Surpassing Joy — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 13:44–46 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, December 17, 2023 · *Advent 2023*

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All right, well thanks to the band for leading us in worship. If you have your Bible, you can open it to the book of Matthew. We're going to be in Matthew chapter 13 this morning and we're actually doing a little break in what we typically do in our church of preaching through books of the Bible. We were in the book of Genesis, but we press pause to look at these kingdom parables in the book of Matthew because they're answering the question that a lot of us raise during Advent, which is about the second coming of Jesus.

The question is, what does the kingdom look like? If Jesus taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven," what does the kingdom look like? And how do I possess it? And how do I participate in it? And Jesus answers those questions a variety of different ways, but one of the ways that he addressed those questions is through these parables in Matthew chapter 13. Sometimes they're called the kingdom parables. And the way that Jesus talked about his kingdom is that it's not just future, it's actually at hand right now.

He talked about the kingdom as if his coming into the world inaugurated the coming of the kingdom of God. And he made statements like, the kingdom of God is like a sower who went out to sow. And he talked about these four different types of soil and sometimes the seed goes into hard soil and it doesn't really penetrate. Sometimes it goes into shallow soil and it'll take root but it springs up and dies pretty quickly because there's no real depth of root there and sometimes the kingdom is like going into thorny soil and it'll take root and begin to bear fruit but it really can't bear much fruit because it's being choked out by the thorns.

And then of course you have the good soil, and the way Jesus describes the kingdom is for those who have the right kind of heart, who hear the word and receive it into their life. It actually revolutionizes their life and it changes them at a very practical level. Some bear fruit sixtyfold, hundredfold, different-fold,[1] but the point is the kingdom of God, once it's received, changes everything. He told a parable about the kingdom is not just like soils, it's

sometimes it's like seeds. There's the good seed like wheat, and then there's bad seed like weeds, and in the kingdom of God there are both, wheat and weeds.

Good and evil. There is suffering in the world even though the kingdom has come. In Jesus' mindset, the kingdom is already and not yet. It's here in the sense that it can change your life and give you a different, qualitatively better kind of life, but it's also difficult in your life because you have an enemy who wants to kill, steal, and destroy. And so in the king's patience, he allows both seeds to grow together until the harvest and then he'll separate both seeds. So when you ask the question, well, how do we have joy if the kingdom is already and not yet?

How can you have peace? How can you have love? How can the kingdom change this world if the enemy is still on the prowl? And the way Jesus described it is it's like a mustard seed. It's itty-bitty at first. But when you let that thing do its work, it grows to be the biggest tree of all the trees, and all the birds of the air come and nestle on its branches. He says the kingdom of God is actually kind of like yeast. It's almost invisible. It doesn't take very much, but if you will put it into that batch of dough, it'll work its way through and eventually permeate the whole lump.

It's subversive in that way. When you think about subverting something, overthrowing the old order, putting in the new order, the way Jesus says the kingdom comes, it comes subversively. It works slowly, gradually, but inevitably. It doesn't advance through violence or force. It advances through humility and love. And when people are impacted by that kingdom, it will change them and it will change the world. Today we're going to see the kingdom is like a treasure buried in a field and a pearl of great price. It's in Matthew chapter 13, verses 44, 45, and 46.

It's actually two parables, but they're so short, we're going to look at both of them today. And what they're going to show us is that the kingdom of heaven is like hidden treasure. That when it's found, it results in surpassing joy. Joy that is unlike any other joy in this world. Joy that will be present whether your life is going well or not so well. Joy that surpasses human understanding. So let's pick it up in chapter 13, verse 44. I don't know if you can turn the lights up a little bit.

You all look very shadowy out there. Is it just the lights are not all there? There you are. Now I can see you. I like to see you when you fall asleep so I can pick it up a notch. All right. Matthew chapter 13, starting in verse 44: The kingdom of heaven is like treasure buried in a field that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and he sells everything that he has and he buys that field. Now this is a guy working a field. We don't know why he's in the field, but for whatever reason.

He finds treasure buried. I guess maybe he was plowing, maybe he was digging holes on a septic tank, and nobody knows that it wasn't a septic tank. But he's down there, he finds this treasure. And a lot of people ask the question, why is somebody burying treasure? If you think about it, back in the day the banks weren't so great and the currency wasn't so good, which I guess today banks aren't so great and currency isn't so good, but the way they would solve that problem back then is they would take their wealth, put it into a hard asset, and put that hard asset into the ground and they would keep it safe.

