67. Psalm 67.

[6:55] Look at verses 3 and 4. May the peoples praise you, O God.

May all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy. For you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth.

And so this is the goal of missions. This is the goal of missions. That the joy of the nations and the rule of God. So do you see that?

Their joy and their praise are one and the same thing. As they are glad in God. As they are taking in His rule and enjoying His power and His greatness and His reign over their lives.

As they are praising Him. And so what is at the very heart of missions? It's the worship of God. It's this praise.

[7:54] Now here's point number two. Worship is the fuel of missions. Worship is also the fuel of missions.

Missions ends in worship. It's the goal of worship. But missions also begins with worship. So it begins and ends with worship. So think with me for a minute.

What is going to move someone out of their comfortable American lifestyle and onto a difficult mission field? What's going to move someone out of the comfort of an enjoyment of their family and their extended family, their friends, to go to a totally foreign context where they're strangers in a foreign land?

And what's going to move a person from safety into danger? Because I think that we're going to see later on in this book that that is the necessary requirement for most missions.

It's to move from safety into danger. What's going to move them? What's going to move a person to sacrifice so that we could send other people? So that we could send people to the field?

[9:06] The only motive that is lasting, the only motive that is strong enough is a passion for God's glory. If you're enthralled with the idea that God is being worshipped or he's not being worshipped and we need to change that.

So you'll never say no to yourself. You'll never say no to your comfort, your safety until you've absolutely until you're absolutely taken in with the worth of God.

That God is great and he is to be greatly praised and he's not. And so we need to act. So God deserves to be praised.

God deserves to be worshipped by all the people in China, in India, in the Middle East, all those little people groups that every week we bring you those prayer sheets. Those people groups need to worship God.

And so when you have a passion for God's glory, it will say, I will go. I will go because this situation needs to be changed by God's grace.

[10:12] And I will pay the cost. I will sacrifice in order to send. So missions is our worship is the fuel of missions in either way, whether you're you're sending or whether you're going, you cannot.

Commend what you do not cherish, you cannot commend what you do not cherish. What I'm saying is you can't genuinely offer God to someone else unless you first have tasted and seen that the Lord is good.

Until you are in a state of worship before God. Only then are you prepared to go and commend God to others. So let me tell you what I mean.

I love eating at Carrabba's. It's a fabulous Italian restaurant. There's one in Mishawaka. I would recommend it for all of you.

Steph and I love to go there for anniversaries, for dates, for birthdays, for Thursdays, Wednesdays. I love it. I mean, I love it.

[11:27] And because I love it and because I enjoy it so much, I love recommending it to other people. Because I want them to enjoy it as well. So a group of us were going to a play at Notre Dame.

And so I said, oh, can we go to Carrabba's before we go? Can we go? And most of the people who Steph and I were going with had never been there. But I said, oh, you're going to love it.

Steph and I love it. It has great food. Come on, let's go. Well, we went and they enjoyed it. It's the same thing with missions. It's the same thing with evangelism.

A passion for God precedes the preaching of the gospel. A passion for God precedes evangelism. And so when I've tasted that God is good and that he is merciful and that he is glorious and I'm enjoying that mercy and I'm enjoying that greatness, I have no problem talking about him to other people.

And I have no problem sacrificing myself so that they would enjoy. And sacrificing my safety, my wealth, my time, whatever for their enjoyment so that he would have greater praise.

[12:46] So you're in Psalms. Turn over to Psalm 117. Psalm 117. We're going to read the entire Psalm. Thankfully, it's only two verses.

Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Praise the Lord.

All the nations. All you nations. Extol him. All you peoples. For great is his love toward us and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Praise the Lord. So let me ask you, why does the psalmist say, praise the Lord, all you nations? Why does he say that?

The answer is right there in your text. His love is great. And the second part. His faithfulness endures forever.

[13:45] The psalmist had experienced the love of God and the faithfulness of God. He had drank from that fountain. He had been refreshed. And so he said, oh, you peoples.

