

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**  
**Student Pastor Rob Jones**  
**June 16, 2024**  
**Completely Satisfied**  
**Psalm 73**

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Pastor Carey ended last week looking at Peter learning to answer Jesus' question, "do you love me?" And we see a seed of truth planted deep in his heart, that would guide him through the rest of his life and ministry and grow more and more, "that his greatest satisfaction can be found in Christ alone."

**Big Idea: Our greatest satisfaction can be found in Christ alone.**

Polycarp is a famous name in the history of Christianity. He lived between 69 and 155 A.D. Polycarp was the Bishop of the Church in Smyrna, a city in Asia Minor known today as Izmir in the modern day Turkey. He is said to have known the apostle John and to have been instructed by him in the Christian faith. An account of Polycarp's arrest, trial, conviction, and martyrdom, was written after his death by some members of his congregation. Although Polycarp wrote some great books defending the Christian faith, his greatest contribution to Christianity may be his martyred death. His martyrdom stands as one of the most amazing stories of true faithfulness and full commitment. The Roman emperors had unleashed bitter attacks against Christians during this period, and many Christians gave their lives for the sake of Christ. Polycarp was arrested on the charge of being a Christian. Amidst an angry mob, the Roman ruler took pity on such a gentle old man and urged Polycarp to proclaim, "Caesar, not Jesus Christ, is Lord." If only Polycarp would make this declaration and offer a small pinch of incense to Caesar's statue, he would escape torture and death. To this Polycarp responded, "Eighty-six years I have served Christ, and He never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" Steadfast in his stand for Christ, Polycarp refused to compromise his beliefs, and thus, was burned alive at the stake.

In the gospel of John chapter 6 we see a different picture than this one. John 6 begins with a large crowd following Jesus. As John 6 comes to a close, however, a small group is gathered around the Lord. The crowds turned back for many reasons. Some left because of Jesus' radical demands as we see in John 6:60, "When many of His disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" Some have left because of their unwillingness to follow Christ's teachings as we see in verse 66. For some, Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah of their expectations. He demanded full obedience and full commitment of His followers; halfhearted discipleship is not enough. With Jesus, there is no middle ground; one either is or isn't. Now, it is Jesus and the Twelve. In John 6:67 Jesus asks this critical question: "Do you also wish to go away?" Can you imagine the silence that ensued? I bet you could have heard a pin bounce on the hard dirt floor. Peter, always speaking first, breaks the silence. In verses 69-70 he says, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

**Psalm 73:1-28**

***“Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth. Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. And they say, “How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?” Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning. If I had said, “I will speak thus,” I would have betrayed the generation of your children. But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms. When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.” “Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.”***

Psalm 73, Asaph writes a Psalm about how he wrestled with deciding between giving into the world and his sin nature or drawing near to God and living in obedience to him.

Meaning: “gatherer of people”. Asaph is a masculine name of Hebrew origin. Derived from 'āsāp̄, "collector," Asaph means "a gatherer of people." It's a rare name that speaks to a warm and welcoming soul inspired by the biblical musical leader

In 2 Chronicles 29:30, King Hezekiah invites the Levites to sing the words of David and Asaph. In Numbers 12:46, Asaph and King David are referred to as “chief of the singers”, meaning they did not just lead worship, they wrote it through inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 73 is the second psalm of Asaph out of eleven Psalms that bear his name in this book.

**Psalm 73:1**

***Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.***

This is the filter through which we should begin and end our thoughts as we go through storms in life. God is always good....always. Circumstances don't change the goodness of God.

The writer does not doubt this, but he lays it down as his firm conviction. It is well to make sure of what we do know, for this will be good anchor-hold for us when we are molested by those mysterious storms which arise from things which we do not understand." (Spurgeon)

**Psalm 73:2**

***But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.***

Such deep questions cause one to question the moral order of the universe. After all, one asks, what good is there in being good? If the wicked enjoy the same prosperity as the pure in heart, then what is the reward of godliness?

