

Totally Committed, part 2

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[0 : 00] John chapter 3, verses 22 through 30. Would you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together.

! After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. John was also baptizing at Anon near Salem because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized, for John had not yet been put in prison.

Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification, and they came to John and they said to him, Rabbi, he who is with you across the Jordan to whom you bore witness, look, he is baptizing and all are going to him.

John answered, John answered, A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear witness that I said I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.

The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete.

[1 : 21] He must increase, but I must decrease. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? Our daughter, Hazel, who is four years old, has been hooked on toys that are called crybabies.

Perhaps you've seen one of their very annoying commercials before. However, each crybaby wears a different set of pajamas that depict a different animal.

And they come in larger sizes and they come in smaller sizes. Hazel loves them and especially she's been loving collecting the smaller ones.

And she's got quite the collection to this point because if any one of our family asked us, what should we get Hazel for Christmas, well, the answer was obviously crybabies.

And so she's got quite the collection at this point. She's been inundated with crybabies and she seemed to be content with the haul that she's received from Christmas.

[2 : 41] That was until last week. Last week, I'd come home from home, or I'd come home from work, and we're all gathered around in the family room.

The TV is on and a new commercial comes on announcing that now crybabies have pets. So automatically, you know, Hazel's watching intently and is excited about this new collection that she can add to the one that she already has.

Now, this is, you know, this is what businesses do. It's irritating for parents, but it's a shrewd tactic on their part because they know that we are never truly satisfied with the things that we have.

We're always wanting more, and they know this. In the late 1800s, no one was wealthier than John D. Rockefeller.

His company, Standard Oil, controlled 90% of the oil and gas market. It was the wealthiest company in the world, and he was the world's wealthiest man.

[3 : 57] At the pinnacle of his wealth, John Rockefeller's net worth was worth 1% of the U.S. economy. 1% of the U.S. economy.

There's a lot of talk today about those who belong to the 1% collectively possessing 1% of the U.S. economy. Well, back then, John D. Rockefeller was the 1% by himself.

His wealth, comparatively speaking, was in greater proportions to the U.S. economy than Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Microsoft's Bill Gates today. To put it simply, this man was filthy, stinking rich.

Once, near the height of his wealth, a reporter asked Rockefeller, how much money is enough money?

To which he replied, just a little bit more. Just a little bit more. That same attitude was exhibited by the eccentric multimillionaire Howard Hughes.

[5 : 05] Hughes died in 1976, and at that time, his net worth was \$1.5 billion, which today would be about \$6.6 billion.

All Howard Hughes ever wanted in life was to just have a little bit more. He wanted more money, so he parlayed inherited wealth into a billion-dollar pile of assets.

He wanted more fame, so he broke into the Hollywood scene and became a filmmaker and a star. He wanted more thrill, so he designed, built, and piloted the fastest aircraft in the world at the time. He wanted more power, so he secretly dealt political favors so skillfully that two U.S. presidents became under his influence. He wanted more power, so again, he influenced those presidents, but he never had enough.

All he ever wanted more in life was to have a little bit more, believing that that little bit more would bring him satisfaction.

[6 : 08] Unfortunately, history shows that the truth was otherwise. Later in his life, he became a recluse. When he died, he was extremely emaciated.

His hair was long and unkempt. His fingernails and toenails had grown so long that they were growing like corkscrews. His teeth had been rotted.

His arms were pocked with needle marks from his drug addiction. And he died having amassed a fortune, but having very few friends, if any.

Though he was with his caretakers when he died, he truly died alone. And like Rockefeller, all the wealth he spent his life accumulating went to other people, because in the end, you can't take any of it with you.

Though we know this, it hasn't stopped most Americans from believing that an accumulation of assets and experiences is going to bring lasting satisfaction to their lives.

[7 : 12] In 2018, a Harvard researcher conducted a study asking more than 2,000 millionaires how happy they were on a scale of 1 to 10, and how much more money they would need to get to a 10.