Oh, you nations. Praise the Lord. So do you see the connection? Worship. Enjoying God. Is the fuel for missions.

It provides the get up and go. So worship alone is the goal of missions. Right now, people aren't praising God and they must. They must.

He's too great to be ignored. And he's too glorious to be overlooked. And it's also the fuel of missions. Because I have tasted.

I want you to enjoy. He is worthy for you to enjoy him. And so the most crucial issue in missions today, the greatest difficulty, the greatest hindrance that's keeping churches like ours and thousands and hundreds of other churches from being what we should be in this area, from being passionate about missions.

[15:00] It's not money. It's not men. It's the centrality of God in the life of the church. Where God is central and where he is exalted, money is not an obstacle.

We can. We find ways to sacrifice. And where God is central and God is exalted, men are prepared to go out. Men are equipped to go out.

And so at the same time that we're praying, oh, Lord, raise up workers for the harvest field. We have to realize that one of the ways that God answers that prayer is when we together are exalting in God.

It equips God's people to go. So where there is a passion for God, missions will flourish. And where zeal for God's glory fades, missions fade.

They're intimately connected. And so that means that missions really begins on Sunday morning. When we are corporately worshipping. Where people aren't saying and feeling, you know, great is God's love toward us.

[16:17] They're not going to be saying, praise the Lord, all you nations. When they're sort of dead or at least cold under God's greatness. There's no desire.

There's no need. There's no need to commend him to the nations of this world. So missions is not first and ultimate.

God is. And worship has been the inspiration and the lifeblood of missions from the very beginning. So how could Paul be so tireless?

How could Paul be so sacrificial, so persistent in going from city to city? One place he's stoned and left for dead and he gets up and he goes back.

He keeps going. Well, how could he do that? Because he really meant what he said when he wrote to the Philippians.

[17:14] But whatever was to my prophet, I now consider a loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

Christ had the ultimate, the first place in his heart and he was passionate about knowing him. And that gave him the persistence and the get up to go, get up and go to keep moving, to keep wanting to preach him.

He had tasted that the Lord is good. David Brainerd was a very early missionary in the United States. It wasn't even called the United States back then.

And he worked as a missionary to the Native Americans. And God has used his journals and his testimony to raise up, to shape, to inspire, and to encourage many more missionaries.

Henry Martin, William Carey, Jim Elliott, all read David Brainerd's journals. They all testified to the power of Brainerd's testimony.

[18:21] Now, Brainerd died at 29 years old. At 29 years. He was in Jonathan Edwards' home. Died of tuberculosis.

For the last several years of his life, he was coughing. Coughing up blood. He was suffering from tuberculosis. But he just kept on traveling.

It's some of the most harrowing stuff you've ever read. Just to see his sacrifice and his determination. Well, where did that inspiration come from?

To go and to suffer, to see these unreached people groups of the Native Americans brought in. Well, listen to his journal.

Listen to what he wrote one time. This day, I saw clearly that I should never be happy. Yea, that God himself could not make me happy unless I could be in a capacity to please and glorify him forever.

[19:23] Take away this and admit me into all the fine havens that can be conceived of by men or angels. And I should still be miserable forever.

Oh, to love and praise God more, to please him forever. This my soul panted after and even now pants for while I write. Oh, that God might be glorified in the whole earth.

Oh, that God might be glorified in the whole earth.

So missions, it can't be our highest priority. Because worship has to be our highest priority. And missions, this is our third point.

Missions can't be our highest priority. Because it's not God's ultimate goal. It's not God's ultimate goal. Worship is.

[20:30] Worship is God's ultimate goal. So when you get this, when this sinks into your own heart, and for many of you, maybe it has, it changes everything.

The world is turned upside down. Everything looks different, including the missionary enterprise. The idea that God is the most God-centered being in the world, in the universe.

So God's ultimate glory is to glorify himself. His ultimate goal is to make himself look good in front of everyone. So the foundation.

So the foundation. And this is where, this is the bottom line for this class, and for all that we've said so far. The foundation for our passion for God's glory is God's passion for God's glory.