**Psalm 73:3-9**

***For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. (toward themselves) They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. (toward others) They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth. (toward God) ie. Daniel 4: Nebuchadnezzar being made as a beast for his pride***

Together with Asaph, we picture these rich, famous, proud, showy, violent, greedy, foul-speaking gangsters strutting about enjoying their wickedness. We are as troubled by their prosperity and the seeming indifference of God toward them as Asaph was.

**Psalm 73:10-11**

***Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. And they say, "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?"***

In the previous verses Asaph told us that the wicked man sets his mouth against heaven. Here, he tells us what the wicked man and his associates, and even His own chosen people of Israel say against heaven. They claim that God is blind or ignorant; therefore, they can do as they please and God is unable to do anything against them.

How they had forgotten the words of David when he said...

**Psalm 69:5**

***"O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you."***

**Psalm 73:12-14**

***Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning.***

The frustration kept building for Asaph. He felt that it was vain for him to be pure in heart, vain for him to have clean hands before God, vain for him to be innocent.

Stricken as in Plagued is bad, yet one might assign a plague to anonymous and natural causes. Rebuked as in Chastened is even worse, because it implies that *God* Himself was afflicting Asaph with the difficulties. God was easy on the wicked and hard on Asaph.

Job echoes similar feelings as Asaph...

*Job 7:17-18*

*“What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him, visit him every morning and test him every moment?”*

As we would expect in a poetic outpouring, Asaph was exaggerating. The life of the wicked was not as good as he observed, nor was his life as bad as he felt it to be. Yet one cannot deny or contradict the feeling that prompted Asaph in this psalm, and we can instead strongly identify with that feeling.

Jesus says....

*Matthew 5:45*

*“so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”*

**Psalm 73:15**

***If I had said, “I will speak thus,” I would have betrayed the generation of your children.***

Asaph caught himself from sliding further into despair over the perceived prosperity of the wicked. He did not want to be untrue to the generation of Your children, in the sense that he did not want to promote this sense of injustice and despair that he felt.

What a word for parents, endeavoring to raise godly children. Or to believers seeking to raise up disciples in their church and community. For us to be people who seek the wisdom to know when to speak and when to rest silently in the arms of Jesus during trials and suffering. To value the hearts and minds of God’s children so much that we would temper our words, patiently awaiting the need to vent out our anger or emotion to pass, in exchange for the light of truth to settle in our hearts as we are slow to speak and quick to humbly fall in faith at the feet of Jesus.

**Psalm 73:16-17**

***But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. -***

The crisis seemed to build and build for Asaph, until he went into the house of the Lord. There he gained a perspective on his problem that he did not have before. There he was able to see things from an *eternal* viewpoint, and he then understood their end.

“What then did the psalmist do? The answer to some will seem perfectly childish. He went to church. Just what others got out of this service we are not told. But the psalmist came into possession of certain gripping convictions that steadied him and enabled him to walk in the after days with firmness and assurance.” (Chappell)

What did going to the house of God do for Asaph? There, he could gain understanding in several ways.

- By prayer and worship in the sanctuary, he understood that God was at the center of all things, and he gained a fresh appreciation of both God and eternity.
- By hearing the word of God in the sanctuary, he understood that there was a truth that went beyond what he saw and experienced in everyday life.
- By observing sacrifice at the sanctuary, he understood that God takes sin so seriously that it must be judged and atoned for, even if it is by an innocent victim who stands in the place of the guilty by faith.

This is one of God’s great purposes in establishing a *place* where His people come to meet with Him. It is never to imply that there is only one or only a few places where man can meet with God, or that they must be ornate or glorious buildings. It is to emphasize that it is good to have a place separate from other places where we focus on a heavenly, eternal perspective.

