Pursuing Joy in God for His Glory

Psalm 63

Sermon slides highlighted

Introduction:

I need to say at the outset of this morning's sermon that what I am about to teach to you I am very much indebted to a writer, theologian, and pastor by the name of John Piper. I say this because much of what I'm going to say was first taught to me by him over a decade ago and has evolved and shaped my Christian experience in ways that are incalculable. If Piper were here, he would say that he is indebted to people like Jonathan Edwards, C.S. Lewis, the puritans and Reformers. BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY if you were to get all of us (myself, Piper, Edwards, Lewis, the Puritans and Reformers) together in a room…we'd ALL say together that we are indebted to the Scriptures.

I say this because in the end, if what I'm about to say about ***your enjoyment and glorifying God, and that these two things are not at odds from one another, but are actually a single pursuit***, isn't found in Scripture, you should throw everything away. It doesn't matter what I, what Piper, what Edwards…etc. think if it isn't in the Bible. We are a Bible teaching/believing church first…however, there are times when teachers come into our lives and help us to understand Scripture in an insightful or fresh way.

This morning I want to share with you that which was for me an enormous discovery – ***that to pursue my joy (I mean that quite literally) and to pursue the glory of God in all things are not opposite pursuits, but they are the same pursuit.***

Watershed: We receive, we enjoy, and we supply the love of God in Christ unto the glory of God"

I say the "***love of God***" because in this series we are focusing on the love of God. But I could easily change the statement to say, "We receive, we enjoy, and we supply the *GLORY of God* in Christ unto the glory of God". That would in no way damage the statement, in fact, it would enhance it to expand beyond ONLY the love of God to speak of God's perfections which include the love of God but are not limited to the love of God. We are called to enjoy God in ALL OF HIS PERFECTIONS. And in enjoying His ***glory***, we ***glorify*** Him.

What if I changed it to say this: "we receive, we enjoy, and we supply the GLORY of God in Christ FOR HIS GOOD PLEASURE." Would that change the heart of it? No…because it is God's good pleasure for God to be glorified. No one is more God centered than God Himself!

What if I changed the statement again to say: "We receive, we enjoy – all of who God is, in all things, at all times – and we supply that enjoyment In Christ unto the glory of God" Again, saying the same thing but amplifying. So you can see what I'm driving at: to pursue my enjoyment in God in all of His perfections, in all things, and at all times, AND to glorify God in all His perfections, in all things, and at all times – are ONE AND THE SAME PURSUIT.

Notice all of this is IN CHRIST…because CHRIST IS THE APEX OF IT ALL. Christ is the greatest, the complete display of the glory of God in His person, in His salvation, in His present and future rule and

reign…in all things Christ is elevated, exalted, and in Him the fullness of God dwells, is experienced, is enjoyed unto the glory of God.

Our Enjoyment, God's Glory: What if I were to tell you that in order for you to glorify God…you need to pursue your own enjoyment 24/7? How would that sit with you? We don't like to think, as Christians, of pursuing our own enjoyment! It sounds selfish! I need to die to self! I need to put my enjoyment on the altar! It's the pursuit of my enjoyment that got me into this mess of sin and need for a Savior! What do you mean that I need to pursue my own enjoyment!

What if I told you that to glorify God you need to pursue your own enjoyment 24/7 IN GOD? Doesn't that change the statement? Glorifying God and pursuing your enjoyment are one and the same pursuit. Both are ordained by God. One (to glorify) is a command, the other (to enjoy) is a means to fulfill the command. We are created to pursue that which we value/enjoy most – that pursuit is inescapable. And we are created to glorify God.

"Value" or "Enjoy"? I struggled with what words to use. I could say that we are to "value" God, because to discover value in God is the means to glorifying God. He reveals His value, we stand in awe, we praise Him, and thus we glorify Him. This is the pattern of encounters with God in Scripture. However, the Scriptures use words to describe this "valuing" like finding "satisfaction" in Him, or "pleasures fulfilled", or "rejoicing in", or "joy discovered", or "desires fulfilled". These are ways that the Scriptures speak of us finding value in God. So I'm using the word "enjoyment" because it is a biblical word and when you value something, you enjoy it, and when you enjoy it you bring it glory. A diamond is really just a rock! But it has value because it is delighted in! God is obviously much more than a rock, and He doesn't need anyone to value Him in order to be valuable. Father, Son, and Spirit for all eternity are enjoying one another in their glory…but when we see God, we value God, and when we value God, we enjoy and glorify God.

