

Pursuing the Treasure That Satisfies

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Date: 07 April 2019

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[0:00] You have your Bible and you're in the book of Hosea. Would you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together.

I'm going to read Hosea chapter 11 verse 12 to chapter 12. Verse 6.
and wait continually for your God. May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? So this morning in this room, there are two groups of people.
Either you are a Christian or the second group, God is calling you today to become a follower of Christ, to be a Christian.

To the Christians in Corinth, the apostle reminded them of this important truth. 1 Corinthians 6, 19-20. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

[2:24] You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

So if you're a Christian, then understand that you are not your own. You have been bought with the price of Christ's own death.

And so now, as a result of that, you doubly belong to Him. That means that your life is not your own. You belong to Him.

He redeemed you from the bondage of sin and death. You're His. Now I'll tell you that that is a message that is not very popular in the world in which we live in today.

People want to be free from God. They want to think that they can do whatever they want with their life, with their body.

[3:37] I came across a story about a year ago of a 52-year-old man in Toronto. This man was married and he had seven children.

But at the age of 46, he decided that what he truly was was not a 46-year-old man, but a six-year-old girl.

And so he left his wife with his children and he moved in with some friends who adopted him as their daughter. And this 46-year-old man dressed like a six-year-old girl and he would spend his day playing toys and coloring pictures.

He's doing what he wanted to do. This is crazy to me because then the culture celebrates this man. What a courageous person they say that he is.

Losing fact of the matter, this man abandoned his wife and their children to pursue his own selfish desires.

[4:47] The Bible says that since a believer's body is not their own, they must use it to glorify God. Glorify God in your body is what Paul says to the Christians in Corinth.

This is the purpose for which you have been made. This is the purpose for which Christians, Christ bought you.

This is the meaning of your life. God does not exist to serve you. You exist to serve God.

Now again, that's not a very popular message in our world because you might hear that and you might think, well, that doesn't sound like very much fun to me. In fact, that makes me feel like I'm being used.

You're saying that God is just using me to get what He wants from me. That doesn't sound like an act of love to me and I know, Pastor Mike, that the Bible says that God is loving.

[6:01] I'm going to come back to that thought in a moment, but first I want to address those of you today who are yet to be Christians. And Jesus today offers you the same thing that those of us who have believed have experienced.

doubly belonging to Him and being able to do what He made you to do, created you to do.

Doubly belonging to Him. Now again, that may not sound exciting to you as unfortunately, let's be honest, that doesn't sound all that exciting to many Christians.

Glorifying God may mean nothing to you. You come across the same drawbacks. Namely, God seems to be using me to make much of Himself.

That makes me feel like I'm being used by Him, not loved by Him. This is understandable given the way that love has been almost completely distorted in the world in which we live.

[7:11] for most people in our society and the world to be loved, they think to be loved is to be made much of. If people love me, then they'll make much of me.

In Western culture, we are taught that love means increasing someone's self-esteem. Love means helping someone feel good about themselves. Love is like handing somebody a mirror and making them love or like the reflection that they see.

This is not what the Bible means when it talks about the love of God. Now, no, I'm not saying that love involves making people feel bad about themselves.

Certainly, love involves making people that you love feel better about themselves, but that is not truly what love is about, and that certainly is not what the love of God is about. John Piper says, we are made to see and savor God, and savoring Him to be supremely satisfied, and thus spread in all the world the worth of His presence.

Not to show people the all-satisfying God is not to love them, he says. To make them feel good about themselves when they were made to feel good about seeing God is like taking someone to the Alps and locking them in a room full of mirrors.

[8:40] Think about it. The most joyful moments I would say that you've had in your life are experiences, aren't experiences I should say, of self-satisfaction, but moments where you completely forget yourself.

Completely forget yourself. Anyone who walks up to the edge of the Grand Canyon, if you've been there, you've seen it. Anybody who looks at the Grand Canyon and their first thought is of themselves and how great they are has a serious issue.

