

Soul-Satisfying Christianity

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Date: 09 May 2021

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[0:00] Good morning, church. Happy Mother's Day. Would you turn with me to John chapter 14, verses 8 through 14. We are continuing our series in Jesus's farewell discourse in John chapters 13 through 17. This is the moment in Jesus's earthly ministry in the upper room when he prepares his disciples for his impending departure by way of the cross and resurrection, but he also prepares his disciples for their upcoming mission by way of the Holy Spirit. So last week we heard Jesus speak words of comfort to the disciples and to us, that he's going to prepare a way for us, that he's the only way to the Father. So let's pick up where we left off in John chapter 14, verses 8 through 14.

But before we read, let me pray for us. Let me pray. Our Father in heaven, we ask that as we come to your word this morning, you would give us ears to hear what your spirit is saying, and you would give us hearts to receive with faith what it is you have for us.

God, thank you for doing a transformative work in us and through us as you speak to us. We pray this in Jesus's name. Amen. All right. John chapter 14, verses 8 through 14.

Philip said to Jesus, Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us. Jesus said to him, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. Well, I wonder if you've ever felt like something is missing, like you're just not connecting the dots. You watch the movie that all your friends are raving about, and you just don't get it. You think, what am I missing here? Or you're putting together a piece of Ikea furniture, trying for the second or third time, and the thing just doesn't look right. What am I missing here?

[2:53] I think as followers of Jesus, we can sometimes feel similarly about our spiritual lives. We can feel like we're missing something, right? For example, Paul says in Romans, the kingdom of God is all about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. And sometimes we think, I don't really feel any of that. What am I missing?

When Philip asks Jesus in our passage, Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us, don't you hear Philip kind of feeling the same way? Jesus, what am I missing? Just show us the Father, and that'll be enough for us. Now, you have to admire Philip's desire here, right? It's like Moses in Exodus, when Moses says to the Lord, Lord, show me your glory. After all, to see God, to catch a glimpse of his brilliance and beauty, that would truly be enough for us. That would satisfy the soul for a thousand lifetimes. That would thrill even the most cynical heart to see God.

But what are we missing? Why are we so often dissatisfied in our walk with God? Why are we so often bored? What are we missing? Like Philip, we ask, Lord, just show us the Father, and that'll be enough for us. And in our short passage, Jesus is going to help us connect the dots. He's going to show us that a soul-satisfying relationship with God can be had, but too often we overlook something important. Too often we're trying to build a stool with only one or two legs, and then we wonder why it can never stay up. We wonder why it always falls flat. Instead, Jesus shows us that a soul-satisfying relationship with God involves the dynamic interplay of three critical things—believing, doing, and praying. It's about a kind of believing that gives birth to doing, and a kind of doing that gives birth to praying, and a kind of praying that comes back again to believing. So let's look at each of these three and find out maybe what we've been missing. So first, a soul-satisfying relationship with God means believing. But what kind of believing? Believing that in Jesus we have all we've ever longed for. Look again at verses 9 through 11. Like Philip, we want to see the Father. We want to see God. It's almost like we're estranged lovers longing to meet our beloved again. We're like exiles longing to see our homeland. I mean, if you've ever been in a situation where you've been far from home for a long time, doesn't it feel like it would just be enough to kind of crest the hill and see home once again? To know that you are at last where you belong. And isn't so much of our life a search to find lasting satisfaction and meaning? Isn't that so much of what we long for in life? And isn't so much of our life a search for those things that often comes up short? That life isn't enough. You know, we get the degree, we get the job, we get the relationship, we buy the home, but it doesn't do the trick.

Reflecting on this reality, C.S. Lewis once said, if I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

If none of my earthly pleasures, he goes on to say, if none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, he says, I must take care on the one hand never to despise or be unthankful for these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a copy or echo or mirage.

[7:06] He concludes, I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country. And so, like Philip, we say, Lord, show us the Father, and that'll be enough for us.

But now consider, consider what Philip's question implies in this moment. Philip and the other apostles, the other disciples, have been with Jesus now for three years. Philip has heard Jesus teach, seen Jesus work wonders. In chapter 13, right before this chapter, Jesus has just washed Philip's feet and served him the meal that will become the sign of the fulfillment of all of Israel's hopes of redemption. And yet, Philip still thinks that he needs something more to see the Father.

But listen to what Jesus says in verse 9 to Philip, to all of us. Let that sink in. There is nothing in addition to Jesus that we need to see the Father.