Well, unsurprisingly, no one listed themselves as a 10, and all of them saying basically the same thing, that they had 2 to 3 million more, or 2 to 3 times as much, they would be a 10 on the happiness scale.

But it's not just them. Many Americans, no matter their wealth, feel that in order to be happy, they need just a little bit more, maybe a lot more.

And so many of us spend our entire lives pursuing that more, even, again, if it's just a little bit more. And once we get that little bit more, we soon realize that that little bit still isn't enough.

Now, I want to offer a disclaimer here. This is not a sermon against wealth, right? We see that all blessings come from God. We see in the Bible many people who are wealthy as a result of that.

[8 : 35] This isn't about having wealth. And comparatively speaking, let me say, if you live in the United States of America, and you have running water and electricity and food in your cabinet, you are filthy, stinking rich compared to the rest of the world.

But this is a message about our desire in pursuit of wanting more of these things, thinking that they will bring satisfaction to our lives, but they never seem to.

Why is that the case? Well, one of the greatest sentences, I believe, ever written by man that is not contained in Scripture was composed by St. Augustine in his famous work known as the Confessions of St. Augustine.

The Confessions is the story of Augustine's search for himself and his search for God. He spent much of his life in pursuit of more, but the more he acquired, the less satisfied he was.

Augustine comes to the realization that it wasn't he who was searching for God during this time, but it was God who was searching for him. And having been found by the Lord, Augustine experienced the satisfaction that all other worldly pursuits were unable to provide to him.

[9 : 46] And this great sentence expresses that, penned in a very simple way. St. Augustine wrote to God saying, You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.

I'll read it again. You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. When we commit ourselves to seeking worldly satisfaction and when we realize that even after having attained those things that we are still restless, that feeling serves as an indicator or as an alarm to us, that our lives here are meant to be used for so much more.

And committing ourselves to living life in pursuit of a little bit more of the world's comforts and treasures is a life that Jesus Christ said is a life wasted.

Luke 12, 13-21, Jesus speaks to this very thing. But he said to him, Man, who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you?

So he's answering in reply to a question of somebody who felt like he'd been cheated out of the family inheritance. And this is Jesus' answer to this man.

[11 : 21] Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you? And he said to them, Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

And he told them a parable, saying, The land of a rich man produced plentifully. And he thought to himself, What shall I do? For I have nowhere to store my crops.

And he said, I will do this. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and all my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years.

Relax, eat, drink, be merry. But God said to him, Fool, This night, Your soul is required of you. And the things you have prepared, Whose will they be? So is the one Who lays up treasure for himself And is not rich toward God.

[12 : 24] In Mark 8, 36, Jesus gets right to the point when he says, For what does it profit a man To gain the whole world And forfeit his soul? These passages and others Reveal that Jesus Christ desires That none of us Live our lives in such a way To be called a fool by God At the end of it.

He warns us That a life spent In commitment to worldly treasures And comforts And the accumulation of stuff Is a life wasted.

When you reach the end of life, There is no reset button. There is no chance for a do-over. Jesus is urging us To make the most Of the lives that we've been given In the time that we have.

Like the rich man Who spent his last days Making plans for how he would Spend his treasures In accumulation of greater comforts For himself, That night, He would lose The most precious thing that he had, Which was his life.

No sane person On his deathbed Was ever comforted By the possessions That he owned Or she owned. And so I pray That you, like me, That we would hear And take these words Of Jesus to heart This morning.

[13 : 49] It is possible To waste your life. And it's so short. And it's so fragile.

And it's so final. You get one chance To live your life. And then the judgment. Our Lord spoke these words Because he so greatly Desires that you and I Understand what he knows.

That life is precious. But that it can be Tragically wasted. That there is A much better way.

That there is a way To live your life Unwasted. So here's the main idea For this morning's sermon.

The unwasted life Is a life lived In total commitment To Jesus Christ.