They're very self-absorbed. I remember as a youth pastor going there for the first time in the Grand Canyon, we had a mission trip in Arizona and taking our teens there. And you know, teenagers are very self-absorbed people.

And it was amazing. It's just a big, giant hole. And I mean, it's seriously more than that if you've been there, but to see them just completely forget about their cell phones, almost even forget about each other and themselves.

And I remember we found a place where we could sit on these logs and for quite a while we just stared into this giant hole. It was amazing.

[9:57] At such moments like that, we realize that we were made for a joy that originates from outside of ourselves.

Have you ever had that feeling before? I get that feeling when I see images of stars and planets and galaxies that are millions of miles from Earth and then trying to contemplate just how endless the universe is and then to think about that here I am in my little tiny corner of the universe in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

So powerless. So small. Then I think about all the things that I get worried about and concerned about, the things that tempt me to want to believe that the universe revolves around me when it doesn't.

and I realize in looking at the universe, seeing glimpses of the universe and its wonders, I realize that they are simply an echo of a far greater excellence, of a far greater glory.

That being of the one who made it all. The excellence and glory of God himself. That's what the Bible says, isn't it? Psalm 19.1. The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

[11:25] Yet we spend so much of our time and so much of our thoughts on self-centered pursuits that we think will bring us joy. But in reality, they only keep us from the joy that we were made to experience.

The Bible says that the well-lived life, the unwasted life, is a life spent in pursuit of exalting God and finding satisfaction in him.

Matthew 6.30-33. This is precisely what Jesus says. He says, but if God so clothes the grass of the field, dealing with people's worries, dealing with people's concerns, which is today alive and

tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

[12 : 38] The meaning of this verse is as direct as it sounds. We are, Christ says, to pursue the things of God as our greatest priority in this life that he has given us.

So in our scripture today that we read just a moment ago, we come across a person, Jacob, and a nation that descended from that person, Israel, who teach us about the futility of pursuing the things of this world in order to find joy and satisfaction.

Jacob and Israel used and deceived people and God in attempts to gain for themselves all the things that only God could truly supply, all the things that only God could truly give to them.

So here's the main idea for this morning's message. The Bible says that the well-lived life, the unwasted life, is a life spent in pursuit of exalting God and finding satisfaction in him.

God has promised to provide for his own, saying that he will provide for every need.

[14 : 05] Philippians 4.19, and God will supply every need of yours according to the riches and glory in Christ Jesus. However, God's idea of what we need is often different from ours, and his timing doesn't often meet our expectations.

For example, we may see our need as being more money. God, I need more money. Or it may be something to do with career advancement.

God, I need that promotion. But perhaps, God, knowing all things, knows what truly, what you might need in that point in time in your life, and this might be a hard truth, it is a hard truth to swallow, isn't prosperity, but poverty.

Or loss. Or solitude. Let me tell you that when that happens, if that's happened to you, if that's you right now, let me tell you that you are in good company.

A couple people come to mind from Scripture, Job and Elijah. God loved both of those men. But the Bible says that he allowed Satan to absolutely pound Job under his watchful eye.

[15 : 34] And he let Jezebel break the spirit of his own prophet, Elijah, who wished for his own death. In both cases, God followed these trials with restoration and provision.

A growing number of false teachers have gathered an incredible number of followers under this message. God wants you to be rich. But that message, I'm telling you, read the Bible for yourself, is not the counsel of Scripture.

And it certainly isn't the counsel of Matthew 6.33 where Jesus talks about our worries and how the only thing that we should truly pursue is the kingdom of God.

Jesus taught that our focus and our pursuit in life should not be in pursuing the world and using God to attain those treasures, but he says that pursuing God is what we must do because He is the treasure.

The treasure above all other treasures. Far superior. The Bible says that the well-lived life, the unwasted life, is a life spent in the pursuit of exalting God and finding satisfaction in Him.