Some people get upset that Jesus seems to be condoning dishonesty because the guy reburies the treasure and he goes and buys the field. I think that just misses the point of the parable. If this guy owned the treasure, do you think he would have sold the field without removing the treasure? Of course not. And it's a classic law of the universe since we were all little kids, finders keepers. So this guy found the treasure. He reburied it. He didn't steal it. He could have taken some of the treasure and used that to buy the field.

He's not dishonest in any way. This was treasure that was buried by the guy before the guy who owns the field. This guy is dead and gone. This has become a very fortunate man who found an incredibly valuable treasure, and he does whatever it takes to make that treasure his own. That's the first parable. The second parable is about a sea merchant, different kind of guy, different kind of trade, but it's like a sea merchant in search of fine pearls. And then when he found one priceless pearl, he went and he sold everything that he had.

And he bought it. The Greek word translated sea merchant is the Greek word *emporos*. It means it literally means sea trader. Someone whose main job it was to go and find valuable things in the ocean and then sell those things for profit. Think of a stock trader today, similar to that, but you got to dive down deep in the ocean and get pearls. Now I don't know—has anyone ever done some pearl diving? It was different back in the day, okay? They did not have the modern amenities like scuba gear and stuff like that.

So what they would do, in fact they actually do this today. They made it into some kind—it's not an Olympic sport, but it's one of those sports they show on ESPN where people basically try and kill themselves and we watch it for fun. *Skandalopetra* is the name of the sport, and it comes from the Greek word *petros*, which means rock, and then *skandalos*, which means stumbling. Essentially they tied a big, huge, heavy rock that was smooth to their leg and they would get to the side of the boat. And they would jump off the boat, drop the rock down into the ocean, and the rock would sink to the bottom of the ocean.

The reason you wanted a big rock is so you could get to the bottom of the ocean as fast as you can, because you only have so long you can hold your breath, right? So you'd go down there to the bottom of the ocean, you start feeling around for these pearls, and you'd try to scoop some up and then your buddy would pull you up to the top and then you had your pearls. So

you can see it was a very dangerous trade. And because it's a very dangerous trade, the treasure was very valuable.

Because there just weren't that many pearls, because not that many people were going to do that kind of reckless thing. So this is a guy who knows how to spot value. This is a guy who knows what he's looking for and is probably very wealthy because he's found it. But one day, and I don't know if this was when he was diving or maybe he was just out and about, he finds a pearl that is of incomparable value. So he does whatever it takes to sell everything that he has to obtain that pearl.

So in this parable, both men do two things. Number one, both men find treasure that is hidden. And both men sell everything that they have to obtain it. Now there are differences between the guys, right? The first guy seems to be lucky, right? He finds the treasure by accident. He's just doing his thing, working his job nine to five and bam. And that's sometimes how people find the kingdom. They're just doing their thing, working their job, and then some guy out of nowhere walks in out of the blue and shares the gospel and your life is changed forever.

Maybe that's how you came to know the Lord. You were just minding your own business and God slapped you upside the face and said, let's go. Some other people are like the sea merchant. They know the questions to ask and they've been looking for truth their entire life. Why am I here? What is my purpose? How do I find it? What's wrong with the world? How do we fix it? And there are people who live in that existential angst for all of their life, and that's kind of like the sea merchant.

That's how some people find the kingdom. They settle on Christianity as the truth that explains all of life's problems. C. S. Lewis said it's like the sun: I don't believe in the sun because I see the sun. I believe in the sun because through the sun I see everything else. And that's how some people find the kingdom. It just makes sense out of life. And when I live according to these kingdom values, my life is better, and I can make sense out of everything. Both men find the treasure, but they find it in different ways.

The other thing that's different about the men is who finds the treasure. The first guy is really poor. Poor enough that he has to sell everything he has just to buy some real estate. He's working a day job, so he's not someone who could go without working. Compare that to the sea merchant who has a working job, but he would have been very wealthy. Because he was an upper class kind of guy. He had an upper class job, dealt with upper class people, and lived an upper class life. But the way the kingdom worked is it doesn't matter whether you're high class or low class, anybody can find the treasure.

