

Psalm 63.5-8
The Glory of Satisfied Thirst
Sermon #3 in a Series on Psalm 63

Preached by Pastor Glenn Durham at Dominion Covenant Church, Omaha, Nebraska, on August 27, 2006.

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Main Idea: *God is glorified in satisfying his people's thirst for himself, even while they are in the wilderness.*

Introduction

Maybe you have had experiences similar to mine. Someone is explaining why they did not like the church service or why they no longer attend. The details vary, but many excuses revolve around this theme: "I did not get anything out of it."

That reasoning frustrates many Christians because it sounds as if the worship service (and maybe even God) is being graded on the same basis as the latest Tom Cruise film or Disney World: "What's in it for me?" If an event thrills or amuses or otherwise moves us emotionally, then it may be judged "good" or "enjoyable" or well worth our time and entertainment dollar.

Something inside devout believers cringes as such a crass valuation of the things of God. A relationship with the Lord of the universe is not the same as a movie; a worship service is not to be judged like a trip to the theme park.

Therefore, we may have responded with some indignation: "Worship is not about what you 'get out of it'; it is about what you put into it. A church is not to be measured by how it pleases you, but by how much God is pleased by you." We may even quote **2Corinthians 5.9b**: "...we make it our aim to please him." Sometimes we even raise to a virtue what is called "disinterested love," the idea that the highest form of love is indifferent to its own joy.

John Piper comments on this idea of true love having no thought of self: "When I was in college I had a vague, pervasive notion that if I did something good because it would make me happy, I would ruin its goodness. I figured that the goodness of my moral action was lessened to the degree I was motivated by a desire for my own pleasure. At the time, buying ice cream in the student center just for pleasure didn't bother me, because the moral consequences of that action seemed so insignificant. But to be motivated by a desire for happiness or pleasure when I volunteered for Christian service or went to church—that seemed selfish, utilitarian, mercenary." (*Desiring God*, 18).

Something feels wrong about worshipping for what we get out of it—that's selfish, even mercenary—to use Piper's words. And yet, while we strongly agree that church is not to be evaluated as entertainment, there could be something not quite complete in the answer we give to those who "did not get anything out of the service."

David Brainerd, missionary to the Indians of New England, wrote in his diary on January 24, 1744: "In the evening, I was unexpectedly visited by a considerable number of people, with whom I was enabled to converse profitably of divine things. Took pains to describe the difference between a regular and irregular self love; the one consisting with a supreme love to God, but the other not; *the former uniting God's glory and the soul's happiness that they become one common interest*, but the latter disjoining and separating God's glory and man's

happiness, seeking the latter with a neglect of the former.” (*The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, quoted in Piper, *Desiring God*, 242, emphasis added).

I would suggest there are three options where we previously saw only two:

1. Friends may be seeking happiness without no concern for God’s glory and pleasure. This is the sin of self-absorption which Jesus condemns when he says, “You must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.”
2. In over-reacting, we may have proposed seeking God’s glory with no thought to the soul’s happiness—thus the stoicism that has no part in the Christian life.
3. The Biblical answer is different—it *unites* “God’s glory and the soul’s happiness [so] that they become one common interest.”

That is precisely where we are in Psalm 63.

This is a wilderness Psalm. David is driven from his home; circumstances are arrayed against him; he is in a literally dry and weary land. But Christians have always recognized this Psalm as applicable to more than a physical wilderness—it is a song for whenever we are spiritually dry, when we feel far from God. David does *not* sing disinterestedly. His hope is set on his soul’s happiness in seeking God—he plans to get a lot out of his pursuit of the Lord!

Last week, we focused on our *duty* during spiritual drought: 1) We are to recognize God’s claim on our lives; 2) We are to remember God’s acts of redemption; and 3) We are to respond to God’s lovingkindness. This week we will see the gracious promises God holds out to motive us to seek him. Verses 5-8 teach that God is glorified in satisfying his people’s thirst for *himself*, even while we are in the wilderness. To get there, first, notice...