[17 : 00] This is the message in Hosea 11.12-12.6 that we've read. So let's dive in. I want you to see that this is true. First of all, Hosea brings up that Israel used lies and deception to pursue worldly treasures And as a result of that, they would be repaid accordingly.

So in verse 12 through chapter 12 verse 2, God laments over His people and their deceitfulness.

Wherever He looks, is what He's saying, wherever I look, I'm surrounded by cheaters. As if He was in the locker room of the New England Patriots.

Right? We can all bash on the Patriots here, right? Go Chiefs. Amen? Amen? Alright. He's surrounded by cheaters.

That's what He's saying. Long ago, His people had abandoned their pursuit of God as their treasure. They abandoned their pursuit of Him in order to try to gain national prosperity and stability for themselves.

[18 : 11] They still worshipped God, but it was empty. They were going through the motions. It was without meaning. Kind of like a husband who tells his wife that he loves her only on her birthday and Valentine's Day because he feels obligated to.

That's not love. In their pursuits of worldly treasures, they had been deceitful by turning to other gods, taking their eyes off the one true God, turning to other nations for their security instead of

turning to God.

At this point in time, Assyria was the dominant world power, and so Israel paid them yearly tribute to kind of keep them off their case. Kind of like the kid in middle school who tells the bully, hey, I'll do your homework for you if you don't stuff me in the locker anymore.

This is kind of the relationship that they had. But later on, Israel had an idea. Hey, we don't really like this situation with Assyria.

You know what? I think that if we team up with Egypt, we could take him out. And so that's what is happening here. They have this treaty with Assyria giving them tribute, but then behind the scenes they're working out with this situation with Egypt where they say, hey, we're going to lure Assyria into a dark alley and together we're going to jump him.

[19:29] We're going to take him out. In order to be the man, you've got to beat the man and we're going to beat the man and we are going to become the man. Didn't work out so well. They did all of this without ever once consulting God.

They thought they were clever. They thought they were smart. But let me tell you that as the Bible says, God sees all things. He sees what's happening and he says to them, basically, you guys are acting like idiots.

You're out running around trying to catch the wind and then you think once you've caught it that you can eat it and that it will bring nourishment to your bodies. Israel had become increasingly known for their deceptive and violent ways.

They had broken their covenant with God and so God brings them now into his courtroom where he presides as the plaintiff, as the prosecutor, and as the judge.

And they will suffer as a consequence of their sinful pursuits. Israel was behaving like their namesake, Hosea says, like Jacob.

[20:45] So in verse 2 through 4, Hosea draws their attention to two important events in Jacob's life and he does so in order to encourage them to learn the lesson that Jacob learned from God.

In doing so, then Hosea hopes to teach them a lesson that he hopes will help them during their time of exile in Assyria to turn back to God.

So what was that lesson? Well, it's this. Jacob spent much of his life pursuing and grasping after the treasures of this world.

When he strove with God, and prevailed, he learned that the treasure truly worth pursuing and grasping was God himself.

I want to read those verses again to you. Three and four. In the womb, speaking of Jacob, he took his brother by the heel and in his manhood he strove with God. He strove with the angel and prevailed.

[21:52] He wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel and there God spoke with us. And so in these verses, God reminds the nation of who their ancestor was and how they got their name.

This is significant because it also is a way in which God afterwards remind them of what his name is, who he is in verse five and what that means now for them.

So Hosea begins the story of how Jacob received his name in the womb. He took his brother by the heel.

He had a twin brother, Esau, and he took him by the heel and so that's what his name means to grasp the heel. Now imagine, you may not like your name but you grow up in Hebrew times and they say, what's your name?

My name is he who grasped the heel. Maybe you like your name a little bit more after thinking about that. But what that name also carries is the thought of cheating, the thought of supplanting.

