

Talk 3 - Sanctification: The Ministry of Bringing Others to God's Glory & Joy In Him

Big Idea: Our ministry is a ministry of bringing people to glorify God, and supreme joy in Him, by working to present them perfect in Christ.

Introduction

Yesterday we saw three things:

1. The gospel, as it centers on Jesus, reveals the glory of God, and brings us to the glory of God in His holiness. In Jesus we are being brought to the highest good, the greatest treasure, and supreme greatness in the gospel, which is God in the glory of His holiness.
2. In bringing us to supreme greatness in Jesus, we are not just brought to praise Him, but we are being brought to joy in Him. *In praising what is great, we are brought to joy in their greatness.*
3. In now making us more and more like Jesus, we are being brought to the highest praise and glory that we can give God, and the greatest possible joy and satisfaction that we can experience. *Imitating greatness is not just the highest form of praise; it also brings us to the greatest experience of joy we can know in imitating greatness.*

And so I want to say to you, this morning, that there's nothing greater you can be brought to that brings God more glory, and you most joy, than for you to become more like Jesus, and for you to have Jesus fill and consume your life, because there is nothing higher or greater than Him who is God, in the glory of His holiness above all. He alone is the highest treasure.

And there's nothing greater you can call and lead your people to (e.g. your Sunday school class, your youth fellowship, and your bible study group). There is nothing greater that will bring God more glory, and them most joy, than for them to become more like Jesus, and have Jesus fill and consume their lives.

Christian ministry is all about bringing people to God's glory, and supreme joy in Him, above all things.

So I want you to understand this; Christian ministry - gospel ministry - is nothing less than a God-glorifying ministry: **a ministry of bringing people to God's glory, and supreme joy in Him, above all things.** That's the goal of the gospel, that's where the gospel leads, that's what the gospel secures in our lives, **and that's what we're called to pursue in our lives and bring our people to in ministry.**

And we do it not just by holding out Jesus, who is God in the glory of His holiness above all, and not just by bringing people to Jesus, who is supremely great. **We do it by helping them grow in Jesus, in the glory of His holiness; we do it by helping them become more like Jesus in His supremacy;** we do it by helping them make Jesus their highest treasure in life, above all. The closer we get to becoming more like the one whom we consider supremely great, the greater they are praised and magnified, and the greater our joy and satisfaction in their greatness.

So how do we pursue God's glory, and our joy, in becoming more like Jesus? How do we bring people to God's glory and supreme joy in Him, in becoming more like Jesus?

The most obvious answer is the gospel, isn't it? For the same gospel that reveals the glory of God, that saves us, and brings us to God, in the glory of His holiness, is the same gospel that **transforms us** into the likeness of Jesus! **The gospel, as it centers on Jesus, is the key to our transformation, and to us becoming more like Jesus, to His praise, and our joy in Him.**

That's why you read what you read in **Colossians 2:6-7**. Understand the progression in the passage. Paul has lifted up Jesus in His supremacy, in His greatness, in His being and person, and in His work of redemption (**Col.1:15-27**). **Who else is Paul going to proclaim, lift up, and speak of?** It should be nothing less than Jesus in His supremacy.

So you read in **ch.1:28: Him we proclaim**. **Who else is Paul going to grow people into?** It should be nothing less than Jesus in His supremacy. So you read **ch.1:28 – Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature/perfect/complete in Christ. For this I toil/labour with all his energy that he powerfully works in me.**

So if there's nothing more supreme than Jesus, **who else is Paul going to call us to know, and to grow in?** You've reached the substance, the sun, and the ocean, and there is no beyond. So what do you do now? Notice what Paul goes on to say in **Colossians 2:6-7, ⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him – continue walking in Him (continue being filled with Jesus in your life), ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.**

You've come to Jesus - the sun; now feel the blazing heat, and be consumed by it. **You've come to Jesus - the endless ocean; now soak it in, bathe in it, and drink from it.**