Doesn't matter who you are, what you've done, where you come from, you don't have to be like those quote-unquote church people. You don't have to be like those quote-unquote

people who have it all together. The kingdom is available to anyone. Both men find the treasure and both men sell everything that they have to get the treasure, even though one is poor and one is wealthy and one does it by accident and one does it on purpose. What is the point of the parable? Well I think the point of the parable is pretty obvious.

It's actually you could put it in two ways. The first parable focuses on the first point, the second parable focuses on the second point, but the point is that the kingdom of God is a treasure, but the treasure of God's kingdom is hidden. It's not easy to see. This world puts other things—brings them to the surface— so that even though the treasure is the most valuable thing that you could ever possess, you're not going to see it on the surface. You're not going to find it where you normally look. The kingdom of God is a treasure and the treasure is hidden.

So let's look at the first one. The kingdom of God is a treasure. What is the treasure? You ever asked that question? Jesus calls it a pearl of great price, a treasure you'd sell everything for. You could use the word salvation. That's what we just talked about with Mary. She rejoices in "the God of my salvation." But when we say salvation, a lot of us think salvation equals rescue from hell. If I get saved, that means I go to heaven when I die, and I don't go to hell when I die.

But that's not the way the Bible talks about salvation in its fullest sense. Salvation is past, present, and future. It's not just that you're saved from hell in the future, it's that you get the abundant life right now. It's not just that you get a second chance, and I hope you do better from here on out, but it is all of your past sins have been erased. Maybe a better word to describe it would be the word joy. There's actually a German word that C. S. Lewis used to describe this that I think is very helpful.

I mispronounced it in the 8:15 service, and one of the ladies who's a member of our church is German. And she came up to me and said, "No, no, no, no, no. That is not how you say that." It sounded like a German redneck, I'm sure. So let me see if I can get this word right. It's—do I have it up on your—yeah. I said "Zahnsucht." It's not "Zahn," it's "Zehn," with a long A: *Sehnsucht*. You want to say it with me? It's really fun to say. *Sehnsucht*. Some people translate it joy.

It actually means life-longing. That deep, and we all know the feeling because we've all experienced it. Profound happiness that you experience when your first child is born into this world or when you finally get the thing you worked so hard for. Or you fall in love for the first time. Or for the last time. It's that experience of incredible, overwhelming joy. And what C. S. Lewis said is that that is *Sehnsucht*. It is what we spend all of our lives chasing, doing whatever it takes to obtain it. But the experiences are not themselves the joy.

The experiences are like rays from the sun, in that they are from the true joy, but they are just momentary experiences that hit us and fade. And that is so true, is it not? That even the best meal that you've ever tasted is still not enough to keep you from getting hungry. Even the best drink that quenches your thirst in ways that no other drink has ever done, it's still not going to keep you from getting thirsty again. That's what C. S. Lewis says joy is like. Joy is not in this world, it's not from this world, and none of the experiences in this world are the joy, but they're actually experiences that point us to the source of joy which is otherworldly.

He actually made an argument for the existence of God that if I find within myself a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy then that must mean I'm made for another world. I'm made for joy. That joy is not in this world. It's out of this world. That *Sehnsucht* that I'm chasing is the treasure that Jesus describes in this parable. It's what all of us spend all of our lives chasing, doing whatever it takes to obtain it. That is the kingdom of God. That is salvation, that is joy. But that joy is hidden, according to Jesus.

It's not on the surface. You won't find it looking in the places that you normally look. It's like a ray of sun that you look back and you can't see the source. It's like something buried or hidden. It's, as Paul said, a stumbling block to the Jews, and it's foolishness to the Gentiles. This is exactly why Jesus, when he talks about the kingdom of God, he says, this is why I say it in parables. Because when I communicate in parables, it's exposing the fact that some people have eyes to see the kingdom and some people don't.

If you look back, Matthew chapter 13, one example of this is in verse 11. The secrets of the kingdom have been given for you to know, but it has not been given to them. Not because he's like intentionally communicating in ways to make it difficult. He's just saying the condition of certain people's hearts is such that they'll never have ears to hear. Then he tells them, blessed are your eyes because they see. Blessed are your ears because they hear. This—I think—oh, no, go to verse 13. This is why I speak to them in parables.

Looking they don't see, hearing they don't listen or understand. He quotes Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah chapter 6, and then he says in verse 16: Blessed are your eyes because they do see, and your ears because they do hear. He tells the parables that we've looked at the last two weeks, and then he once again says, the reason I tell parables, this is in verse 34, is so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled. I will open my mouth in parables; I will declare things kept secret from the foundation of the world.