[23:02] He who grasps the heel is a picture of one who grabs another in order to pull them back so they can get ahead of them. And when I thought about that it reminded me of our youth Christmas party.

We were fortunate to be able to rent an inflatable from Trish Edinger. There's a plug if you need an inflatable go to Edinger's they will hook you up. We had this great obstacle course and we put it in our fellowship hall and we took turns with the kids racing through and seeing who could go the fastest and then we squared off against one another to see who could win, who would win.

So Jack, my seven year old son, comes up to me and he's like, Dad, I want to race you. I'm like, okay, you know, I'm a full grown man, you're a little boy, I will waste you but this will be an opportunity for me to humble you, my son.

And so we go and now you know those obstacle courses, there's things that you have to climb over, there's things that you have to zigzag around and so they are made for little bodies, not for big bodies.

And so as we're about halfway through, I realized this and you know what I saw? his heel. And you know what I did?

[24 : 23] I snatched it. I snatched it and I pulled him back. And when we got out of the race, he came up to me and he got in my face and said, you cheated, you snatched my heel.

And he was right. So know that, you know, I'm following Christ, but I am not yet glorified in any way. I still am in the process of sanctification. And we raced again and he did beat me.

But don't tell him that whenever we leave. That's what human beings do. We're heel grabbers.

Thinking that we can take advantage of another to get ahead, but it never works out the way that we think that it will.

But Jacob, before he had done anything good or bad, in his sovereignty, according to his infinite wisdom and according to his divine purpose, God chose this weak man, this weak character, this heel grabber.

Romans 9, 10 through 16, when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our father, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works, but because of him who calls, she was told the older will serve the younger, as it is written, Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.

[25 : 59] What shall we say then? Is there injustice in God's part? By no means. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy. I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

So then it depends not on the human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy. The nation of Israel needed to be reminded of this in Hosea's day, that Jacob, though he was a heel-grabbing scoundrel, was chosen by God according to God's grace and mercy, and that God would use this scoundrel to bear eventually his name, Israel, to bring blessing to this nation, despite his many failures.

Let me tell you, I already gave you a testimony of my imperfection. The church is a group of imperfect people, saved, yes, new creations, yes, in the process of being sanctified, ultimately we will be glorified, but we are a group of imperfect people, yet amazingly, God still uses us.

He uses us to spread the good news of Jesus Christ, to share the gospel that sinners would hear and hopefully believe.

After this, Hosea then draws attention to Israel's, to Jacob's other name, Israel, this other moment in Jacob's life, a moment where this man was in desperate need.

[27 : 57] Jacob had spent his entire adolescent life metaphorically wrestling with Esau, his brother, for their father's affection. Esau was like the athlete in the family.

He was the varsity quarterback while Jacob was getting straight A's in home ec class. He was a really good sower. He was a good cook. And so Esau was his father's favorite, but Jacob was his mother's favorite.

And this is the way that they grew up. Jacob contended with his brother for their father's favor, for their father's love, for their father's blessing. But no matter what he did, his father continually showed favor to his brother Esau.

And let me tell you, fathers, that there are few things more wounding to a son than that. And unfortunately, Jacob repeated the same mistake with his sons, showing favoritism to Joseph. But on the day when Isaac was going to give Esau the ritual blessing that went with his birthright, which meant he'd get the lion's share of the estate, Jacob disguised himself as Esau and deceived his father who was now nearly blind in his old age.

[29 : 17] And he did so long enough in order to receive the pronouncement of his father's blessing. And then, after that, he ran away from home. The family was torn apart by all of this in their attempts to pursue their own desires and ignore what God had clearly stated.

And so, when Esau finds out about what Jacob had done, he makes a vow. And he says, I'll kill him if he ever comes back here.

I am going to kill him. So, Jacob flees in exile to a faraway country where, despite many struggles there, he prospered.

