

“The Pleasure of Knowing God”
(Psalm 16:11)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. A few weeks ago, we considered the very real truth that the world will never be able to satisfy us, only the Lord can.
 - a. The Lord tells us as much, and we should by this time be able to trust that what He says is true.
 - b. But in case we'd be tempted to doubt Him, He gave the riches of the world to one man, and then left that man's inspired testimony further to convince us.
 - c. Solomon had everything the world had to offer – and a lot of it – and after he had enjoyed it for a while, he came to realize it was all vanity – there were limits to what it could provide, it could not bring lasting pleasure.
 - d. But the same is not true of God – with God there are no limits, and so there are no limits to the pleasure He can give to those who truly love Him.
 - e. He alone can satisfy.
2. We also considered where we need to be to find this pleasure/satisfaction in God:
 - a. We will only find it in communion with Him.
 - b. But if we want communion with God, we will need to walk with Him.
 - c. And if we want to walk with God, we will need to walk in His paths, because that is the only place we will find Him.
 - d. The point was, you are not to seek your happiness in the things of this world – you won't find it there.
 - e. The only place you will find true happiness, contentment and satisfaction is in God.
 - f. And the only way He will give it to you is through His Son Jesus Christ.

B. Preview.

1. Having seen that the Lord alone can satisfy and that we must walk with Him if we are to find that satisfaction, let's consider what it is He gives that is so satisfying.
 - a. What does He have that's better than the things we have and see now that bring us the happiness we now enjoy?
 - b. Are they all ahead of us in heaven?
 - c. Or is there anything He gives us on earth?
2. The answer is, these joys aren't all just in heaven, though the best is certainly yet to come. He also gives us something here that is more satisfying than anything the unbeliever can ever possess. Let's look then at two things:
 - a. What the Lord gives us to satisfy us in this world.
 - b. And what the Lord will give us in heaven.

II. Sermon.

A. First, what does the Lord give us to satisfy us in this world?

1. If we were to summarize these blessings, what we could say about them is that they are bits and smatterings of the world to come.
 - a. I'm not thinking here so much about the objective blessings – of forgiveness and an inheritance in the world to come – as the subjective ones – of love, peace and joy.
 - (i) Certainly, we couldn't enjoy the one without the other – in other words, we couldn't experience what the Lord has for us until we first learn about Christ through the Gospel and the wonderful blessings He has promised us and embraced them through faith.
 - (ii) Certainly, we will also experience something when we learn of these blessings – for how can we hear about the forgiveness of our sins, our deliverance from hell, our eventual reception into heaven, and the joys of that world to come and not be moved?
 - b. What I want us to focus on mainly this morning are the subjective blessings.
 - (i) What Paul refers to when he writes, “‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and *which* have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him.’ For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God” (1 Cor. 2:9-10).
 - (ii) Or when he writes, “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:13-14).
 - (iii) This pledge of the Spirit is the down payment (the bits and smatterings) of our inheritance in heaven; and what the Spirit produces in our souls is very real and very satisfying.
 - (iv) It's meant to make us hunger, to make us long, for the full realization of these blessings in heaven.
2. What is this foretaste of glory?
 - a. Paul summarizes it for us in a couple of passages:
 - (i) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).
 - (ii) “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).
 - (iii) It is something different than the pleasures of this world – it is the pleasure of the world to come.

- (a) It certainly enhances everything we enjoy in this life, because if we aren't ultimately satisfied/content, then it doesn't matter what we have, it won't make us happy.
- (b) It further enhances our pleasure in this life by the fact that we have a clear conscience and peace because our sins have been forgiven and we've been freed from judgment.
- (iv) What is this foretaste of glory? Love: God's love, the love He has for us and the love He gives us for Him.
- b. This holy and divine love is very real and can and should be very strong.
 - (i) Sometimes we tend to think that all there is to our relationship with God in this life is learning more about Him.
 - (a) We equate Bible Study – or learning *about* God and His ways – to knowing God, which really should be our purpose behind studying the Bible.
 - (b) Knowing God is not the same as knowing something about Him – knowing about His attributes, His plan, His commandments or promises. It is being in relationship with Him.
 - (c) Edwards writes, “There is a difference between having an *opinion*, that God is holy and gracious, and having a *sense* of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace.”
 - (d) It’s the same difference that exists between believing that honey is sweet without tasting it and knowing that it is by tasting it.
 - (e) As Christians, we may know *Him* and experience love for Him and His love for us.
 - (f) This is the most satisfying thing we can enjoy in this life.
 - (1) You know how enjoyable relationships can be, especially very special relationships that lead to marriage.
 - (2) This relationship is much more satisfying, because it’s with One who is infinitely beautiful.
 - (3) The fact that most Christianity is reduced mainly to knowing facts is the main reason we have so many difficulties in the church.
 - (ii) How can we know whether we are experiencing this love for God? What should we use as a measuring stick? Consider a few things J. C. Ryle suggests in his book *Holiness*. These are the things that will be true of you, if you truly love God.
 - (a) He says first, “If we love a person, we like to think about him. We do not need to be reminded of him. We do not forget his name or his appearance or his character or his opinions or his tastes or his position or his occupation. He comes up before our mind’s eye many a time in the day. Though perhaps far distant, he is often present in our thoughts. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! Christ ‘dwells in his heart,’ and is thought of more or less every day (Eph. 3:17). The true Christian does not need to be reminded that he has a crucified

Master. He often thinks of Him. He never forgets that He has a day, a cause and a people, and that of His people he is one. Affection is the real secret of a good memory in religion. No worldly man can think much about Christ, unless Christ is pressed upon his notice, because he has no affection for Him. The true Christian has thoughts about Christ every day that he lives, for this one simple reason that he loves Him."