What he's saying is the treasure is hidden. It's hidden from most people because they don't have eyes to see. They don't have ears to hear, because it requires a spiritual understanding to see the value that's there. Paul talks about this in his letter to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians chapter 2, he says that the natural man does not receive the things of God. Because the things of God are spiritually understood. He actually says that they'll be foolishness to him because they're evaluated spiritually. In his second letter or fourth letter,

depending on how you count them, he says that there is a god of this world, talking about the enemy, talking about the devil.

And he says the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they're not able to see. This is 2 Corinthians chapter 4, if you want to throw that up on the screen. Just go to the next one. The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to what? To keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. In other words, the treasure is hidden. It was hidden during Jesus' day and it's hidden during our day. In order to see the treasure, you've got to have eyes to see.

And the reason it's hidden is because the world pushes so many other things to the surface. The world says there is joy in this world, but the only way you'll have true joy is through this thing. It's through this approach to life. It's through this way of orienting yourself. It's through this amount of money. It's through this kind of job. It's through that kind of appearance. It's through this kind of reputation. And when the kingdom of God comes along and says, no, there's actually a better joy than that, it's a joy that is surpassing all of the fleeting joys of this world, but it comes through humility.

Well then that sounds like nonsense. It sounds like foolishness. There's an even better joy, but it's sourced in a man who was God in the flesh and he was born of a virgin. And most people say, you got to be kidding me. You actually believe that? Perpetual virginity? You can have a baby as a virgin? You actually believe that whole God nonsense? The reason a lot of people don't have eyes to see is because they're looking in the wrong place, and when they're pointed to the right place, they don't see any value there.

I remember when I was a kid assessing value. I assessed value as a kid much differently than I assess value today. Anyone else? I bet we've had some of the same experiences. Well I know there's one experience that you haven't had. When I was young, one of the things that I enjoyed playing with more than any other thing was these He-Man action figures. Anybody remember He-Man? All right, 1985, all right. Well, I got to wear my He-Man action figures. I was the firstborn. My mom bought me every He-Man action figure I ever wanted.

I had so many He-Man action figures I finally got bored of them. But there was a kid in my class named Judd Bond, who I'm still friends with today, good guy, because he's forgiven me of this terrible thing I did to him. But I realized that he liked those He-Man action figures and I thought I could make a buck off of Judd. So I took my He-Man action figures and I began to sell them at a very unfair price, to be honest. But he wanted them so bad that he was willing to steal from his father.

Now mind you, I did not know he was stealing from his father. I just thought he had a lot of money. I should have put it together. But I remember getting in so much trouble because he was jacking money from his dad to buy my silly He-Man action figures. But that's what I

found value in. But then you grow up and you start to assess value differently. And Judd assesses value differently. And that's how the kingdom works. You come to a point where you mature in your thinking and hopefully, through the Holy Spirit, he begins to open your eyes that maybe there is value here.

I mean those people sure do seem content. And they are able to get along. They have nothing in common with each other, but they seem to truly love each other. And yeah, maybe they're not wearing the nicest clothes or driving the nicest cars, but there's some value there. The value is hidden. One of the arguments that C. S. Lewis used in his book on—what's the book with the demons talking? *The Screwtape Letters*? Thank you. One of the arguments that the head demon uses to persuade the young Christian that he doesn't really need to bother with Christianity.

I printed it out, but I don't have it in here. But he basically says—the chief to the underling demon—"What I want you to do, I want you to take this man to church. He's just gotten saved, so what I want you to do is take him to church. Which sounds odd, but what he says is when you take him to church, I want you to have him focus on how out of tune they sing. They didn't have our band, but some churches, you know, you're like, mmm. I want you to have them focus on their silly attire and their silly arguments and their silly accents.

Because if you can show him the foolishness of the people, then maybe he'll see the foolishness of the religion." And that's how a lot of people think about the value of the kingdom. "There's no value there. Those people are fools." But what they don't see is what's underneath our sloppy appearance and sometimes foolish ways of speaking, and that is a supernatural love that enables people to forgive each other. When, according to this world, there's no grounds for forgiveness. Enables people to love each other who come from different, totally different parts of the socioeconomic spectrum.