Note: the alternative in v.8; if you're not being filled with Jesus, if you're not walking with Him, being built up in Him, and growing to be more like Him, something else will take His place, and something else will fill your life. You will grow to be more like the world, thinking like the world, and living like the world! **That's how life works; you're filled with, and you become, what you hold to be supremely great in your life.**

Paul says that Jesus - who is the image of God, in whom the fullness of God dwells; who, by His work at the cross, brings you to God, in the glory of His holiness - is supreme over all, **and you become more like Him in His supreme greatness by walking in Him, being filled with Him, by grounding yourself in Him, and growing in Him; when you make Jesus everything in your life.**

Paul in **2 Corinthians 3:18** puts it like this. *¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord (Jesus – who we're told is the image of God and glory of God revealed to us in 4:4-6), as we behold Jesus in his supremacy we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

You become more like Jesus by beholding the glory of the Lord. You are transformed more and more into the likeness of Jesus, as you behold Him who is supremely great; when Jesus, in His supremacy, fills your vision and gaze, and when He is the treasure that fills your every horizon in life.

And that's generally true in life, isn't it? What you hold up, and what fills your gaze in life as your supreme treasure, is what will fill your life, and consume you. It becomes what you live for, it fills your thoughts, it shapes your walk, it affects your decisions, and **it changes you**, and eventually you become more like what you supremely treasure. The same gospel, as it centers on Jesus, that saves you to God's glory also transforms you.

For example, consider Winston and Eilen. Before they met, they were ignorant of each other, he was living in darkness and attracted to lesser lights, and he never saw her greatness. Over time, he begins to see her greatness. The more he observes her, and speaks to her, the brighter he sees her greatness, over all others. And he marries her; devoting himself exclusively to her, as the treasure above all others in his life: "With my body I worship you; with all that I am I give to you." It's the highest praise, isn't it? And it brings him joy because he is now with her.

But it doesn't end there, does it? Are you brought to the one you treasure, and that's it? No. You continue to grow in treasuring her in her greatness. How is he going to enjoy her as his treasure? How is he going to grow in his love and devotion for her, and his commitment to her as his treasure?

He enjoys her, and he keeps renewing his love for her by beholding her, keeping her on his horizon as his treasure above all other women, fixing his attention on her, spending time with her, and deepening his understanding of her. And eventually, what happens? He begins to think like her, and he begins to reflect her mannerisms and pithy sayings. And people will begin to say that they're like two peas in a pod: couples who become just like each other.

That's what Paul's saying here: **your growth in the Christian life, and you growing to be more like Jesus, is directly proportional to your beholding of Jesus in your life;** to you fixing your attention on Jesus in His supremacy. The gospel, as it centers on Jesus in His supremacy over all, and as the highest treasure you can be brought to, **IS** the means by which you grow to be more like Jesus - as you behold Him, as you fill your life with Him, and as you fix your attention on Him. *Beholding the glory of the Lord we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.* **You become what you behold.** **So how do you behold Jesus? How do you fix your attention on Jesus? How do you help your people behold Jesus in their lives?**

1. The Word, that Helps Us Behold Jesus

It's the Word of God - the Scriptures - that helps us behold Jesus. You behold Jesus most supremely in the Word of God. In fact, the purpose of the Word of God is to set forth, and lift up, Jesus in all His supremacy for us to see.

That's what you read in **2 Timothy 3:14-17**. Here are Paul's last words to Timothy; encouraging him to persevere to the end, and to continue faithfully serving in the ministry.

Notice what he says to Timothy:

*¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings – the Scriptures [what has Timothy learned and believed? It is nothing less than Jesus in the scriptures, the same scriptures], **which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [go back to the scriptures as they center on Jesus]** ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*

Notice what Paul is asking Timothy to do in v.14: ‘after all these years’, he says, ‘continue in what you have learned in the Bible, as it sets forth salvation through faith in Jesus, and as it sets forth the supremacy of Jesus in His saving work.’ Keep going back to what is supremely glorious in the gospel: ‘**salvation**’ that brings you to God, in the glory of His holiness, and through faith in Jesus, who is the very glory of God in His holiness, whose work brings us to God in the glory of His holiness, and to His praise and our joy in Him.