There's no surplus of God somewhere else that we might need to discover or find out. There's no sort of advanced course or higher degree that we might take. Soul-satisfying Christianity is not Jesus plus something else. In fact, the very reason why our faith becomes so dull is because we think we have to keep looking somewhere else. It's like we're in the dressing room and we keep trying on clothes after clothes. Maybe the next outfit will be just the right fit. Maybe the next outfit.

When there's a perfectly tailored dress waiting for us right there. There it is. Put it on. But how can that be? How is it that Jesus alone is enough?

[9:11] Look at the next verse, verse 10. Jesus says, Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? Now this is what we've come to call the mutual indwelling of God the Father and God the Son.

The Father is in the Son. The Son is in the Father. You see, Jesus isn't merely a prophet or a religious leader who comes with a word from God. No, Jesus is the very word of God. When God the Father speaks, the very word he says is Jesus, the Son. So to think that we can find more of God somewhere else is impossible.

Imagine you visit a friend you haven't seen for ages. You fly across the country to visit them. You show up at their door. They open the door and then the friend says, Well, it's great that you're here and all, but you know, I'm going to head down to the library and see if anyone has written any biographies about you. Maybe search the internet and see what I can find. I'm so eager to get to know you better after all these years that we've been apart.

And you think to yourself, I'm here. I'm right in front of you. I'm in the flesh. It doesn't get better than this. It's impossible to find more of me somewhere else. And that's what Jesus is saying to each one of us.

I'm standing right in front of you. God in the flesh. It doesn't get better. It doesn't get more personal. It doesn't get more self-revealing than this. But why should we believe that the Father is in Jesus, the Son, and Jesus, the Son, is in the Father?

[10:51] Look at verse 11. Believe me, Jesus says, or else believe on account of the works. In other words, we can either take Jesus' own word for it, or we can believe because of the powerful works that Jesus has done.

So on the one hand, we can take Jesus' own word for it. And consider, that is no light thing. Did anyone ever teach like Jesus? Did anyone leave a greater impact on human history?

You know, many people will say that they revere Jesus as a great teacher or a great spiritual guide. Some will even say perhaps he was the greatest teacher, the greatest spiritual guide who ever lived.

Well, friends, if you believe that, or if you're at least willing to entertain that thought, then consider what Jesus says about his own relationship to the Father. If you believe that he's a great teacher, and he is, then believe what he actually says about himself, perhaps.

But on the other hand, you can believe on account of what Jesus has done. During Jesus' lifetime, we have records of people saying things like this, when the Messiah comes, will he do more works than these?

[12:10] Nearly every historical record we have of the life of Jesus presents him as a worker of mighty signs and wonders. In John's gospel, we find Jesus doing things like turning water into wine or feeding 5,000 people with just a few fish and loaves of bread, even raising the dead back to life.

All of these works are meant to tell us something about who Jesus is, about his identity. They are nonverbal, Christological signposts. In other words, they're Jesus showing us who he is, not merely telling us.

But as we think about the works of Jesus, think about the greatest work of all. Consider that the one who turned water into wine and fed the multitudes and calmed the seas and raised the dead, consider that at the end of his life, he was willing to stand in the place of his enemies and to be stripped of all his dignity and honor and to be crucified and to go down into death itself.

Consider that he was willing to give his life as a ransom for many, to pay the infinite debt of sin that we owed to an infinitely holy God with the infinitely priceless blood of his own perfect life.

Has anyone ever done a work like that? Died for our sins willingly, lovingly?

[13:44] And so, friends, as we apply this to our own hearts, we have to ask, we have to ask ourselves, where do I tend to look to find ultimate spiritual answers?

Where do I tend to go to find ultimate spiritual satisfaction for my soul other than Jesus, other than the crucified and risen Lord?

If we are trying to see the face of the Father, of our Creator, of the one who made us and loves us, Jesus says we have to look into the face of the Son, of his own self.

In other words, our pursuit of God must be ruthlessly, radically Christ-centered, or it will leave us empty, tired, and bored. So first, what Jesus says then is soul-satisfying Christianity means believing, believing that in Jesus we have all we've ever longed for.

But let's pause a minute and ask, let me ask you, Christian, is that your experience? Having seen the Father in the face of Jesus, are you satisfied?

[15:05] Most of us, I think at times, have to honestly answer, no. We know Jesus is all in all, but why doesn't it feel like it's enough?

Well, it could be that we aren't really pressing into the person of Jesus through the means of grace, through spiritual rhythms like Christ-centered prayer, or scripture meditation, or worship, and so on.