However, once again, he found himself in a situation with his uncle that escalated to the point of violent conflict. And so, with nowhere else to turn, with nowhere else to go, Jacob and his wives and his family and his servants and his flocks and his herds, they decided to head back to his home. It's been 20 years now since Jacob had first left, since Jacob had last seen his brother. And so, as he draws near to his home, he receives a report that's concerning, very concerning.

[30:43] The messenger says, Esau is coming to meet you. and he's brought 400 men with him. Now, if that was me, if you're Jacob, you think, well, that's a small army.

Why else would my brother bring so many with him unless it was to fulfill the vow that he had made to end my life? So, Jacob is discouraged.

He's unsure of what will happen the next day. This could be his last day on planet earth. And so, he springs into action. He prays.

Then he sends a large gift ahead to Esau, his brother. Then he divides his camp into two, hoping that at least one of them will get away free from the conflict if there was one the next day.

And then that night, Jacob went out by himself to spend that night alone. Think of it. He's desperate. His brother is coming.

[31:50] His chances are slim if there is a conflict. His wives, his children, everything he has could be lost. He doesn't know what the next day will bring.

He spent all of his life wrestling with his brother, wrestling with his father, wrestling with his uncle to secure blessings, treasures for himself. himself, but he still couldn't find satisfaction.

And so that night, Jacob is attacked. But it's not by Esau, it's by God himself. I want to read that account in Genesis 32, 24 through 31 to you.

Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.

Then he said, let me go, for the day has broken. But Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. And he said to him, what is your name?

[33:04] And he said, Jacob. Then he said, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed. Then Jacob asked him, please tell me your name.

But he said, why is it that you ask my name? And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the name of that place Peniel, saying, for I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered. The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. This is an interesting story.

And the narrator deliberately obscures the identity of this mysterious wrestler, but he provides us with clues so that we can identify him. First, there was the powerful touch.

They had been wrestling for hours. And then this mysterious wrestler, all he had to do in the Hebrew, is the word for tap. All he had to do was tap Jacob's hip, and it ripped out of sockets.

[34:11] So we know that this wrestler had supernatural strength. Secondly, the wrestler insisted that he leave at dawn as the sun was approaching.

Why is that? Well, because the Bible says that no one could look upon God's face and live. So after the match was over, Jacob realized this. He realized that God had done this for his protection.

For he says, I've seen the face of God and lived. And I think what happens in the greatness of that morning, and I believe this is a Christophany, he's wrestling with Christ. He sees the outlines of his face.

He realizes who he's wrestling. And he knows that as the sun approaches, as the light casts in that area where they are at, that if he looks upon God, he will die.

What would most of us do in that situation? I'm out of here. I don't want to die. Let him go. This is God. I'm no match for God. But Jacob, as he realizes who he's wrestling, he holds on to him tighter.

[35:31] And he says, I will not let you go. I will not let you go. If I die, I die, but I will not let you go.

Why did Jacob do that? I think Jacob finally had in his grasp what he had been searching for all of his life.

And he realized, I have God in my hands, God good. And I am not going to let him go. Everything that I've been searching for, everything that I've been wanting in my life, it's here, it's him.

And let me tell you, Jacob was in desperate need of a victory. And God in his mercy allowed him to win. Man, God is humble.

God is so good. coming to this servant in his time of need and giving him this great victory. God blesses him there.

[36 : 37] This son who never received the blessing from his father legitimately now receives a blessing from God. We don't know what God said to him, but he whispered this blessing into his ear.

Changed this man's life. And I think this encounter is also a picture of the gospel. Jacob was never the same after this encounter.

He walked with a limp for the rest of his life. That's what the gospel does to us. It humbles us. We realize that you know what I need?

I need to be saved. I'm a sinner. I'm without hope. I cannot save myself. I cannot earn my own salvation. But then it emboldens us, doesn't it?

But I have been saved. God died for me. He took my place. He bore my sins.