The unwasted life Puts the infinite value Of Jesus Christ On display For the world to see. It's a life Of total commitment That brings Increasing joy Enduring hope And everlasting peace.

[15 : 02] Christians are called To live differently Because we know That the world Is not our home. But it's the road That we travel To our ultimate destination.

This means that Our view of the world Is different. Our commitments Are also then To be different. We understand That we aren't Simply living For tomorrow. We're not simply Living for Our retirement.

But we're living Every day For eternity. And so may the Holy Spirit Press this truth Deeply into our hearts This morning.

Remember last week We saw Two of the four principles For living your life Totally committed to Jesus. That this is the theme. This is what we're Driving at as a church In 2020. Commitment.

Commitment. First we saw That total commitment To Christ means Being fully committed To God's plan. And then second We saw Through the example Of John the Baptist That total commitment To Christ means Being fully committed To God's calling.

[16 : 08] So now we move on To the third principle Which is listed As number one In your bulletin. And if you're A type A person That drives you crazy I apologize But that's the way it is. Total commitment To Christ Means being committed To Christ Above all.

Verse 29 again Look at what John the Baptist says The one who has The bride Is the bridegroom The friend of the bridegroom Who stands and hears him Rejoices greatly At the bridegroom's voice. And so we see here From John the Baptist That total commitment To Christ Means being committed To Christ Above yourself. Above yourself. John explains What this commitment Is like by

using An illustration.

It's the illustration Of a wedding. In his illustration Jesus is the groom. He is the best man. And God's people The church is the bride.

In this culture Back then The best man Organized the details Of the wedding. His job was to make sure That everything Proceeded as planned. And so he took great joy In watching the ceremony Proceed without any issue.

[17 : 22] And in knowing That the groom And his bride Were finally going To come together And be united. In some weddings That I've performed I've unfortunately Seen bridesmaids Groomsmen Parents of the bride Parents of the groom Make the ceremony All about themselves.

And it's really irritating. Because they can't Take even one hour Even a handful of hours Just even one day They can't stand To not be the center Of attention.

It's pathetic And it's pitiful. It's irritating To the rest of us Because we know This is not the way That it should be. Right?

We understand What they don't. We're not here for you. We don't I mean I'm glad you're here And all But this isn't about you. You're not the reason Why we've come.

This wedding Is about this couple. And at a Christian wedding Right? This message Is really about The message of Christ And his church Being symbolized Through the union Of a man And a woman In marriage.

[18 : 34] It's a service. It's a worship service Even I believe To God. And so it drives us crazy When anybody tries To make it about Themselves. See John Understood this.

But the bridegroom Was not To get The attention. The bride Wasn't His. The cameras Weren't flashing In his direction.

The rice Wasn't being Tossed Towards him. He's not Going on the honeymoon With the couple. His journey In his life Was coming To an end.

The voice Who is crying out In the wilderness Is being Replaced By the voice Who is crying out For the bride. The voice of the bridegroom.

The voice of the shepherd. And in a few Short months After this event The sword Of Herod Would silence John's voice. And what is John's response To this Diminishing And decreasing Of himself?

[19 : 39] He says This joy of mine Is now complete. He understood The truth Contained in the paradox That as Jesus Becomes greater In your life And you become Lesser Your joy Increases Greatly.

The desire In the human heart For just a little bit more Is rooted Truly I believe In pride. Pride It was pride That caused Satan To fall From heaven.

Pride Was the trap That he used To lure Adam and Eve Into sin. And so like Rockefeller And Hughes Though we don't have The same wealth We suffer With the same issue.

That issue Being pride. Pride And pride Is often What keeps us Most From being Totally committed To Christ. C.S. Lewis Has provided us With a great insight Into the nature Of pride.

I want to read To you His quote. He said Pride Pride Gets no pleasure Out of having Something Only Out of having More than The next person.