Or perhaps it doesn't feel like enough because we're just feeling the reality that our consummation is still to come. You know, John says in his first epistle that the day is coming when we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

We are still awaiting the bridegroom's return for his bride. But still, there's another very important reason why Jesus can sometimes feel like he's not enough.

And this, perhaps, is more widespread among us than we realize. And it comes from a faulty understanding of what the Christian life actually means.

[16:05] We operate with a truncated vision of what God actually has for us in this life. You see, the Christian story is not believe in Jesus and then wait around until you go to heaven when you die.

Now, don't get me wrong. The hope of heaven is precious and sweet. It is food when we are hungry. It is drink when we are weary. It is joy in our sadness. It is courage in our weakness. But, as we set our sights on the new heavens and the new earth to come, right now, there is a mission.

There is a purpose, a calling that Jesus has for us. Consider, when Jesus was here, he healed the sick.

He blessed the poor. He challenged empty religion. Andrew, I'm going to switch over the pulpit mic. Is that all right? This thing keeps falling off. I'm going to just get rid of it. Consider, friends, that when Jesus was here, what did he do?

He healed the sick. He blessed the poor. He challenged empty religion. He calmed seas. He raised the dead. Now, why was he doing all of that? On the one hand, as we just said, the miracles of Christ were demonstrations of his identity.

[17:21] Yes. But they were also something more. The works that Christ did, they were creation healing works. What I mean is the miracles of Christ were not merely displays of power or wonder.

They were things that put creation back into the wholeness that God intended. So, I took my car to the shop this past week.

Now, imagine I had taken my car to the shop, and the mechanic somehow magically turned my Honda CR-V into an apple pie. That would have been quite a display of wonder and power.

But it would have been a little pointless, right? Tasty, but pointless. But if the mechanic actually fixed the car, when no one else could fix it, if he restored it to its proper and intended use, isn't that much more important?

And isn't that much more satisfying? You see, the miracles of Christ are signs that the creator has come back into his creation to make things right.

- [18:36] Jesus turned water into wine because God originally created us, not for sorrow, but for joy. Jesus fed the 5,000 because God originally intended us to flourish and enjoy his good gifts and not to be hungry and starve.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead because we were made not for death, but for life. In short, Jesus came to inaugurate the kingdom of God, the world-healing reign of the creator to drive back death and sin and hell from God's good creation and to begin the work of restoration, of new creation.

And here is what we so often miss. Here's why our walk with God doesn't satisfy the soul. Too often we miss the fact that believing, being united to the person of Christ, too often we miss that being united to the person of Christ means being united to the mission of Christ.

Let's read verse 12. Jesus says, Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do because I'm going to the Father.

Soul-satisfying Christianity means believing first and foremost, believing that Jesus is all we need. But this believing gives birth to doing. But what kind of doing?

- [20:13] Doing the very kingdom works of our exalted King Jesus. Now let's break down verse 12. Truly, truly, I say to you, 25 times in John's Gospel Jesus says this.

This is Jesus' way of saying, Listen up. This is the truth that you need to hear. I'm putting my whole divine authority behind what I'm about to say. Whoever believes in me.

Whoever. Notice, Jesus isn't just talking about a select few, right? He's not just talking about the master chefs. He's talking about everyone in the kitchen, right? Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do.

Believing in Jesus results in a life of mission, of deep and lasting purpose. You, Christian, have a calling and a responsibility.

Your life isn't meant to be lived simply to amass wealth or personal success or personal comfort. You're called to do the very works of Jesus. Works of creation, healing, kingdom, exhibiting power.

- [21:24] This is how Jesus defined his mission in Luke chapter 4. Quoting from the prophet Isaiah, Jesus said, As you look out at your world, friends, your family, your neighborhood, your school, your city, what do you see?

If you're looking with the eyes of Jesus, you see men and women all made in the image of God, full of dignity and worth and beauty.

But you see them suffering mightily under the weight of sin. Spiritually and materially poor. Spiritually and materially captive.

Spiritually and materially blind. Spiritually and materially oppressed. And being united to Jesus by faith, we are called to go and proclaim liberty to the captives.

To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. To use all the gifts that God has given us to love our neighbors as ourselves and to serve rather than to be served.

- [22:51] We enter into the mission of Jesus. You will do the works that I do. And then Jesus says, And greater works than these will you do.

Now you can imagine the apostles starting to scratch their heads at that point, right? You have to ask, Okay, well greater in what sense, Jesus? Does Jesus mean greater in number?

Like quantitatively, will we just do a greater number of good works? Well, you have to admit, that is true, right? Read the first few chapters, even just of the book of Acts.