- (b) Second, "If we love a person, we like to hear about him. We find a pleasure in listening to those who speak of him. We feel an interest in any report which others make of him. We are all attention when others talk about him, and describe his ways, his sayings, his doings and his plans. Some may hear him mentioned with utter indifference, but our own hearts bound within us at the very sound of his name. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ. The true Christian delights to hear something about his Master. He likes those sermons best which are full of Christ. He enjoys that society most in which people talk of the things which are Christ's. I have read of an old Welsh believer, who used to walk several miles every Sunday to hear an English clergyman preach, though she did not understand a word of English. She was asked why she did so. She replied, that this clergyman named the name of Christ so often in his sermons, that it did her good. She loved even the name of her Savior."
- (c) Third, "If we love a person, we like to read about him. What intense pleasure a letter from an absent husband gives to a wife, or a letter from an absent son to his mother. Others may see little worth notice in the letter. They can scarcely take the trouble to read it through. But those who love the writer see something in the letter which no one else can. They carry it about with them as a treasure. They read it over and over again. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian delights to read the Scriptures, because they tell him about his beloved Savior. It is no wearisome task with him to read them. He rarely needs reminding to take his Bible with him when he goes a journey. He cannot be happy without it. And why is all this? It is because the Scriptures testify of Him whom his soul loves, even Christ."
- (d) Fourth, "If we love a person, we like to please him. We are glad to consult his tastes and opinions, to act upon his advice and do the things which he approves. We even deny ourselves to meet his wishes, abstain from things which we know he dislikes and learn things to which we are not naturally inclined, because we think it will give him pleasure. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian studies to please Him, by being holy both in body and spirit. Show him anything in his daily practice that Christ hates, and he will give it up. Show him anything that Christ delights in, and he will follow after it. He does not murmur at Christ's requirements as being too strict and severe, as the children of the world do. To him Christ's

commandments are not grievous, and Christ's burden is light. And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him."

- (e) Fifth, "If we love a person, we like his friends. We are favorably inclined to them, even before we know them. We are drawn to them by the common tie of common love to one and the same person. When we meet them we do not feel that we are altogether strangers. There is a bond of union between us. They love the person that we love, and that alone is an introduction. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian regards all Christ's friends as his friends, members of the same body, children of the same family, soldiers in the same army, travelers to the same home. When he meets them, he feels as if he had long known them. He is more at home with them in a few minutes, than he is with many worldly people after an acquaintance of several years. And what is the secret of all this? It is simply affection to the same Savior and love to the same Lord."
- (f) Sixth, "If we love a person, we are jealous about his name and honor. We do not like to hear him spoken against, without speaking up for him and defending him. We feel bound to maintain his interests and his reputation. We regard the person who treats him ill with almost as much disfavor as if he had ill-treated us. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian regards with a godly jealousy all efforts to disparage his Master's word, or name, or church, or day. He will confess Him before princes, if need be, and be sensitive of the least dishonor put upon Him. He will not hold his peace, and suffer his Master's cause to be put to shame, without testifying against it. And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him."
- (g) Seventh, "If we love a person, we like to talk to him. We tell him all our thoughts, and pour out all our heart to him. We find no difficulty in discovering subjects of conversation. However silent and reserved we may be to others, we find it easy to talk to a much-loved friend. However often we may meet, we are never at a loss for matter to talk about. We have always much to say, much to ask about, much to describe, much to communicate. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian finds no difficulty in speaking to his Savior. Every day he has something to tell Him, and he is not happy unless he tells it. He speaks to Him in prayer every morning and night. He tells Him his wants and desires, his feelings and his fears. He asks counsel of Him in difficulty. He asks comfort of Him in trouble. He cannot help it. He must converse with his Savior continually, or he would faint by the way. And why is this? Simply because he loves Him."
- (h) "Finally, if we love a person, we like to be always with him. Thinking and hearing and reading and occasionally talking are all well in their way. But when we really love people we want something more. We long to be always in their company. We wish to be continually in their society, and to hold communion with them without interruption or

farewell. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The heart of a true Christian longs for that blessed day when he will see his Master face to face, and go out no more. He longs to have done with sinning and repenting and believing and to begin that endless life when he shall see as he has been seen, and sin no more. He has found it sweet to live by faith, and he feels it will be sweeter still to live by sight. He has found it pleasant to hear of Christ and talk of Christ and read of Christ. How much more pleasant will it be to see Christ with his own eyes, and never to leave him any more! ‘Better,’ he feels, ‘is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire’ (Eccl. 6:9). And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him” (Ryle, Holiness).

- c. The purpose of grace – or the reason the Lord gives us His Holy Spirit – is so that we will stop looking for pleasure in this world and begin finding it in God’s love.
 - (i) Thomas Boston reminds us that “Pleasure is a necessary ingredient in happiness.” You can’t have one without the other.
 - (ii) But the only place we can find it is in God.
 - (iii) Our passage tells us, “In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever” (Ps. 16:11).
 - (iv) That we must have this kind of love if we are truly to be disciples is what Jesus meant when He said, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26).
 - (v) Without God’s gracious love, we would never give up these relationships in order to have Jesus Christ. But through His grace, the Lord puts things back into their proper perspective: we find so much pleasure in God that we would be willing to part with anything and everything, before we would ever give Him up (Boston).
- d. Do you know the Lord in this way this morning?
 - (i) If not, I would invite you to come to Christ who alone can give you that love for God.
 - (ii) If you do know Him, but not to this degree, then I encourage you to press on to know Him in the ways you already know how to pursue Him.
 - (iii) We’ll take up the second point next week, when we consider something of the pleasure the Lord also has stored up for us heaven. Amen.