[20 : 53] We say That people Are proud Of being rich Or good looking But they aren't. They are proud Of being richer Or clever Or better looking Than others. If everyone else Became equally rich Or clever Or good looking There would be Nothing to be Proud of.

In other words We are only Proud of being More successful More intelligent More good looking Than the next person. But When we're in the Presence Of someone Who is More successful More intelligent Better looking Than we are We lose All the pleasure That we once had And the things That we own Or have.

Do you understand What I'm saying? Okay I feel good About what I've got As long as I have More than the next person. I'm content With what I have. Then here comes Somebody else Who has more than me And all of a sudden These things That I was content with No longer are good enough.

No longer are good enough Because I'm coveting I'm wanting more And pride Is holding me down. There's always Going to be someone Who has more than you. So a life spent In accumulation Of things Is wasted Because it can't Save you And neither will it Be able to satisfy you Because you were made To experience A greater joy Than anything In this earth Could give you.

And that joy Comes from the one Who gave it all To set you free. Philippians 2 1-11 So if there is Any encouragement In Christ Any comfort From love Any participation In the spirit Any affection And sympathy Complete my joy By being of the same mind Having the same love Being in full accord And of one mind Do nothing From selfish ambition Or conceit But in humility Count others More significant Than yourselves Let each of you Look not only To his own interest But also to the interest Of others Have this mind Among yourselves Which is yours In Christ Jesus Who though he was In the form of God Did not count equality With God A thing to be grasped But emptied himself By taking the form Of a servant Being born in the likeness Of men And being found In human form He humbled himself By becoming obedient To the point of death Even death on a cross Therefore God

[23 : 20] Has highly exalted him And bestowed on him The name that is above Every name So that at the name Of Jesus Every knee should bow In heaven And on earth And under the earth And every tongue Confess that Jesus Christ Is Lord To the glory Of God the Father You see Jesus was not proud He wasn't too proud To take on human flesh He wasn't too proud To make his home With peasant parents In the itty bitty Insignificant And irrelevant town Of Nazareth He wasn't too proud To call disciples Of low social rank And little education He wasn't too proud To speak the truth In refusing to play The political games That others were playing To advance himself In the eyes Of the societal elite He wasn't too proud To associate With people Like the Samaritan woman Whose race And background Made her unclean In the eyes Of her community He wasn't too proud

To stand up For the woman Caught in adultery Coming to her defense He wasn't too proud To be seen With tax collectors And sinners Knowing that What they needed most In life Was not a little bit more Of the world's treasures But to be set free From their inability To be completely satisfied He wasn't too proud To touch the lepers To touch the lame The diseased Even the dead He wasn't too proud To get on his hands And his knees To wash his disciples' feet He wasn't too proud To wear a crown of thorns And to bear a cross And be buried In a borrowed tomb He wasn't too proud And God has exalted him On the third day He arose from the grave And soon after Having appeared to many He ascended back to heaven Where he sits At the right hand Of the Father And as his word promises He will return And here we've read

That when he does Every knee Will bow to him Every tongue Will confess That Jesus Is Lord And listen No matter what you believe You Will Be there You will be there We will all Be there All of creation Will be there The angels Will be there And listen Your knee Will Bow And your tongue Will Confess Either Willingly And joyfully Or unwillingly And painfully You will be there And you will do this

I want you to imagine For a moment That day Imagine it When it arrives When you are there Assembled with all Of creation And Jesus has returned On that day What will really matter What will truly Matter And so I say to you As Jesus encourages us Through his word Live your life In light of that Day's coming Totally Committed To Christ Above All What does that mean How do we do that I want to use a story To illustrate James Montgomery Boyce Was a great Theologian And pastor He Passed away In the year 2000 But I'll Never forget A story He told about Another great Pastor And theologian This man's name