Thousands of believers join the church in one day. Many people are healed. The church does go on to do works greater in number than those Jesus performed during his three-year ministry. That is true. But, greater in number doesn't seem to be the best understanding of the actual Greek phrase here.

There are other more natural ways to say greater in number if that's what Jesus meant. So, if Jesus doesn't mean greater in number, perhaps he means greater in wonder.

[23:56] will the church do more wonderful or miraculous works than Jesus? Well, we have to admit, it's kind of hard to imagine doing more wonderful works than raising the dead and calming the seas and feeding the 5,000.

We do see mighty works done by the church. Read the book of Acts. Read church history. God does miraculous things through the church by his spirit, even today. But, it's hard to say that these are greater in wonder than what Jesus has done.

So, what does it mean that we're going to do greater works? Well, imagine a baseball player. It's early in the season.

His team is tied in the third inning of some random game. He gets to the plate. Boom! Hits a home run. That's a pretty great work, right?

Now, fast forward. His team has made it all the way to the playoffs. It's the World Series. Bottom of the ninth. Score is tied. Two outs. Same player. Steps to the bat.

[25:02] Boom! He hits a home run. Which one is the greater work? Well, the work itself was the same, right? A ball, a bat, hit a ball and it went over the fence.

But, obviously, the second work was much, much greater. Why? Not because of what, but because of when.

Brothers and sisters, do you know what time it is? Not clock time, not chronological time. Some of you are thinking, maybe it's time to start wrapping this sermon up.

We've been sitting here for 20 minutes. No. What time is it in God's plan of redemption? The time that really matters, theological time.

When are we? Do you remember in Genesis 3, after the fall of Adam and Eve, God said, a time was coming when the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

[26:08] Do you remember in Genesis 12, when God called Abraham and God said, a time was coming, Abraham, when I'm going to bless all nations and your offspring? And do you remember in 2 Samuel chapter 7, when God made a covenant with David, God said, a time was coming when David's throne would be established forever.

And then in Joel 2, when the people were languishing under a natural disaster, under a locust plague, God said, a time is coming when he would pour out his spirit on all flesh. In Isaiah 49, when the people were suffering in exile, God said, a time was coming when he would not only bring back the people of Israel, but he would make his servant a light for the nations and his salvation would reach to the ends of the earth.

A time is coming. A time is coming. A time is coming. Do you know what time it is? That time is now.

Right now. Theologically speaking, it is the World Series. Every hit counts.

God's kingdom is unleashed on the world and nothing will stop it. Why? Look at verse 12 again.

[27:29] Jesus says, we'll do greater works than he did during his earthly ministry because I am going to the Father, he says. because I am going to the Father.

Jesus is referring there to his death and resurrection and ascension to the Father's right hand. And because Jesus has died, risen, and ascended, that is the reason why believers will do greater works.

Because when Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, a human king was at long last enthroned over creation just like God promised David.

and the serpent's head was crushed by the crucified one just like God had promised Adam and Eve. And the spirit was poured out just like God had promised Joel.

And the blessing of God was now being proclaimed to all nations, to the ends of the earth, just like God had promised Abraham and Isaiah. Friends, the king has taken his seat and he will reign until every enemy is under his feet, until even death itself will die.

[28:38] Heaven and earth are now united in King Jesus. The door of redemptive history has swung open and the time is at hand.

what a wonderful, humbling, and awe-inspiring thing that the almighty God of the universe has chosen to do his greater work, his kingdom-advancing work, not apart from us, but through us.

how much must Jesus love his body, his bride, his church? He defeats sin and death on the cross, he rises to new life on the third day, he ascends to the everlasting throne of his father after 40 days with his disciples, and then he chooses to do his greater work of advancing his kingdom to the ends of the earth.

How? Through us. does he need us to do that work? No! But he delights to include us in that work to make us part of his plan and his purpose and his mission.

That's why the apostle Paul says in Acts 13, in Acts 13, Paul's preaching the gospel, and what happens there is that Paul takes a passage from Isaiah, actually the same passage from Isaiah, Isaiah 49, that we read earlier, a passage that is clearly about Jesus, and then Paul applies it to his own life and ministry as an apostle.

[30:20] This is what Paul says, For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have made you a light to the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth. Now, is Paul being presumptuous when he takes a passage that is about Jesus and applies it to his own life and ministry?

No. He is simply realizing what Jesus himself taught, that you will do the works that I do and even greater works than these because I am going to the Father.

So friends, where has God called you to participate in this greatest of works, in this time in which we live?

faith. Listen to what Jesus has been saying so far in this farewell discourse. Serve one another. Love one another.