1. God’s glory and the soul’s happiness are united in God’s satisfying our soul (Psalm 63.5-6)

God’s promises will not disappoint. Going hard after God never leaves us barren. Pursuing God is not like salt water, so that the more you drink the dryer you are. Your soul thirsts for God; and your soul can be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.

In the West, we do not naturally think of fat as a delicacy. But some of you heard Jon Kayser’s report after his trip to China and saw the pictures. The great meal he and Pastor Kayser were given to celebrate their visit was huge mound of fat. David is saying that our souls shall be satisfied in the same way we enjoy a Thanksgiving feast, eating the best of the best.

Know this even while you are in a dry season: God *never* demands that we seek him in vain. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.... Which of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7.7-11).

I love the scene in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* where Lucy asks Aslan when she and Edmund will return:

“Please, Aslan, before we go, will you tell us when we can come back to Narnia again? Please. And oh, do, do, do make it soon.”

“Dearest,” said Aslan very gently, “you and your brother will never come back to Narnia.”

“Oh, *Aslan!!!*” said Edmund and Lucy both together in despairing voices.

“You are too old, children,” said Aslan, “and you must begin to come close to your own world now.”

“It isn’t Narnia, you know,” sobbed Lucy. “It’s *you*. We shan’t meet *you* there. And how can we live, never meeting you?”

Lewis has well honed in on a primary way in which God satisfies our souls. Not in singing, *per se*, but in the filling of the Holy Spirit and the peace of Christ promised to those “teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in our hearts to God.” Not in a corner of a cracker and sip of fine wine, but in participating in the body and blood of Christ. Not simply in attending church, but in the presence of God promised to those gathering in Jesus’ name. It’s not church, you know; it’s him. Psalm 63.2: We look *for him* in the sanctuary—and it is God who personally satisfies the soul, who meets with us when we seek him.

How else does God satisfy our souls?

- He pours his love into our hearts.
- His Spirit lives in us, uniting us body and soul to Christ.
- He assures us of forgiveness and gives us peace of conscience.
- He reminds us of his kindness.
- He makes us alive with Christ.
- He enables us to understand and believe his word.
- He sanctifies us, gives us hope and establishes us in every good work.
- He blesses us with every spiritual blessing.

So when a friend says that she “did not get anything out of the service,” we do not dismiss the concern too quickly. There is a sense, surely, in which we are here to give to God; but we must not imagine we serve him as if he needed anything. Christ insisted that he did not come to be served, but to serve us! We are the needy ones; he is glorified in his all-sufficiency. God’s glory and the soul’s happiness are united in God’s satisfying our soul.

And let us especially note David’s satisfaction when alone and awake at night! We are not sure of the exact reason for his not sleeping, but we can easily guess. In peril of life virtually continually, the day was full of activity, watchfulness and constant interaction. Little time was available for devotions. Additionally, as for many of us, nightfall would surely mark the time when senses are most heightened. As Calvin said to his tiger, Hobbes, “I think nighttime is dark so that we can imagine our fears more easily!”

Have we not been tempted to find the night watches the least satisfying for the soul and the time when we are least inclined to seek God? But David uses a sleepless night to turn his heart to God and finds him faithful.

Matthew Henry: “When sleep departs from our eyes (through pain, or sickness of body, or any disturbance in the mind) our souls, by remembering God, may be at ease, and repose themselves. Perhaps an hour’s pious meditation will do us more good than an hour’s sleep would have done.”

When we make it our passion to meditate on him day and night, we get out of it joy and happiness for the soul!

2. God’s glory and the soul’s happiness are united in God’s being our help (Psalm 63.7)

Has not God been a help to you?

Is not God a help in our *duties*? Everything he requires of us is for our good *and* everything he requires he assists in the doing! Are we too weak for the tasks set before us? His grace is sufficient; his power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore we boast all the more gladly of weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon us.... For when we are weak, then we are truly strong! Do you feel unable to do all required of a faithful follower of Jesus? You are unable (in yourself)! But you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you! God is your help in every duty.

Is not also God a help in *conflicts*? Great and mighty is the enemy of our soul, a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, disguised as an angel of light. What chance does Christian have against Apollyon? God is our help—he provides the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and prayer by which we are fitted with his armor and enabled to stand. God is our help in great conflicts with great enemies.