Was Donald Gray Barnhouse Maybe you've heard Of his name Before He with his Family Was on a trip With Donald Gray Barnhouse And some others And in this trip They went to An amusement park And one of the Attractions there Was you know One of those Barrels That spins And you know The objective is To walk through it Right Without toppling over And being spun around Again and again and again So there's this Large barrel And to everyone's Surprise This distinguished Beloved Pastor Says I'm going to go Do that And so He began His Trek Through the Barrel And Soon enough He lost his Footing And he spun Around And around And around So could you Imagine Could you Imagine Seeing A situation Like that Just imagine Me doing that I guess It's It's funny And it's Embarrassing And so

[28 : 24] The man Who was running The attraction He stopped it He put it to A stop And so Here This Distinguished Pastor Is crawling out On his hands And knees Getting out On the other Side of the Barrel Everybody's Concerned And he stands Up and he Says Run it again Turn it on I'm going Back through But this time The operator Had some Instructions for Him Because he Was concerned And so He took him To the Beginning of The attraction And he Showed him Through to The other Side And he Said What do You see Over there And Barnhouse Said I see A mirror And then The man Said Okay He got In his Spot He said Who do You see In the Mirror And the Man

Said I see You So he Said Here's The trick In order To make It through If you Keep your Eyes On me In the Mirror You'll Make it But if You look To What's Spinning Around you You'll Fall And so Sure Enough As long As he Kept The eye His eyes On the Image Of the One Who was Making The barrel Spin He made

It through And sure Enough He did In the Same Way Life Is hard It's Difficult It's Often Painful But we Know That God Is sovereign And in Control And as We've Sung We know That soon This earth Will Will Will Fade Away Like snow That this Is not The place That he's Permanently Prepared For us But we Have this Promise That he Is with Us That we Have his Word To guide Us That as Long as We're Looking To him Now we See as In a Mirror Dimly Then we Will see Face to Face But we Can see And we Can go Through This life Totally Committed To him And we Understand That no Matter what Happens In our Life Whether we Perceive it To be Good Or bad That God Is using It For a Greater Purpose And a Greater Good And that One day We will Be there With him On that Day When every Knee Bows And tongue Confesses That Jesus

Christ Is Lord And so I Encourage You To commit Yourselves To his Word To his Church To his Cause And the More that You do That the Less we Will squabble Over Insignificant Matters that Often trip Up the Church From Its Mission Be Committed To Christ Above All And on That day When you're There You won't Regret Anything You've Ever Done In the Name Of Jesus Christ Second Principle Here Or the Fourth Principle Depending On how You're Counting Total Commitment To Christ Brings Joy To Others Brings Joy To Others Verse 29 The rest Of verse 29 And 30 John Says Therefore This joy Of mine Is Complete He Must Increase But I Must Decrease We've Seen How Christ Joy

Was To Accomplish The Father's Will Which Resulted With Our Salvation By His Atoning For Our Sins He Came To Live And To Die And To Rise Again For Others And As Those Who Represent Him Here On This Earth As Those Who Serve As His Ambassadors Being Totally Committed To Him Means Doing The Same!

Joy To Other People Do you Know That Joy? Some People Think that There is Great joy In material Possessions But Things In Themselves As We've Seen They Cannot Truly Satisfy And As I No Doubt Know That You've Experienced Others Think That There Is Joy And Worldly Fame And Achievement Or Pleasure But They Are Relatively Unrewarding In The End They Cannot Satisfy If They Do It's Only For A Brief Time!

[32 : 34] Say To Jesus Here I Am Lord Use Me And Then Finding That Out Of His Grace He Is Able To Use You To Bring Others Into Saving Relationship With Him That's A Joy That Satisfies Forever Imagine Being There On That Day With Other Believers And People Whom You Have Witness To People Whom You Shared The Gospel With And The Lord Used That Witness To To Bring Them To Salvation People That You've Discipled People That You've Ministered To They'll Be There And So I Say To You That Being Totally Committed To Christ Means Being Totally Committed To His Mission Which Means As A Part Of That That We Serve Others!