For Asaph, this was the sanctuary of God. It was the temple in Jerusalem, or the tabernacle that existed before the temple. For us, it is the place where we meet with God’s people for worship and fellowship and hearing the word of God.

When Asaph went to the sanctuary of God, he received understanding. It wasn’t only a place to impact the senses and the feelings, but the understanding of a man. Asaph didn’t remark on how he felt their end or even experienced their end; he understood their end. It isn’t a bad thing to feel and experience the right things in the house of God, but there must also be understanding – the communication of truth in ways that can be received.

\*How many seek out encouragement from social media posts, or friends and other places when you find yourself heartbroken? This is exactly how I arrived at this passage for this morning. I had exhausted the social media posts and every place I could look for encouragement in a moment when my heart was so broken. And that’s when the Holy Spirit told me to sit down and to listen to Him in His Word. And he brought me to this

Psalm. It was like my life in that moment had been written down on the page in front of me. I sat and sobbed as I read His message to me. It gave me understanding that was far beyond some motivational speech or encouraging quote online. It was life-changing, as it reminded me of the truth that had already been gifted to me when I received Jesus as my Savior. It brought my heart back to focus on my greatest satisfaction. And off of the temporary heartache and discouragement that I was experiencing.

When Asaph went to the sanctuary of God, it only did him good because he connected with eternity, something that made him understand the end of the wicked. He didn't need to go to the house of God to hear about the news of the day or the same talk one would hear in the marketplace or the business office. Asaph needed the ultimate relevance, the relevance of eternity.

"*Their end* is literally 'their afterward', their future which will unmake everything they have lived for." (Kidner)

***Psalm 73:18-20***

***Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.***

Earlier in the psalm, Asaph worried that his feet had almost slipped (Psalm 73:2). Now, with a perspective gained from the house of the Lord, he sees that the *wicked* are the ones in slippery places.

With an eternal perspective from the house of God, Asaph understood that the good life of the ungodly is really as fragile as a dream, and they will soon wake to the reality of the destruction, desolation, and terrors that are their portion.

Oh, Lord, when you rouse yourself: Asaph admitted that it *seemed* as if God were asleep because one could not always see His active hand of judgment against the wicked. Using this idea, Asaph knew that God would not always sleep in His patience toward the wicked, and one day He would awake and judge them; He would despise their image.

***Psalm 73:21-22***

***When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.***

Asaph rightly observed that animals seem to have no concept of eternity. They live their lives for momentary pleasures, satisfying natural urges. When Asaph forgot about eternity, he was truly like a beast before God. He acted illogically and without reason, driven by emotion and immediate desire.

Have you ever been heartbroken before God and become bitter? Has it ever caused you to act ignorantly out of hurt and emotion? Have you ever become like a beast before the Lord in your suffering?

***Psalm 73:23-24***

***Nevertheless, I am continually with you, you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.***

With the new perspective gained at the house of the Lord, Asaph knew that God would guide him in this life and ultimately receive him to glory.

Significantly, Asaph expected God to guide him with His counsel. He expected to hear God's wisdom and receive guidance through it. He didn't expect to be guided primarily through feelings, circumstances, or experiences, but to be guided through counsel.

Asaph had the faithful expectation of an afterward of glory. This is a deliberate contrast with the end of the wicked mentioned in Psalm 73:17-19. As a godly man, Asaph has his afterward and the wicked will have quite another.

***Psalm 73:25***

***Whom have I in heaven but you?***

The greatest truth we could ever learn in life, a reality that changes everything. Is your greatest source of satisfaction found in God alone? This was also the truth that guided the life and ministry of Peter. Thirty years of growing in Jesus, directed by the realization that Peter's greatest satisfaction and joy and contentment could be found in Christ alone.

*John 6:69-70, PETER says, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."*

This lesson is learned through humility, seeing God for who He is and seeing ourselves for who we are.