How do you grow and persevere in the Christian life? You do it by coming back to the Scriptures, again and again, as it sets forth and lifts up the gospel, and as it centers on Jesus and His saving work. For isn’t He the glory of God in His holiness? Isn’t He the supreme treasure? Isn’t He the substance, the sun, and the endless ocean? You never grow beyond the gospel, and you never grow beyond Jesus. Here we’re reminded that growth in the Christian life comes from coming back, again and again, to the gospel, as it centers on Jesus and His saving work (it is cyclical) **because He is everything.**

As you mature, your vision of Jesus enlarges. (E.g. It is like children. As they grow older, they appreciate their parents more and more.)

Now our problem is that in teaching the Bible, in getting people to study the Bible, in reading the Bible for ourselves we begin and we move straight into v.16. We remind and tell our people that they are to come to the Scriptures to be taught, rebuked, corrected, trained in righteousness, and completely equipped for every good work. That’s what we teach our people to do, that’s what we do when we read the Bible, and that’s why we read the Bible. But Paul didn’t just write v.16, did he? That last clause in v.15 is crucial, the scriptures ‘*which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus*’. What happens if you took out the last clause in verse 15?

It would read something like this:

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings – the Scriptures breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

What’s the problem with that? It makes the Bible a book of do’s and don’ts – a book of good works. It makes the goal of the Scripture good works. It doesn’t help Timothy, and it doesn’t

encourage him to persevere, remain faithful, and endure. It's just telling him to go to the Bible to work out how to live a good life. And we do the same when we leave out that last clause in v.15.

The primary purpose of the Scriptures is to point us to, lead us to, show us, and explain to us the gospel, as it centers on Jesus, the glory of God in His holiness, and in His supremacy over all: the very goal of our salvation. That's the only thing that will encourage Timothy to persevere, remain faithful, and endure.

It is what allows me to know that what I have is so great, so beautiful, so priceless, so powerful, and so lasting, that it's worth dying for, it's worth suffering for, it's worth fighting for, it's worth holding on to, and it's worth giving my life to. Only when I see His greatness will I persevere because there is nothing greater I can have than Jesus, and there's nothing you can take away that I don't have in Jesus.

And so it's no surprise that the Scriptures are setting forth what can only be what is supremely great, which is nothing less than the goal of the gospel. It is what you have been brought to: your salvation in the face of Jesus, who is the glory of God in His holiness above all, **who is supreme greatness, who is unsurpassing beauty, who is infinite worth, who is unmatched power, and who is the highest treasure.**

For the more you behold Jesus, in His supremacy as the glory of God, in His being and in His saving work for you, the more you see Him as your treasure in life. Everything else begins to fade around you, circumstances no longer burden you, and suffering no longer enslaves you because you've got Jesus, who is supremely greater than anything else.

That's how Paul encourages Timothy. And so v.16 is really a response to the gospel as it centers on Jesus; teaching us as we relate to Jesus in His supremacy; rebuking us as we relate to Jesus, who should be the highest treasure; correcting us as we relate to Jesus, in His infinite worth, and training us as we relate to Jesus, in His perfect righteousness, so that we may be equipped for every good work as we relate to Jesus.

It's so important for you to grasp this as leaders. **The goal of the Scriptures is to bring you to a person who is supremely great**, in whom there is no equal in greatness, worth, beauty, or power; who is God Himself, in the glory of His holiness above all. **The goal of the Scriptures is to continually bring you to behold Jesus.** So I don't just want my people to read the Bible to work out how to live, and if that's all they do when they read their Bibles, it's called legalism.