The foundation for our passion for God's glory is God's passion for God's glory. God is central and supreme in his own affections.

[21:46] God delights and desires and loves himself more than anyone else. So God is not an idolater. God is not an idolater. He does not disobey the first and greatest commandment.

With all his heart and soul and mind and strength, he loves himself. With all that he is, he loves himself.

And that's the greatest proof that worship should be the fuel and goal for missions for us. Because it is the fuel and the goal for God's missionary work.

It's why God has done what he has done. It is why God sent his son. And it's why Jesus said, you go into all the nations. And it's why God sent the Holy Spirit.

Why God saves sinners is because God loves worship, ultimately. He loves himself. And so when we read in Psalm 117, praise the Lord all nations, this is God's word.

[22:55] And this is God's goal. And this is God's heart for the world and for himself. And it must be our goal. So the Westminster Catechism asks, what is the chief in demand?

And what's the answer? To glorify God and enjoy him forever. And so we could turn around that question and say, what is the chief end of God?

And what is the answer? To glorify God and to enjoy him forever. To glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Another way to say this is that God is absolutely righteous.

He's absolutely righteous. Let's turn in our Bibles to Romans chapter 1. And we're going to read verse 18 and several other verses in this passage.

Romans 1, 18. Romans 1, 18. And this is Paul's explanation of what is righteousness and what is not righteousness.

[24:08] 1, 18. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

Since what may be known about God is plain to them. Because God has made it plain to them.

Then skip down to verse 22. Although they claim to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

So let me ask you, what is the height? What is the source of man's wickedness? According to verses 22 and 23. Idolatry. Idolatry.

What do they do? They make an exchange. They make a trade. They exchange the worship of God for created things.

And so the question is, is God an idolater? Is God righteous? Well, no. God is not an idolater. And yes, God is righteous.

[25:17] God is completely righteous. Righteousness is essentially esteeming and enjoying and worshiping things according to their true worth.

It's giving things their due. And so God is righteous. And that means God values God more than anyone else or anything else.

God alone is worthy. And so God, with all of his heart and soul and mind and strength, recognizes, loves, upholds with all of his energy the infinite worth of himself.

So what is he doing in missions? What is he doing in salvation? He's making a name for himself.

He's upholding his own goodness, his own greatness, his own holiness, his own worth.

And so that is God's passion and it has to be our passion. And I think until we get those things aligned, until our hearts are where God's heart is, missions is going to be weak.

[26:31] It's going to be flagging. Evangelism is going to be difficult. A lot of things are going to be difficult. Obeying God, just basic obedience is impossible until we are moved off of the center.

Now, this isn't just some theological conjecture. This truth that God seeks his own glory before everything else is not just, you know, a house of cards that human ideas have built.

This truth that God's highest passion is for his own glory is seen in dozens of biblical passages. passages. And so in our remaining time together, I want to read to you a lot of these passages.

And so there's going to be two ways that you can hear this. The first way is the wrong way. You're going to hear this and you're going to be like, wow, that's a lot. And how am I supposed to take all that in? You know, I know, I know God pursues his own glory.

I got that. Tell me something I need to know. Tell me something practical. I don't need to hear this. That's the wrong way to hear this, all these passages. What I'm asking is that you hear these passages and you let this truth fall onto your heart again.

[27:45] Let these passages fall into your own heart, settle there, and come to you and let them hit you with their full strength. And when you do that, it's like getting hit by a Mack truck full of delicious fruit.

If you survive the impact, because it is devastating to our natural way of thinking, to our man-centered way of doing and thinking about life and thinking about missions, if you survive the impact, then it's totally glorious.

God isn't primarily about us. He is primarily about himself. And so all these passages say, it's not about you, Jason.

It's about God. And when you feel that, when you're moved off center and you're pushed down to your place, if you don't feel like worshiping, I think there's something really wrong with you.