4 arguments this morning and then application..

- **We are created for the glory of God, and we glorify that which we value**
  - ***Isaiah 43:7 - everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."***
    - **We are created for the glory of God**: To see His glory, and in seeing to glorify Him.
    - **Glory** – What is the glory of God? It is the revelation of Himself. The manifestation of His perfections, His attributes, His holiness, His beauty, splendor, worth, weightiness.
    - **Glorify** – To glorify God, then, is to ascribe value, to enjoy, to ascribe worth, to praise, to honor, to draw another's attention to the glory of God.
    - **Whatever you value most you honor**! It's what you do when you see a really good movie and go tell someone about it…you are glorifying the movie. It's the difference between the moon and the sun. The Sun is the source, the moon reflects, radiates the brilliance and glory of the sun's light. We are to reflect, to exalt, to draw attention to, to glorify God (Mt. 5:16 – let lights shine…so that you may glorify)

- **God commands that we glorify Him in everything – *1 Corinthians 10:31 – "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."***
    - Paul is talking in context about eating and drinking, but he gives a principle that *transcends* eating and drinking because he says **– "or whatever you do"… "do all"**
    - **Everything we do is meant to honor, to glorify, to draw attention to the glory of God.** your happiness, your joy, your suffering, your living, your dying, your health, your sickness. All of it is meant to point to God and to exalt His value, His glory
- **Conclusion**: You were created to experience the glory of God and to then glorify God in all that you do with your life. His revelation precedes your glorifying Him.
- **Westminster Catechism** – Q: What is the chief and highest end of man? A. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever.

• We always pursue that which is most valuable

- Everything you do, all of your choices in life are *determined* by what you value and by that which provides the *best outcome*. God created us this way…like breathing air. It's inescapable and unavoidable. To "choose" by definition is "pick out or select (someone or something) as being the *best or most appropriate* of two or more alternatives".
    - If you decide to get out of bed, it's because sleeping in and losing your job is a worse outcome, so you *choose* to get out of bed. Even things you don't want to do in the immediate, you do because of the GREATER OUTCOME.
- **This is a *morally neutral principle***. The word "desire" (epithumia) is translated either "desire" or in some places "lust" depending on what it values and the choices it produces. If I value (desire) chocolate cake, I am going to eat a lot of it, unless I value (desire) my health more and decide to abstain. (choice to go to church, the choice to go to a particular movie)
- **Conclusion**: This principle of valuing, desiring, and choosing is inescapable and it inevitably determines our destiny, because what we choose determines our destiny – to follow Christ, or to deny Him. If we value idols more than God, you will deny God and pursue idolatry and the end is judgment. If we value God, we will pursue God with everything unto eternal life. Therefore, to glorify God, we must value/enjoy God more than anything else. We cannot value God unless He reveals Himself to us. In revealing Himself to us, we are satisfied, we glory in Him, we enjoy Him…in enjoying Him we glorify Him

• God Himself is most valuable and we enjoy what we value

- **Psalm 16:11** – ***You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.***
    - God Himself possesses the path of life – the best way to go. In His presence is fullness of joy – you cannot get more joy than "fullness of joy". At His right hand are "pleasures forevermore" – you cannot get a longer duration of pleasure than

"forevermore". Were there anything, or anyone with greater value than God I would pursue that thing or person – BUT THERE ISN'T!

- ***Psalm 63:3 – "your steadfast love is better than life"*** - When David looked at his own life, and compared it to the love of God, he valued them both and determined, "YOUR LOVE IS BETTER!" So I'm willing to die and lose everything, but PLEASE GOD DON'T TAKE AWAY YOUR LOVE!