The Bible is here for me to behold a supremely great person, to treasure a supremely great person, and to help me see the fullness of the gospel, as it centers on the glory of God in the face of Jesus, who is my treasure. **It's the Scriptures that help us behold Jesus most supremely, which means that the key to transformation, and becoming more like Jesus, is to read and study Jesus, as He is lifted up in the Scriptures for me to behold.**

Now there are several implications for us as leaders:

1. **We must therefore read our Bibles seeking to behold Jesus more and more** (and we must teach our people to do the same). When you open the Bible to read it, the goal must be to see Jesus more and more; the goal must be to see Him in the glory of His holiness above all, to grasp and know the infinite treasure that He is, and to see the fullness of the gospel, as it centers on the glory of God, in the face of Jesus. You should pray to see Him and know Him in the Bible: **Psalm 27:4, *one thing I seek, to be in your presence, to gaze upon your beauty.*** Read to know Him.
2. **When we teach the Bible**, in every small group, in every one on one meeting, **we must hold out the supremacy of Jesus, above all, before people**. When you open the Bible to teach it, to read it with others, to disciple others, and to encourage them with it, the goal must be to bring them to see Jesus more and more, and the goal must be to help them grasp and know the infinite treasure that He is, and see His supreme greatness over all.

How do you encourage the lonely? By helping them see that they are not alone; there is one who will never leave them or forsake them. **How do you help an addict break the power of sin in their lives?** By helping them see that He is a greater and more satisfying treasure than the sin they so enjoy. **How do you rebuke the materialistic?** By showing them the infinite wealth they are losing out on in Him.

In the light of a greater treasure, everything else disappears. 'Oh lord you're beautiful; your face is all I seek'. *Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.*

I want my people to know Jesus first and foremost in the Bible; always setting before them Jesus in His supremacy. Only when they see how great He is will they let go of everything else in their lives; only then will they live for Him, only then will they persevere for Him, only then will they trust Him, and only then will they want Him above all things.

I want to bring my people to the substance, the sun, and the endless ocean. (You cannot call people to obedience in Jesus if they don't see Him as supremely great, and you cannot call people to leave their life of sin if they don't see Him as supremely great.) Your prayers should be like this: *Open the eyes of our hearts, Lord. Open the eyes of our hearts. We want to see You. We want to see You.*

3. **Until you become a regular Bible reader, and until your people become regular Bible readers, there will be no growth in your Christian life. You become what you spend time beholding; you absorb what you spend your time admiring.**

And in life, there are many things that draw our gaze, steal our attention, and grab our focus. In fact, we spend time beholding what we most treasure, don't we? So it should be no surprise that if I spend most of my evenings beholding what's on TV, I become a couch potato, which is nothing more than someone who treasures TV. It's no surprise that if I spend most of my time fixated on my career, I become a workaholic, which is nothing more than someone who treasures work. It's no surprise that if I spend most of my time online in my virtual world,

whether it's StarCraft or Left 4 Dead, I become a gamer, which is nothing more than someone who treasures gaming.

You are transformed by what you spend time beholding, you are filled by what you spend time on, and you become what you spend time beholding.

And the same holds true in the Christian life – growth and transformation comes when you behold He who is supreme over TV, career, study, work, and games. And so if you are not a regular Bible reader who is beholding Jesus, you will not grow in the Christian life. Like anything in life, you never discover greatness and beauty until you spend time immersed in it.

No one goes into a relationship to not see, talk, or spend time with the one whom they consider great. For couples in relationship, it's only as you spend time together, listening to each other, talking on the phone, working together, and studying each other that you discover how great and awesome the other person is. And as that happens, they become your treasure, you are filled with them in your life, and you are consumed by them in your life. Nothing else is more important, and nothing else matters. With StarCraft, and the anticipation that surrounded its release, no one buys it to put it on the shelf. Your enjoyment of the game comes as you immerse yourself in it, play it, and discover its greatness.

It's the same in the Christian life - **you only discover the greatness and beauty of the Son, who is supreme greatness, as you spend time with Him, become immersed in His word, listen to Him, and studying Him. Only then will you know change and transformation; only then will Jesus fill you, and only then will you be more like Him.**

Too many of us, and too many of our people at church, live a dumbed down Christian life, with our minds and intellect in the clouds. You read in Ephesians 4:23, where we're reminded that our minds need constant and continual renewal. In Romans 12:2, we're told that transformation comes by the renewing of our minds.