Joyfully It's Interesting How God Works If You Remember Last Sunday You Were Here The Invitation Was To Come Open Handed To The Altar Right Understanding That Everything Is A Gift From God The Lives That We've Been Given Have Been Given To Us From God And So We Come To Him Saying Not With A Grasping Fist Because We Understand That All That I Have Is Yours And That You Are In The Right Position To Put In My Hands Whatever You Want And To Take Out Of Them Whatever You Want Because Ultimately I'm Here To Serve You And So I Was Thankful For The Response I've Been Praying For You This Week And Maybe If You've Done That God Has Already Begun To Answer That Prayer This Week If Not I'm Telling You That He Will Just Be Patient But I Share This With You Because On Wednesday This Past Wednesday I

Had Some Place I Needed To Be But I Knew That We Were Going To This Is A Man His Name Is Aslam He Works For The IMB He Is Pakistani He Is A U.S.

Citizen Now But He Goes Back To Pakistan Once A Year And What He Does There If You Know Anything About Pakistan It's A Muslim Country It's Unwelcoming Of Americans And Especially Of Christians To Be Found There With A Bible Or To Be Sharing!

The Gospel Is Exploding There As It Is In Iran As It Is In Iraq It's Amazing What God Does Right Humans Can't Keep Him From Accomplishing His Mission And So He Came To Speak With At The Association I Didn't Know If I Was Going To Have Time To Make It But One Of My Good Friends Had To To So I Wanted To Be To To It I Got In At The Tail End Of It And He Was He Was Talking About What He Doing Over In Pakistan And What He Does Is He Says You Guys Can't Go But I

Still Can And So I Do Is Last I Was There There Only One Of Me And A lot Of These Pastors And A lot Of Them Are New Believers And They Have A Great Desire To And so he says, when I was there, as I was leaving, they asked me, these pastors, please, would you provide training for us? [36 : 05] And so he said, I told them that I would, but I guess the way that he responded wasn't convincing enough to them. And so as he was going to his cab, one of the pastors grabbed him by the arm and pleaded with him, said, please, brother, don't abandon us here.

And so he's come back. And what he's doing is he's recruiting pastors, American pastors, to preach short messages about pastoring, about leadership, that he puts on a USB drive and he takes back to Pakistan.

And they gather together and they have like seminary classes and he plays these messages for them and he translates them. And then it's something else that he's doing is he's setting up a way for us to be able to speak with them here early in the morning, but there at night when they can hear and ask some questions of pastors.

And so he asked me, would you be willing to do this? And I said, yes. And he was excited, but I could tell he was also unsure because I seemed to commit maybe a little bit too quickly than what he was used for.

So he took his picture with me and he says, now I have your picture and so I know where to find you. But I had to tell him, I said, you know, listen, you don't understand. Last Sunday, I was before my church and I was telling them, you know, through what God's word says that we come to the Lord with our hands up like this and whatever he puts in there, he puts in there, you know, this has been put in there.

[37 : 49] And it's something so easy for me and others to be able to do. But to think of the joy of being able to be a part of something that builds the kingdom of God in a place where the gospel is in desperate need of being shared.

And then what a great privilege I felt afterwards. You know, what a great joy to be able to do something so little that God could maybe use in great and profound ways.

And so I say to you, do not waste your life. I don't say to you, Christ says it to you, do not waste your life.

Serve him above all others. Serve others and seek their joy above your own. And I promise you that when you do that, you'll experience a joy welling up inside of you that no new car, no nice house, no stack of money or whatever, people telling you compliments about how nice you look today, you name it.

It will far exceed all of those things because it's eternal and it has lasting consequences that go all the way to that day when we all stand before the Lord.

[39 : 25] And so we'll continue to be driving home this message of commitment throughout the weeks and the months and throughout this year to come. And my prayer and my hope for you is that together as a church we'll come before the Lord, right?

Palms up. Lord, here I am. Use me. And I promise you that you won't regret it. I promise you. And greater than that, God's word promises you.

So let's live that way. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.