Enables this wall of hostility that exists in our culture between all sorts of different people, but somehow when you come into the household of God and you have people who truly believe the gospel, there is a joy and a meekness and a humility and a genuine love and contentment that isn't like any other place in this world. That's the value. But it's hidden. So how do you get the kingdom? If the kingdom is the greatest value in the world, but that the value is hidden, then how do you receive it into your life?

Well, Jesus says you got to do two things. Number one, you got to look where the treasure is found. And number two, you've got to leave whatever it takes. And both men do both things. Both men look where the treasure is found, and they both leave or they sell everything that they have, they do whatever it takes to obtain it. Let's look at the first one which is looking where treasure is found. The treasure will not be found where most people say the treasure is going to be found. The treasure is going to be found where the Lord is.

And so you may have to get past some of your mental hurdles when it comes to taking seriously the claims of Christ. Maybe you're here and you're kind of one of those skeptical people. And you're just like the person in the Screwtape story. Maybe you're here just out of a way of humoring your spouse. But if you would be willing to take a second glance, or maybe a deeper look, or maybe crazy idea, ask the God who exists to open your eyes so that you might see. Holy Spirit, if you are real, would you help me to perceive and understand if there's anything here?

And maybe you'd be able to find it. You've got to look where the treasure is found. The way the Bible talks about the kingdom, it's not about eating and drinking. This is from Romans 14:17—but it's about peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. It's not about the attractiveness of the citizens, but it's about the supernatural love and contentment that they have in the Lord. It's not about talk—1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 20—but it's about power. If you look in the wrong places, you'll always find the wrong things. If you look for the wrong reasons, you'll find the wrong thing.

But if you look in the right place, then you'll find the right thing, the best thing, and that thing is the joy of the kingdom. And that joy is available in a person. It's not available in a place. It's not available in an organization. It's not available in some rules and regulations and ethical codes. The joy of the kingdom is available through a person, and that person is Jesus. The best analogy I've ever seen is C. S. Lewis's analogy where he talks about joy being the rays of the sun. The rays of the sun that hit your skin and they warm it and you go, man, that's good, and that's so wonderful.

But if you were to actually do the hard work of tracing the ray of the sun back to its source, you would find that it culminates in the sun. And if you will take the joys of this world, whether it's the pleasure of sexuality or the joy of marriage or bringing children up in this world or the joy you feel after an incredible achievement, if you take that pleasure and you take it back to its source you'll find that all roads end in the Lord Jesus Christ. All the signposts point back to him.

We just quoted 2 Corinthians chapter 4, which says, the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers. If you read just two verses later, he says that the God who said, let light shine out of darkness, this God has actually shone the light of the gospel or the light of God's glory into our hearts so that we might have the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. He's the treasure. He's the joy. He's the thing that's hidden that our world doesn't evaluate or treat as anything seriously.

But when you let the Holy Spirit open your eyes to see who he really is and what he's really done, you will begin to discover a treasure that is unlike anything in this world and you will do anything it takes to obtain it. So you got to look in the right place. But once you see him, if the Holy Spirit opens your eyes to see the light of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ, how

do you obtain him? You've got to leave behind whatever it takes. Now in both parables, both men sell everything that they have.

And he repeats it twice intentionally. They both sell everything that they have. Why does he say that? Well, it's not because you can buy the kingdom, obviously, right? There's all kinds of other passages that say you don't earn your salvation. It's a gift of grace. It's something you receive, not something you earn. Jesus said, blessed are the poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom. So it's not as though you buy the treasure. What it is saying is that to obtain the treasure, you've got to give away yourself. You've got to leave whatever it takes.

In other words, you've got to be totally surrendered. It's got to be reckless abandon. All of the things you used to prize as joys, all of the things you used to find security and sweetness and satisfaction in life, those ultimate things in your life, not the things that—like, they're nice, but you could live without them. We're talking about the things that you cannot live without, the things that define your identity, whatever that was, if it wasn't Jesus, you've got to leave that behind. You've got to let go of that thing so that you've got room in your heart to receive the treasure of the kingdom.

Now sometimes this is financial. Jesus told the rich young ruler, "You want to follow me? First sell everything that you have, give it to the poor, and then follow me." And the rich young ruler—it says he went away sad because he had a lot of money. And for some people, their idol is money. And so that may be the case for you. It may be you can't follow Jesus and approach money the way you typically have. But I would say that's probably not most people. In fact, I've never met a person who had to sell everything that they owned and give it away to the poor in order to become a Christian.