Charles Spurgeon said, "while others are congratulating themselves, I have to sit humbly at the foot of the cross and marvel that I'm saved at all"

***Psalm 73:25***

***And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.***

This is the beautiful expression of a longing heart for God and for eternity. Intellectually, Asaph probably understood that there was much for him in heaven. There were angels and dwelling places and streets of gold and the companionship of the people of God throughout all generations. Yet all of that paled in the light of the presence of God.

“There is none in heaven, with all its stars and angels, enough for thee but Him.”  
(Maclaren)

“God, you are not only the greatest source of joy, but you are all our joy.”  
(Spurgeon)

**Psalm 73:26**  
***My flesh and my heart may fail.***

Charles Wesley (1707-1788), the great Methodist hymn writer, was thinking about it on his deathbed and actually composed a hymn based on it as his final testimony. Calling his wife to him, he dictated:

‘In age and feebleness extreme,  
What shall a sinful worm redeem?  
Jesus, my only hope thou art,  
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;  
O, could I catch a smile from thee,  
And drop into eternity.’”

**Psalm 73:26**  
***but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.***

Portion refers to “inheritance and future hope”. Asaph was a Levite worship leader. Levites have the Lord as their inheritance and so they receive no land inheritance.

In ancient Israel the priests enjoyed a privileged status of having the Lord as their ‘share’ and ‘inheritance’ (Numbers 18:20). Though they were denied the privilege of land ownership, they, along with the Levites, were taken care of by the Lord’s tithes and offerings.” (VanGemeren)

“Allusion is here made to the division of the promised land. I ask no inheritance below; I look for one above.” (Clarke)

**Psalm 73:27**  
***For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.***

Here we see the reality of the end of the wicked. Those who die without having surrendered their lives to Jesus. Eternal punishment in a real place called Hell is what awaits the wicked.

Asaph presents a HUGE TRUTH here. Instead of envying the temporary pleasures of the world, believers should look beyond to the eternal reality that awaits us all. Damnation for the unsaved and eternal paradise with their creator for the saved. Therein lies the filter through which we can more clearly see our situation. We can find



true gratefulness and satisfaction, even while passing through temporary trials on this earth. Because we know the promised future for God's children.

**Psalm 73:28**

***But for me it is good to be near God.***

Asaph understands his future promise of eternal life in the presence of his Creator far overshadows every earthly trial and discomfort.

**Psalm 73:28**

***I have made the Lord God my refuge that I may tell of all your works.***

He is not relieved by the understanding that the wicked will be destroyed. He is glad that God is just and will deliver perfect justice. But he feels for the wicked. He no longer envies them, rather now he pities them. And this drives Asaph to seek his own satisfaction in God alone, and then to proclaim to a lost and dying world how wonderful their Creator is that also offers them such a great salvation and payment for their sin and injustice. Because the greatest of all God's works is the work done on the cross of Jesus Christ to redeem a fallen humanity.

How do we see this lived out in the life of the Apostle Paul?

**Philippians 4:11-13**

*"Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."*

Paul didn't just learn contentment. He learned that the greatest satisfaction and pleasure and joy could only be found in Jesus, and he was left completely satisfied in Christ.

How does this truth impact my relationships and the way I love others?

John Piper on true love: to be so satisfied in God's love that you extend it to others.

So many love because it makes them feel good. They like how the other person makes them feel. So once the other person makes them feel something other than amazing or stops making them feel incredible, they stop caring about that person.

How do we know that we are supposed to find our greatest satisfaction in Christ?

**Psalm 37:4**

*"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."*

*Psalm 16:11*

*"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*

*John 15:11*

*"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."*

*1 Peter 1:8-9*

*"Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*

In conclusion, I was sitting in my living room, asking God, what's the point of healing if life is a series of suffering? And "echo holy" came on radio. Like He answers me, "because you were made to be most satisfied in me." Not the things that are troubling you and breaking your heart.

*Revelation 7:9-12*

*"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."*