You're either a dumb or lazy Christian if you want to bypass your mind and intellect that God gave you to know Him more, to grow in His likeness, and to be more like Him. God's purpose, in everything in our lives, is to do what it says in Romans 8:28-29: to make us more like Jesus, and to bring us to the highest good; conforming us to the likeness of His Son.

How does this take place? Romans 12:2 says it is by the renewing of our minds. If your mind is not being renewed by the Word of the gospel, as it sets forth Jesus in His supremacy, it's being renewed each day by something else, which is why the first half of verse 2 says to not conform any longer to the pattern of this world because if your minds are not being renewed by Him who is supremely great, something else will take His place; another treasure will replace Jesus because we always fill our minds with that which we treasure; we think about it, we daydream about it, and we contemplate it.

So our lives become obsessed with it, and our lives then reflect it. Our minds will be renewed by work, sex, career, TV, study, money, and family. And we are transformed into their likeness, where they fill our lives. **If you're not beholding Jesus in your life, you're beholding**

something or someone else. And I can tell you this: **that is what's filling your life; that's what's changing you.**

Are you a regular Bible reader? Do your people give time to personally studying the Bible? Do you set aside time to meditate on the Scriptures? Do you give yourself to memorizing Bible verses? And no, time is not an excuse.

What I often do, when my people tell me that they haven't been able to read or study their Bible, is ask them: **"Do you eat? Why do you eat?"** Because if you don't you'll suffer the consequences. You will be tired, and lose concentration. Do it long enough, and you'll die.

It's the same in the Christian life. If you're not a regular Bible reader, there will be consequences for your Christian life. Something, or someone else, will take the place of Jesus' preeminence and supremacy in your life, and you will die.

One of the things I've encouraged people to do is **practice the discipline of planned neglect: to pursue the better, the more precious, the more worthy, and the greater.** Lots of things we do in life are good things, but they don't fuel our affection of Jesus and His saving work; they steal our joy in Him, they substitute for Him in our lives, they distract us, and they tire us.

Plan to neglect what is not helping you in your pursuit to make Jesus the supreme object of your affections, whatever is not helping you behold Jesus!

Plan to do away, lessen, and put aside things and activities that, although good and enjoyable, don't foster your heart's affection for Jesus; they steal your affection for Jesus and substitute Christ as a treasure in your life.

For example, hours spent on the internet, hours on your PS3 and Xbox, hours playing StarCraft, hours watching TV, endless hours on your hobbies, and hours building your life around your kids. They are all good, enjoyable, and fun things, but in your pursuit of what is good, don't sell yourself short, because you're missing the greater treasure! And there's nothing greater than opening up the Scriptures to behold Jesus, to gaze upon His unsurpassing beauty, to be in awe of His unmatched power, to be swept away by His incomparable love, and to see His supreme greatness over all.

In Luke 10:38-42, there are two sisters: Martha, who's always busy and is all good, and Mary, who sits and listens to Jesus. Martha is anxious about many good things while serving Jesus. Martha is busy doing many good things while serving Jesus, but Mary has chosen the good portion, and the better portion, which will not be taken from her – spending time beholding Jesus.

Give yourself to reading, studying, and meditating on the Scriptures, as it centers on the glory of God in Jesus and His saving work.

In helping us behold Jesus, the Scriptures are securing God's highest praise in our lives, and the greatest joy we can have in our lives. If the goal of the Scriptures is to set forth Jesus, in His greatness and supremacy over all things, for us to behold -

and beholding leads to us becoming more like Him because beholding what is infinitely great leads to us being filled by that greatness – it leads to us being consumed by that greatness, and it leads to us becoming more like Him in His greatness.