I'm not saying it never happens. But I've not seen it. But what I have seen a lot of is people's opinion of themselves having to die. I've seen a lot of people having to die to the idea that they're going to have the perfect little family, or that people are going to perceive them a particular kind of way. I've had a lot of people have to die to the idea of being respected by their peers or the most popular student in school. See, what Jesus will require of you is whatever that idol was, whatever that thing of most importance was, if it wasn't him, he will require you to let go of that thing so that you can make him your joy.

Because there will be no competition in the kingdom of heaven between true joy and its substitutes. There will be no toleration of true joy and its competitors. Jesus will either be Lord of all or he won't be Lord at all. One of the ways that I like to think about this, because some people hear that and go, "Well, I don't want to be a Christian if that means letting go of everything I love." You're not losing in this deal, okay? Think of it in this way, marriage. One of the ways the Bible talks about our relationship with God is in the terms of marriage.

And one of the ways the Bible talks about sin and idolatry is in terms of adultery. And if you think about marriage, when you get married with someone and you commit yourself to them and you say, I'm going to love you and only you, I'm going to satisfy all of my desires in you and you alone. But then you decide I'm going to cheat on my wife or cheat on my husband and I'm going to pleasure and satisfy myself outside of the bounds of matrimony. That's a problem, right? Can we all agree that's a problem?

Why is it a problem? It's not a problem because you had desires that needed to be satisfied. Those desires are from God, they're part of the human condition. They're good in that God loves to have those desires satisfied according to his design. In other words, the desires are not the problem. The person in whom those desires are satisfied, that's the problem. The same is true when it comes to the Christian life. God has given you desires. He has given you the hunger and thirst for joy. That's not the problem. Your desire for success and popularity and security and money, those are wonderful things, good things, they're by God's design.

The problem is when you try to satisfy those ultimate desires in something that isn't ultimate, in something that is someone or something other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Giving your life to Jesus, in other words, is not the end of pleasure any more than your wedding day is an end to romance. I've never met anyone who on their wedding day, during their wedding vow, said, now that I've waited so long and I've found the one that my heart truly desires, I promise from here on out I will never have a lustful thought.

I will never have a sexual desire. I will not think romantically anymore, no more dates. Did anyone ever say this on their wedding day? Yeah, I'd be like, I'm out of this. It's not what I signed up for, right? No, what you said is the romance and the love and the desire that I have led up to this point, I plan on giving you even more—more intense desire, greater desire, greater displays, greater romance, but what I'm doing is I'm narrowing the field. So there's greater intensity, but a narrow focus on the people with whom those things are enjoyed.

And that's the Christian life. The Christian life is I've kind of enjoyed my sinful life up to this point, you know, and sin is fun. And if you're not enjoying your sin, you're not sinning correctly, as they say. So you can you can enjoy that, you can have a good time, but when you come to know the Lord, what you're saying and giving your life to the Lord is, oh, I guess I can't have pleasure anymore, I guess I can't have fun anymore. You're saying, no, I'm going to have greater pleasure, greater fun, greater stories of enjoyment, but I'm narrowing the focus.

I'm narrowing the person through whom those desires are satisfied. I'm going to center them in the Lord Jesus Christ. And listen, when you do that, that principle of exclusivity in marriage is a big one. When you narrow your person, that is my person. There is no gratification of any desires outside of him, outside of her. When you do that in your marriage, your marriage gets better. And when you do that in your relationship with the

Lord, your relationship with the Lord will get better and you will find greater satisfaction in the Lord in ways that you would never dream even possible because it's a treasure that is hidden, that when you leave everything in order to obtain it, you will find something you would not trade for anything else.

So look in the right place and leave whatever it takes. I'm going to close with this illustration and then I'll be done. Thomas Chalmers was a preacher from back in the day. And the way he described this mindset—he called it "the expulsive power of a new affection." There's actually an illustration of this in the Bible in Philippians chapter three where Paul talks about what he gave up in order to become a Christian. And he says in Philippians chapter three, everything that was a gain to me I've considered to be a loss because of Christ.

More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. In other words I had a wonderful, joyful life before Jesus, but when I met Jesus, I considered that stuff as rubbish. He actually uses a cuss word in the—well, it's not a cuss word, it's just not pleasant. It's like a Daddy Bob word, a Roby word. It's dung. It's *skubala*. It's basically poo-poo. What are you talking about, Paul? What was so wonderful in your life? If you'll go to verse 7, go to the next one.