You're still living for yourself. You're still at the center. And you're glad to be there. And in other words, you haven't been born again. So listen to God's word and let it hit you.

[29:04] Let it come and do its work. Now the question is, how committed is God to his own glory? Well, listen to the Bible's answer. God chose his people for his glory.

Ephesians 1, 4-6. He chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love, he predestined us to the adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself according to the kind intention of his will to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Why did God choose you or choose his people to the praise of the glory of his grace? God created us for his glory. Isaiah 43.

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory. God called Israel for his glory.

I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory.

[30:17] God rescued Israel from Egypt for his glory. Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works, but rebelled by the sea at the Red Sea, yet he saved them for his name's sake that they might make known his mighty power.

God raised up Pharaoh to show his power and to glorify his name. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

God was after, it was a missionary work that God was after when he raised up Pharaoh and then brought him down. God gave Israel victory in Canaan for the glory of his name.

Who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and all its gods.

God did not cast away his people for the glory of his name. Do not be afraid, you have done all this evil, 1 Samuel chapter 12, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake.

[31:46] God restored Israel from exile for the glory of his name. Thus says the Lord God, it is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name.

And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, and the nations will know that I am the Lord.

That's Ezekiel 36. Matthew 5, 16, Jesus told us to do good works so that God gets the glory.

In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. What was Jesus after in his teaching?

That the Father in heaven would have glory. Jesus said that God would answer our prayers so that he would be glorified. whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

It's John 14, 13. John 12, 27 through 28, Jesus endured his final hours for the glory of God. God gave his Son to vindicate the glory of his righteousness.

[33:24] God gave his Son to vindicate the glory of his righteousness. Romans 3, God put Christ forward as a propitiation by his blood to show God's righteousness.

It was to show his righteousness at the present time. God forgives us of our sins for his own sake. Isaiah 43, I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake and I will not remember your sins.

For Psalm 25, 11, for your own namesake, O Lord, pardon my guilt for it is great. Jesus receives us into his fellowship for the glory of God.

Romans 15, 7, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God. Why did Jesus bring you into fellowship with him?

For the glory of God. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Son of God. Welcome one another, he will glorify me, talking about the Holy Spirit, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

[34:40] John 16, 14. God instructs us to do everything for his glory. You know this, 1 Corinthians 10, 31. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

God tells us to serve in a way that will glorify him. This is 1 Peter 4, 11. Whoever serves, let him do it as one who serves by the strength which God supplies.

in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Philippians 1, 9, 11.

Jesus fills us with the fruit of righteousness for the glory of God. Why does Jesus help you in your sanctification? It's for God's glory. It's my prayer that you would be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Romans chapter 1. All are under judgment for dishonoring God's glory. They became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images.

[35:56] Or Romans 3, 23. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. What's the essence of sin? It's falling short of the glory of God.

Herod is struck dead because he does not give glory to God. Acts 12. Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not give glory to God.

Jesus is coming again for the glory of God. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled at among all who have believed.

2 Thessalonians 1. Jesus' ultimate aim for us is to see and to enjoy his glory.

John 17, 24. Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you love me before the foundation of the world.

[37:08] Even when God shows wrath, his aim is to make known the riches of his glory. Romans 9, 22, and 23. desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, God has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy which he prepared beforehand for glory.

Why is there a hell? The ultimate reason is because God is after glory. God's plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory.

Habakkuk 2, 14. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. So do you see that God is committed completely in everything that he does to his glory so that worship will happen.

And so, brothers and sisters, the chief end of God is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. That's what missions is about. It's about worship. That's why we do it. It's the fuel.

It's the goal. And so, let me ask you, do you care about missions? Do you care about missions? Is there a fire burning in your heart?

[38:39] Missions exist because worship doesn't. God himself is going after worship with all of his heart and so you know that his heart is altogether in the missionary enterprise.

This is where his heart is at because he's all about his own worship. And so, let's begin the missionary endeavor again. And we do it this Sunday morning as we sing his praises, as we exalt him.

We are dismissed. Thank you. may may may may