Look at your neighbors. How can you serve them? Love them. Look at your fellow church members. How can you serve them?

[31:32] Love them. Ask yourself, who am I? Who has God made me to be? Where am I? Where has God put me right now?

When am I? Well, we know the answer to that one. You have a part to play in the drama of redemption. You know, the Old Testament saints longed for this day and here you are.

Do you want a faith that is soul satisfying? Then first and foremost you must believe that Jesus is all you need and then you must join the kingdom work of your risen Lord.

But Jesus isn't done yet. Perhaps, perhaps you've heard this kingdom call. Perhaps you're finding your way in the mission that Christ has for you.

And the danger for you isn't boredom. That's the unique danger of believing without doing.

[32:41] No, the danger for you is weariness. You're believing, yes. You're doing, yes. But your soul is weary and drained and you find yourself asking, what am I missing?

is this really what it's all about? I feel so thin. I feel so tired. What am I missing? Jesus shows us in the last two verses of our text.

So we've seen that soul-satisfying Christianity means believing, first and foremost, believing that Jesus is all we need and it means doing, doing the very kingdom works of our exalted King Jesus. But third, it means praying.

Praying with radical assurance in Jesus' name. Let me read again verses 13 through 14. Jesus says, whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. The English poet George Herbert, he once called prayer reversed thunder.

[33 : 57] Now think about that metaphor for a minute. How does thunder work? Well, there's a flash of blazing light across the sky, right?

And then half a second or maybe a second later, boom, we hear the thunder. First the light, then the sound. But prayer, prayer is reversed thunder.

prayer is the sound that brings the light. Why don't we pray? We don't pray because I think we don't really believe that prayer is reversed thunder.

We don't really believe that prayer is the sound that brings the light. We don't really believe that God answers prayer. prayer.

But listen to what Jesus says. If we ask anything in his name, he'll do it. Now what does it mean to ask in his name? Well, two things I think.

[35 : 10] First, praying in Jesus' name means praying for things that are in accord with who Jesus is and all that he stands for. Praying in Jesus' name isn't some magic code word that gives you a brand new car because you're tired of your old one, right?

But you really can ask for anything in his name. If you need a different car to do what Jesus has called you to do, to get to work, to serve your family, to give people a ride to church, then pray for the car.

So praying in Jesus' name means praying for things that are in accord with who Jesus is and what he stands for. But praying in Jesus' name also means praying in deep recognition that Jesus is our only way to the Father.

That Jesus has made a way where there was no way. When our sins had cast us out from God's presence, Jesus came from heaven, paid for our sins, and returned to heaven so that we can now come to the Father on the basis of his perfect record and not on the basis of our own record.

We don't offer our prayers to God because we deserve to be heard, but because Jesus deserves to be heard, and because he's united us to himself. And that's why prayer is reverse thunder, because we know that our redeemer lives, and that he invites us to come, and to come and ask anything in his name.

[36 : 39] Because when we ask, when we pray, who gets the credit? Who gets the credit? What does Jesus say?

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. As we embark on the mission of Christ, Jesus wants us to ask for anything we encounter along the way.

Ask for anything, Jesus says. Why? So that he might get the glory for everything. And when God is praised, when God is praised for being the glorious and gracious and holy and kind and powerful God that he is, when our lives are struck by his beauty and brilliance, when they're struck in such a way that they only can be when we are praying in the midst of the mission that is born because of our belief in Jesus, in other words, when God is glorified for answered prayer and kingdom work, that is the place where the soul is truly satisfied because we are seeing his glory in all of its fullness.

And like Philip, we can finally say it's enough. At long last, it's enough.

God will ask for today in Jesus' name. Maybe it's something that seems too petty, too small.

[38:32] Surely God has bigger things to do with his time than answer my small prayer. And yet it's nagging on your heart and hear Jesus say, just come ask for anything in my name and I'll do it.

Maybe for you it's something that seems too big, too bold, and yet it's there. It's this kingdom desire that God has put in you and before you. And you think, I don't know, I don't know, it seems too unlikely that God would do something like that.

Friends, you have not because you ask not. but when you ask in Jesus' name, then get ready for the lightning.

It may not come right away, it may not come like you expected, but it will come. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, thank you for revealing to us and showing us what a full-orbed life with you looks like. Lord, help us by your spirit to enter into these things, to believe and to do and to pray.

[39:57] Lord, we take just a minute now as we sit in quiet before you to pray for those things in your name that are deep in our hearts O Father, glorify yourself through your Son, and may we have eyes to see it and be satisfied.

Amen. Amen. God bless you today. We need you.

God bless you.