So in becoming more like Jesus, who is the image of the glory of God, we're being brought to the highest praise for God in our lives (**imitating greatness is the highest form of praise**). And it also means that we're being brought to the greatest and highest joy that we can know in our lives because we're coming closer to the one we treasure, we are being filled by the one who is supremely great, and we are becoming more like Him who is the glory of God, in His holiness above all. (**Imitating greatness also brings us joy, in sharing in their greatness**).

To share the glory of the Son is as high as it gets – where, in your life, you are displaying the supremacy of Jesus to His praise and glory, and where you are enjoying and finding satisfaction in His supremacy above all **because He fills your life**. What could give God more glory, and what could be more satisfying, than to be filled with Jesus, in the glory of His holiness above all?

Understand this. In helping us behold Jesus, the Scriptures are securing God's highest praise in our lives, and the greatest joy we can have in our lives. The Bible is for His praise and my joy in Him! **The Bible is there to bring us to our chief end, for which we were designed and made**, which is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever, as we see the light of the gospel, of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus, and as we continue to behold Him more and more; becoming more like Him, to His never ending praise, and our ever expanding joy in Him, now and into eternity.

This book is the means to God's glory and praise in your life, as it lifts up Jesus, in His supremacy, for you to behold and become. If you want to glorify God in your life, and you want to bring Him praise; open, read, behold Jesus, be filled with Him, and be more like Him in His greatness. **This book is the means to supreme joy and delight and satisfaction in your life, as it lifts up Jesus, in His supremacy, for you to behold and become.**

If you want to have supreme joy in your life, and you want to be supremely satisfied; open, read, be filled with Him, behold Jesus, and be more like Him in His greatness. And you will find supreme joy and satisfaction when you are filled with Him, in His greatness.

What gives you more satisfaction or joy? Is it you sitting at a table at Aria's, where Matt Moran serves up his signature dishes, and you look at the food, talk about it, discuss it, praise it and walk out, OR is it you tasting it, savouring it, and enjoying it? When you are filled with the greatness of the food, you'll enjoy it, and you are most satisfied. What gives Matt Moran more praise? Is it you sitting at a table at Aria's, where Matt Moran serves up his signature dishes, and you look at the food, talk about it, discuss it, and praise it, OR is it you tasting it, savouring it, and enjoying it? When you are filled with the greatness of the food, having enjoyed it, and having been satisfied by it, he gets the praise and glory.

This book (the Bible) is the means to God's glory and praise in your life, and your supreme joy and satisfaction, **as it serves up Jesus in His supremacy, for you to behold and be filled with**; so too for your people. This is because God is most praised when you are most satisfied

in Him, and you are most satisfied when you are being filled, with Him who is supremely great. God is most praised when you are most satisfied in Him, and you are most satisfied when you are becoming more like Jesus, who is nothing less than God, in the glory of His holiness above all.

This is why the ministry of the Word is supreme. This is the reason why keeping the Bible central in your church, in your life, in your leadership, in your counseling, in your encouragement, and in your discipleship, is not just essential **but needed**. For there is no greater ministry, and no greater work you can share in, participate it, involve yourself in, and bring people to, that is securing God's highest glory and praise in people's lives, and bringing them to the greatest possible joy they can ever know.

That's what you're doing in your churches as you open the Bible to teach it to others, when you preach, when you study it with others, and when you disciple others (from the kids in Sunday school, to your teens, uni students, workers, and families). You're working to magnify, secure, and preserve God's glory and praise in their lives, by seeing them become more like Jesus in His greatness, for their supreme joy and satisfaction in Him.

Resolve to devote yourself to the ministry of the Word, as it centers on the glory of God, in Jesus and His saving work, for His praise in the lives of your people, and their supreme joy in Him. For in bringing them to behold Jesus, to fix their eyes on Jesus, and to have Jesus fill their lives (in bringing people to imitate and become more like Jesus), you are bringing them to glorify God, and enjoy Him in His greatness. You are bringing them to the substance, the blazing sun, and the endless ocean – the end for which they were made: to glorify and praise Him, and enjoy Him forever.