Well, I was the man. In other words, if anybody had confidence in the flesh, if anyone was going to have salvation through some other means, I was going to have it. I was circumcised on the eighth day. I was from the nation of Israel, tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrews, Pharisee regarding the law; zeal—I persecuted the church; righteousness—blameless. But whatever gain I had, everything that was a gain to me I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. That's the expulsive power of a new affection. What Paul's saying is I had joy, I had wonderful joy, but somehow when I met Jesus, that joy, when I received him into my life, it expelled every other desire.

It expelled every other longing. It expelled every other satisfaction. There was nothing even close. So the way Chalmers talks about it is that if you had a glass full of air—a beaker, say—how do you get the air out of that glass? Well you can take a pump and try to pump the air out of the glass, but it'll be very difficult because nature abhors a vacuum. The best way to get the air out of the glass is to take a glass of water and pour it in and when you pour the water in, all the air disappears because you're giving it something that it truly desires.

And that's how the human heart works. We were made to be satisfied. But our satisfaction was supposed to always be ultimately in the Lord. John Piper says it this way: God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. The Lord does not want the end of your pleasure. He does not want the end of your happiness. He wants the truest happiness, the greatest pleasure you've ever experienced. But it's found through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And yes, you will have to leave things. Yes, you will have to say no to things.

You'll have to deny yourself and die to yourself. But in dying, you find true life. And that is the surpassing joy of the kingdom. Only our joy in the Lord can displace the misplaced desires for this world. So as we come into a time of response, I know that all of us in this room probably have ways in which we have misplaced affections in the world: things that you're doing, people that you're loving, maybe people you're dating, maybe the ways you're thinking about money, maybe it's the substances you're putting into your body.

It could be anything. The Holy Spirit has already brought that to your attention. What I want to invite you to do this morning is as the band leads us in a time of response, is to say, Lord, would you open my eyes so that I can see the treasure? Help me to see the treasure and Lord give me the faith to leave whatever I need to leave to receive that treasure into my life. And if the Holy Spirit gives you the ability to give your life to Jesus this morning, if God's moving in your heart and you'd say, you know what, I don't have that joy and I want that joy into my life, I'll be down here at the front and you can come and say, I want to give my life to Jesus, and I will help you walk through that decision and help you take your next steps.

If you're here this morning and you are a Christian, what I encourage you to do is to really examine the joy of your heart. Is it there or is it not? And if your joy is missing, it may be an indication that you've got blinders on your eyes. And so you would ask the Holy Spirit this morning to shine that light into my heart so that I might see the glory in the face of Jesus. And in doing that, have the joy of my salvation renewed and the integrity of my life, the fruit of the Spirit in my life increased.

Not because I'm trying harder, but because I'm seeing more clearly the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. However it is you need to respond, you can do that now as Preston leads us. Father, we thank you for this time and your word and we pray that we would be people who all obtain the treasure, who release what needs to be released, who die to ourselves so that we might live for Christ, live our best life, our greatest life, not just here on this side of heaven, but ultimately in that kingdom when it comes in its fullness, eternal weight of glory.

Would you help us to live for that day? Even in a world that is blinded from its reality. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. The altar's open if you want to make a public response, you can also just right there where you're seated respond to the Lord. There's going to be a QR code that you can scan if you want to have a conversation with the pastor or you have a prayer request you want to submit, but you do what the Lord leads you to do. As you're praying, would you also ask the Lord to help our church be a place where the treasure can be found, that our congregation would be marked as people who have received the treasure and live as if it is infinitely greater than anything this world may have to offer.

We'd be in the world, but not of the world. That we would be marked by supernatural love and forgiveness, contentment and joy in the Lord. If you're a Christian, would you pray that prayer for your family? For your marriage, for your singlehood? That the competitors in this

world for you, the joy of your heart, would not triumph over the treasure you have in the Lord Jesus. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time in your word, and we pray as we leave this place and bring our service to a close, that we would be people who live as if you are our joy.

And that it would be attractive and winsome and compelling and powerful and that it would draw many, many people to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope, who is our peace, who is our surpassing joy. And until he comes again, would you help us to do our part in bringing your kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven? And we pray these things in Jesus' name. And God's people said…

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "fiftyfold, hundredfold"; in the parable the good soil produces "some 100, some 60, some 30 times what was sown." Source: Matthew 13:8, 23 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