- **Therefore, pursuing joy in God and glorifying God are the same pursuit**
  - **This is an invitation and a command –**So often we think that to follow God, we have to kill our joy, suppress our joy, and I'm telling you that you CANNOT follow God unless you pursue joy in God. This is an invitation AND a command! Not only does God ***invite*** you to pursue your joy in Him…God ***commands*** you to pursue your joy in Him.
    - **Comman-vitation:** Sabbath and Communion – both commands, both invitations to enjoy and value God.

If we are created for God's glory, and we are commanded/invited to glorify Him in all that we do, this means, that in all that you do, you are to pursue your joy in God for His glory.

Now let's look at Psalm 63 together to see an example – in Psalm 63 David shows us how we are to glorify God in the midst of pain, anxiety, and suffering – unenjoyable circumstances

- **Psalm 63 – 63:1 – "earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you"** - David's soul is thirsting and only God can satisfy…so he seeks God! **63:2 – "So I have looked upon you…beholding your power and glory**" - He looks to God to behold His power and glory – because he's in a dry and weary land. He is dry! He is thirsting! He is longing for God! His longings to be satisfied cause him to look to God. He knows where to go for satisfaction! Where do you go to be satisfied? That is your God if it is your ultimate satisfaction. **63:3 – "because your steadfast love is better than life my lips will praise you"** – David praises (glorifies God) IN RESPONSE to God's steadfast love. As we've been saying in this series, David *enjoyed the love of God…unto the glory of God*. **63:5 – "my soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food"** – Like a juicy steak! David uses basic essential needs to express the satisfaction that comes from God. The satisfaction we get from food that satiates our desires. Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." (Jn. 6:35)* Bread and water are pictures in Scripture to express the souls longings for God to be satisfied in God. **63:6 – "when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night"** – David is remembering, he is meditating on God. He is getting His eyes off of his present circumstance and onto God. God is at the forefront of his mind when lying down and when at his post as a watchman watching out for the enemy. **63:7 – "FOR" …BECAUSE you have been my help"** God had helped him in the past, and his experience of being helped by God caused him to meditate and remember God. Your experiences of God's faithfulness in the midst of trials prepare you for future trials. **63:8 – "My soul clings to you."** – Do you hear the desperation of David in the midst of trials. God I am clinging to you! You alone can help me! You are the one I need! I must stay as close to you as I can God! Sometimes joy in God comes in the midst of deep distress where God's hand is upon you and guiding you step by step, and you experience His presence like never before. **63:11 – "But the king shall rejoice in God"** – David is expressing hope. He is in the midst

of great distress, but he is reaching out to God and he is trusting that he ***"shall rejoice in God".*** There are seasons of distress that God takes us through, but when He brings us out there are great times of REJOICING!

- Can you imagine someone coming to David and saying, "David…you're in this trial and all you can do is talk about YOUR thirst and YOUR FLESH FAINTING and GOD LOVING YOU and YOUR NEED FOR GOD and YOUR SOUL BEING SATISFIED….you're so selfish for pursuing your needs, your joy fulfilled in God!"
- When David looks to God to fulfill ***His longings***, ***His longings fulfilled in God glorifies God***.
- How do you think David's words are received by God? He is honored in them. He is seen as the greatest source of satisfaction, peace, strength, love, protection, and hope!
- **Conclusion**: How do you glorify God in your pain, fear, anxiety, trials – cry out to Him with your longings and trust that He will respond.

Now, pursuing your joy in God at all times changes our perspective regarding the Christian life:

1. Pursuing joy in God changes our perspective of self-denial

Mark 8:34-35 - "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [35] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