Conclusion

For only an infinitely great treasure can fill an infinitely great need. And if I've been made by God, in the glory of His holiness, for Him (Rev.4:11; Col.1:15ff), then it means that I have been created for nothing less than His infinite praise, and to know joy in Him infinitely.

If I have been created for supreme greatness in God, and supreme joy in God, then nothing but God can fill that in my life. And because God, in His holiness, IS infinitely great, your praise for Him never runs out, is never ending, never gets boring, and never gets dull because your experience of His greatness, into eternity, must be ever expanding. This is why we read, in **Lamentations 3:22-23**, *the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, it never ends or runs out, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning, great is your faithfulness.*

How can something be new the next day? (E.g. The presents you get are great when they're new. You enjoy new things because they are great and new, but when they get old, and you become familiar with it, the shine wears off, our praise for it dies, and our joy in it tapers off.) **So how can something be new the next day, and the day after and the day after?** It can only be new if it is a greater experience and knowledge of His steadfast love; it can only be new if it is an ever expanding experience and knowledge of His steadfast love. How can that be? And it can be because God is infinitely great, and praise for Him must also be infinitely great and ever expanding.

This is what John Newton got right and understood. In the song 'Amazing Grace', he wrote: *'when we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun (brought to the sun), we've no less days to sing God's praise, than when we've first begun.'*

And the reason why you will sing God's praise and never get bored, and never find it old, is because you are in the presence, praising the God who is infinitely great; you'll never run out of things to praise Him for and praise about Him, **which means that if His greatness is infinite, and I am brought to praise Him in His infinite greatness, so too must my joy in Him be infinitely ever expanding and ever increasing**

The more I praise Him, the more joy I get; the closer we get to greatness, the greater our joy; the closer we become like Him who is great, the more He fills us, and the more we are like Him, the greater our joy. And so there - before the substance, the shining sun, and the endless ocean **beholding Him** - we will become more and more like Him, and He will fill our lives with His greatness, into eternity, to His never ending praise and to our never-ending and expanding joy in Him.

And the song of praise you will sing will be none other than the 'new song'. (It's called new in Revelation 5, but it's an old song because it praises the work of the Son in the gospel. How can that be? How can the gospel be a new song? It's because, in the gospel, you are brought to infinite greatness, in the Son who is the glory of God. In the gospel, I am brought to praise Him who is infinitely great; He is **the substance that is forever, the sun that never dies out, and the endless ocean with no end.**

And that means that my joy will be ever expanding and ever increasing in my praise for Him, in His infinite greatness - to experience the power of the sun forever, and to drink of the endless ocean forever (**Psalm 16:11** says *'make known to me the path of life'*. Where does it lead? It leads to the very presence of God: *for in my presence is fullness of joy, at my right hand is where my Son reigns. And where you sit, and share His glory, are pleasures evermore!*).

And so the new song that you and I will sing, into eternity, in never ending praise, and ever expanding joy, will be the gospel song: *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"* (Revelation 5:12) You will praise the glory of God in the Son, and His work, in bringing you and others to glory and supreme joy in Him, who is the substance, the sun, and the endless ocean. He is forever praised, in His infinite greatness, and you are brought to never ending, and expanding, joy in His infinite greatness.

That is what you are bringing your people to as you present them to be perfect in Christ: helping them behold Jesus, in the Scriptures, so that He fills them, and they become more like Him, to God's never-ending praise in their lives, and their ever expanding joy in Him forever.

Additional Notes:

So how do we pursue God's glory, and our joy, in becoming more like Jesus? How do we bring people to God's glory, and supreme joy in Him, in becoming more like Jesus?

The Equipping Of the Saints that Matures Us In Jesus

You bring people to behold Jesus, and become more like Jesus, by equipping them to mutually do this as a church community. It's the equipping of all God's people for ministry that helps us become more like Jesus; a ministry where Jesus, in His supremacy, is our shared treasure, where we are serving each other to make Him more and more of our shared treasure.