[37 : 45] Though I could not save myself, he was willing to save me. So Jacob won that day. God said, you have struggled with God and prevailed.

He was victorious because once he realized who he was wrestling against, he did not flee as he had done so many times before. But this time, instead of running away, he held on tighter.

He finally had in his grasp what he had been looking for all of his life. And guess what? Later that day, Jacob meets his brother who receives him gladly and peacefully.

So thirdly, Hosea then reminds the nation of Israel that their hope for their salvation rested in the grace of God who will save you, who will rescue you from this perilous situation.

Only God can. And by his grace. When Jacob was in desperate need and distress as Israel soon would be, God simply stepped into his life.

[38 : 51] All his life he had brought trouble on himself, but while he was running away from one difficult situation to the next, God met him, God came to him, God blessed him.

Hosea is reminding Israel of that same fact, that God is a God of grace, and he is pleading with them to remember, remember who they are, remember who he is, and that in doing so they will repent, and turn back to him, and be saved.

He reminds Israel of God's name. You know, you were Jacob, you were Israel, but look at who God is. He is, I am, he is everything.

I want to close by sharing one of Jesus' most powerful parables, but it's also one of his shortest.

And man, this has been weighing heavy on my heart for a month or so. Jesus says, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up.

[39 : 59] Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Think about it. Fifteen minutes before this man's discovery in this field, the thought of selling all that he owned would have seemed crazy to him.

It never would have crossed his mind to sell all that he had to buy this field. But fifteen minutes after finding that treasure, he was off to do that very thing, joyfully.

What made the difference? The treasure. The treasure made the difference. This man suddenly found something that transformed his whole outlook on life.

The treasure restructured his values and priorities. It altered his goals. The treasure revolutionized the man.

The treasure in this parable obviously is Christ himself and the resurrection to eternal life that we will receive through faith in him. It was the same treasure in heaven that Jesus promised the rich young man if he would sell all his possessions and give to the poor and follow him that he would possess.

[41 : 19] The rich young man blinded by short-term worldly wealth could not see the treasure, but the man in the parable did and he jumped at the opportunity to acquire it.

Now there was a cost to obtain that treasure. Viewed one way, the cost was very high, wasn't it? It cost him everything. Everything.

His house, his possessions inside that house, his livestock, his herds, whatever this man had, all the money that he had saved up, it cost him everything, maybe even his reputation.

What is this crazy guy doing? He's selling everything for that worthless field, many of them probably thought. So in one sense, the cost was very high, but in a greater sense, the cost was very small.

Standing in the field, the man did a quick cost-benefit analysis. It didn't take him long to realize that selling all that he had was going to make him wealthy, wealthier than he had ever dared imagine.

[42 : 31] He would have been a fool to not do whatever was necessary to buy that field. So now the question is being brought to you.

Christ is the treasure. Are you pursuing him as the treasure? Christian, what do you spend your time daydreaming about?

What are you worried and concerned about today? What are you waking up in the morning pursuing? The Bible says that it should be Christ, because he is the only treasure that satisfies. So pursue him. If you're not a Christian, understand that whatever you are pursuing will never satisfy you the way that you think and hope that it will.

You'll acquire that possession and it won't be enough. And I always when I talk to people about this I say look at the people in Hollywood. They seem to have everything. Beauty. Fancy cars and houses.

[43 : 36] Beautiful spouses, boyfriends and girlfriends. Money. But I don't think that they look very content. They don't seem very happy. They're so self-absorbed that they cannot be.

Look to them and see that they are not going to be able to give you the things that you hope for. But Christ can. He will. So what must you do?

Believe in him. The life that he lived that you could not live. Sinless, without sin, perfect, with the law required. Willingly going on the cross and dying, suffering the wrath of God for your sins there in your place, rising on the third day as proof that he is the son of God.

As proof that God received his atoning sacrifice for our sins. That we too will be made like him in his kingdom and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

And ever. And ever. Thank you.