- **Notice the motive for denying self:** losing your life – by taking up a cross – is for the sake of saving your life – "whoever loses his life FOR MY SAKE AND THE GOSPELS WILL SAVE IT". There is a self that needs to be denied here, and a self that does the denying…but the self that is denied is not for the sake of losing life…quite the opposite! He is denied FOR THE SAKE OF FOLLOWING JESUS WHICH IS FAR BETTER THAN EVERYTHING! Following Jesus is greater than anything and everything you would need to deny in order to follow Him!
- **C.S. Lewis –** Lewis made the observation that our problem is NOT that we pursue pleasure or enjoyment. The problem is that we find our pleasure and enjoyment in weak, puny, unenjoyable things – it's called SIN. We've trained ourselves to pursue momentary, puny, short-lived pleasure in sin. We've spent our entire lives thinking a little sin here and there is what we are truly longing for. ***Lewis concludes, "our problem is not that we pursue pleasure, our problem is that we are far too easily pleased" He likens it to a child playing in mud because he isn't mature enough to understand what is meant by a vacation at the sea. You're short changing yourself with sin! Pursue REAL JOY! "Fullness of joy!", "pleasures forevermore!" (Ps. 16:11)***

2. Pursuing our joy in God changes the way we think about conversion

Mt. 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."

- Notice that this man goes and sells "all that he has" "IN HIS JOY" of "buying the field" – **joy is his motive for "selling all that he has"**
- **Conclusion:** The new birth is discovering Jesus as a treasure that is greater than all you have…so that you JOYFULLY are willing to give up everything so that you may gain Him.

3. Pursuing our joy in God changes the way we think of dying

- ***Philippians 1:21 - "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain"***
    - Even in death, Paul's motive was to find His joy in Christ. For this reason he counted dying as GAIN.
    - Paul is saying, "If I go on living…Christ is everything in my living…if I die, GREAT! I have Christ to a fuller capacity… I have fullness of joy, I have pleasures forevermore in the presence of God!

4. Pursuing joy in God changes the way we view idolatry

Jeremiah 2:13 - for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

- Idolatry is like crawling across a desert and coming to a fountain of living water and picking up a pile of sand and eating the sand! It is the exchanging of God, for that which does not satisfy - "broken cisterns that hold no water" – they cannot satisfy.

Pursuing your joy in God is a means to glorify God because when you find joy in God you honor and glorify God. So choose joy! Pursue your joy in everything you do…don't settle for anything less!

ILL: Button: "Choose Joy"

What are you struggling with in your Christian life right now…what is God asking you to kill…is it helpful to focus, not so much on the killing of that thing as an end…but true and lasting joy in God as an end. When you kill sin, you are pursuing a greater joy in God! SO CHOOSE JOY…choose joy in all that you do…not the limited weak momentary happiness of sin that is fleeting and leaves you robbed. Pursue a greater joy in God!

Next week we're going to look at what this looks like practically…in our daily lives. How do spiritual disciplines aid us in this. How does my enjoyment in life in other things help me to find my enjoyment in God. How can I glorify God in martyrdom, how can I glorify God in eating pizza? Please come back!

Invitation to communion:

Church this morning we have the privilege of taking communion together for the first time as a church…

What it is:

1 Corinthians 11:23–28 (ESV): 23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. **Do this in remembrance of me**." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord **in an unworthy manner** will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 **Let a person examine himself,** then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

1. Communion is something we do to remember Jesus and the gospel
2. Communion is also a proclamation of the New Covenant…we make this proclamation to one another and to the world around us. And we take it while awaiting the Lord's Return.
3. Communion is something that is for believers only. What the bread and the cup celebrates is precious to us. We ask that if you have not yet surrendered to Jesus as your Lord and Savior that you would refrain from taking communion.
4. Communion is an opportunity to examine ourselves, to repent of sin that we need to repent of

We have communion up here at the front, I'm going to ask that while Daniel leads us in a song of worship that you would come up the center aisle, receive the elements, and then go back to your seat around the sides and through the back. After the song I will lead us as we take the cup and bread together.

Bread – the bread symbolizes the body and the life of Jesus given for us. The Bible says that God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, and whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life – bread from heaven has been given to us! With the bread we celebrate the fact that only Jesus can truly satisfy every spiritual hunger. Let's take the bread together.

Cup – the cup symbolizes the blood of Jesus that was shed for sins. It's only through the blood of Jesus that we can be forgiven of our sin and receive eternal life. With the cup we celebrate the fact that God made a way for us to be reconciled to Himself. Let's take the cup together.