The purpose of the gifts is the glory of God and our shared joy in Him, by bringing us to maturity or fullness in Jesus, and by bringing us to be more like Jesus as a community. 'One another' ministry is always about helping others treasure Jesus, in the glory of His holiness above all, because the more they treasure Him, the more they will be like Him in His greatness.

We imitate that which we consider great, and the closer we get to becoming more like Him in His greatness, the more He is praised and magnified. And the closer we all get to becoming more like Him in His greatness, the greater our shared joy in Him. For what could be greater than sharing that joy in the company of others? (Eph.4:11-16; Rev.4-5)

The Imitation of Jesus that Shows Others How to Follow Jesus

You bring people to behold Jesus, and become more like Jesus, by giving them an example to imitate in your life and ministry. Leadership – we lead by teaching and by modeling – by showing our people what it means to follow Jesus, to become more like Jesus in our lives.

The New Testament pattern is that you become what your Father is or does. You trade in his business; learn off him, and from him. We are like spiritual fathers to our people; we teach them, and we model it for them, showing them our Father's business, and our master's trade. You teach your people about Jesus, and you call them to be more like Jesus, and they imitate you as you imitate Jesus. So if you're not growing to be more like Him, trading in His business, and letting Him fill your life, don't expect them to follow, and if they do, you're leading them in the wrong direction (like a bad shepherd, false teacher, or wolf)

It's the reason why Paul says, and the reason why we should be able to say to our people: *'follow me as I follow Christ, you've seen my life and my example,'* says Paul, *'so follow me, and learn from the example of those who have led in the past who have followed Jesus.'* Your life and doctrine matters, and the measure by which Christ is your highest treasure and joy in life, and the measure by which you are becoming more like Jesus, is proportional to the impact your teaching will have on your people: *'follow me as I follow Christ.'*

Look at Paul's life, where he constantly says: *'you know me, you've seen me; it's all been about Jesus.'* And it's not just your passion for who you imitate, but who you imitate also leads people to treasure what you treasure.

Note: In the Old Testament, bad shepherds led people where? They led them to danger, bad

pastures, idolatry, and other loves. But undershepherds lead people to Jesus, by following Him who is the chief shepherd. Jesus says: 'follow me, walk after me, join me, listen to me, and make me your treasure.'

- 1 Timothy 4:6-16, Shepherds lead by the word, following Jesus and becoming more like Him.
- 1 Corinthians 4:16, I urge you, then, be **imitators** of me.
- 1 Corinthians 11:1, Be **imitators** of me, as I am of Christ.
- 2 Thessalonians 3:9, It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to **imitate**.
- Hebrews 13:7, Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and **imitate** their faith.

Praying, Persevering, & Depending On God to Grow You, and Your People

You bring people to behold Jesus, and become more like Jesus, by praying and depending on God, and by His Spirit growing you and your people to this end.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-20 is the highest prayer you can pray for your people (to be strengthened within them by the overflowing glory of God), by Jesus coming to dwell in their hearts by faith, more and more; by Jesus becoming the very object of their hearts desire, focus, vision, and gaze, more and more; by being grounded and rooted in His love, more and more, and by growing to grasp His saving work, more and more, so that they might be filled with all the fullness of God.

There is no greater prayer that will secure God's praise in your people's lives, and their supreme joy in Him who is infinitely great. He becomes the supreme object of praise in their lives; filling their hearts, and they are brought to supreme joy and satisfaction because Jesus, who is the glory of God in His infinite greatness over all, fills them. (Compare this to Philippians 1:9-11)

For ultimately it is the work of God by His Spirit, transforming us, changing us, and making us more like Jesus. 2 Corinthians 3:18 - ***18And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord (Jesus - who we're told is the image of God and glory of God revealed to us in 4:4-6), as we behold Jesus in his supremacy we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.***

For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. It takes God - in His grace, by His Spirit - opening the eyes of our hearts, and opening our minds more and more, to the glory of God, in the face of Jesus; to see His worth, value, beauty, power, and greatness more and more. For until that happens, I will not treasure Him, I will not praise His greatness, I will not desire or seek His glory, and I will not know joy and satisfaction in Him.