Is not God a help in *affliction*? Do you fear being unable to bear difficulties and troubles? Paul was “so utterly burdened beyond [his] strength that [he] despaired of life itself. Indeed,” he writes, “we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.” Sometimes God helps us *from* affliction, by keeping us out of harms way. Sometimes God helps us *through* affliction, by sustaining and strengthening us for the struggle. Sometimes God helps us *out of* affliction, by rescuing and delivering us in time of need. (This section draws on Thomas Horton’s commentary as quoted in Spurgeon.)

Hopefully, some of you have read Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. If so, you may know he was converted through Psalm 50.15 (another text revealing the union between the soul’s happiness and God’s glory). In a sermon entitled, “Robinson Crusoe’s Text,” **Charles Spurgeon** notes, “Robinson Crusoe has been wrecked. He is left in the desert island all alone. His case is a very pitiable one. He goes to his bed, and he is smitten with fever. This fever lasts upon him long, and he has no one to wait upon him—none even to bring him a drink of cold water. He is ready to perish. He had been accustomed to sin, and had all the vices of a sailor; but his hard case brought him to think. He opens a Bible which he finds in his chest, and he lights upon this passage, “*Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*” That night he prayed for the first time in his life, and ever after there was in him a hope in God, which marked the birth of the heavenly life.”

Spurgeon then applies the text: “Here God and the praying man take shares.... First, here is your share: ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble.’ Secondly, here is God’s share: ‘I will deliver thee.’ Again, you take a share—for you shall be delivered. And then again it is the Lord’s turn—‘Thou shalt glorify me.’ Here is a compact, a covenant that God enters into with you who pray to him, and whom he helps. He says, ‘You shall have the deliverance, but I must have the glory. You shall pray; I will bless, and then you shall honor my holy name.’ Here is a delightful partnership: we obtain that which we so greatly need, and all that God getteth is the glory which is due unto his name.”

God’s glory and the soul’s happiness are united in God’s being our help.

3. God’s glory and the soul’s happiness are united in God’s upholding us (Psalm 63.8)

The old King James version translated the first part: “My soul followeth hard after thee....” The Hebrew word is actually the same one used in Genesis 2.24, the famous, “leave and

cleave” verse: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Be joined, cleave, hold fast, followeth hard after—whatever our preferred translation, David is professing his commitment to cling to God in good times and bad, in sickness and in health, when rich or poor, until death do us part.

But how can he make such a commitment? Are not all men fickle and easily swayed from the narrow path? Yes, unless God’s right hand uphold him!

John Calvin: “To say that he would cleave to God, with an unwavering purpose, at all hazards, might have sounded like the language of vain boasting, had he not qualified the assertion by adding, that he would do this in so far as he was sustained by the hand of God.”

Left to our own devices we have no chance. We cannot persevere unless God preserve! But such is precisely the purpose of the right hand. This is the image of power, the symbol of strength. David is reminding himself that he will cling to God because God holds him there. David’s happiness depends on his soul’s clinging; the good news is that God’s glory depends on his upholding. Thus God’s glory and the soul’s happiness are united.

4. Conclusion

John Piper: “Nothing makes God more supreme and more central in worship than when a people are utterly persuaded that nothing—not money or prestige or leisure or family or job or health or sports or toys or friends—nothing is going to bring satisfaction to their sinful, guilty, aching hearts besides God. This conviction breeds a people who go hard after God on Sunday morning. They are not confused about why they are in a worship service. They do not view songs and prayers and sermons as mere traditions or mere duties. They see them as means of getting to God or God getting to them for more of his fullness—no matter how painful that may be for sinners in the short run” (*God’s Passion for His Glory*, 41).

For those who are not in a dry season of the soul this morning, we say, “Hallelujah! May the Lord hold you tightly in the fullness of joy for today and forevermore.”

But some of us are with David in the wilderness. If you are there, please, live in Psalm 63 until God convinces you that he will satisfy your soul. Then cling to him, refusing to let go until he blesses you, and you will see that he is glorified in upholding and helping you. And then you will find your soul satisfied as with fat and rich food, because at his right hand are pleasures forevermore.