

The Pleasure of God Pt 2

SPEAKER	Mark Proeger
DATE	Sunday, August 31, 2025
PASSAGES	Luke 15; Romans 5; John 17; John 6; Matthew 25; Ephesians 5; Romans 15
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:12:33 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

God delights in you. Not after you clean up, not once the struggle is finally behind you — now, in the middle of it. And the proper response to God's delight in us is that we come to delight in him above everything else.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The instinct that God pursued you, saved you, and has been disappointed in you ever since is not humility. It is a lie, and it is worth repenting of.
- ◆ In all three of Luke 15's parables, the punchline is a party. Heaven celebrates one sinner repenting — and God is not surprised when that sinner keeps struggling.
- ◆ God loved us before we were in Christ, not because of it. That is why you can tell a stranger God delights in them and mean it.
- ◆ God delighting in you is not the same as God being pleased with everything you do. Any parent understands the difference without needing it explained.
- ◆ Eric Liddell knew the difference between what is fine and good and what he was actually made for — and he could feel God's pleasure in something as ordinary as running.
- ◆ We are not too greedy for joy. We are far too easily pleased, settling for what cannot feed us while a better meal is set out in front of us.
- ◆ Asked what work God requires, Jesus gave one answer: believe in the one he has sent. Everything else flows out of that.

► 1:14:13

Mark picked up where he left off the week before with one sentence he clearly knew the room would resist: God delights in you. He admitted he resists it himself. In preparing the message he realized he had been carrying an unexamined picture of God pursuing him, delighting in him, saving him — and then being quietly disappointed in him for the next forty-five years.

The hamster wheel

► 1:15:02

What that picture produces is a scoreboard. How many people did I talk to about Jesus today. How many Bible studies did I make it to this week — he went to four or five at UT, and was honest that at least some of that was tallying up evidence that he was a pretty godly guy. “All these games we play in our head to try to earn or curry God’s favor,” he said, “when God’s like, ‘No, no, you don’t have to do any of that. I love you.’”

Then he asked the room to close their eyes while he said it to them directly — and to notice what rose up in response. The addiction. The failure. The reason you disqualify yourself. The gracious version: *sure, God delights in all these other people, but not me.* “I want to tell you, you’re wrong. I’ve got great news for you. You’re wrong.”

Luke 15 and one hundred million angels

► 1:17:11

Luke 15 is the chapter of lost things — a lost sheep, a lost coin, a lost son, three parables in rapid succession. Mark moved through them fast because he wanted the room to hear the one thing that repeats at the end of each.

“Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost. Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

LUKE 15:6-7 ↗

Then the same note again with the coin — joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Mark stopped on the angels. Scripture at one point counts them before the throne at ten thousand times ten thousand. If you have ever walked up to a full stadium and heard the roar go up after a

touchdown, put a hundred million voices behind that sound and understand that it went up over one person repenting. It went up over you. And then it went up again, and again, for thousands of years of people coming home.

► 1:18:09

He read the older brother's complaint, and named him as the character he has always found most familiar — the one who got it right and figured he was owed. "It's rubbish, but that's true."

"Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends... Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found."

LUKE 15:29-32 ↗

His verdict on that: we are all the prodigal. Some of us carry the older brother's self-righteousness as well, but the younger son is the story. "If you don't know you're the prodigal son, then you haven't come to the full understanding of the gospel yet."

Does the party stop when you sin again?

► 1:20:46

The obvious question, and Mark put it plainly: heaven celebrated like that over your repentance — does that change when it turns out, to no one's surprise, that you still struggle? God is not running trials hoping one of them comes out perfect. He already knew. He is not standing over seven-year-old Mark saying *he's already being mean to his brother again, let's try another one*.

Here he brought in Chesterton, because monotony was the sticking point — surely billions of parties gets old.

"It is possible that God says every morning 'Do it again' to the sun, and every evening 'Do it again' to the moon... He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we."

Mark's gloss came from his own habit of throwing kids in the air until his arms give out and they are still saying *again*. God has that appetite, and it does not give out. "Even when we're long tired of our sin, when we're long tired of the repeated failures, he's still delighting in you over and over."

The reciprocal half

► 1:25:13

Borrowing a line from John Bevere about holy fear growing in proportion to our comprehension of God's greatness, Mark reworked it: our understanding of God's delight in us grows with our comprehension of God's goodness. And it runs both ways. David knew it — "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy". Then he read the line he called mind-blowing, the one that would sound like blasphemy if it were not printed in the Bible:

"I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."

JOHN 17:23 ✍

Loved them as you loved me. Say that to someone without the chapter and verse behind it and you would be called a blasphemer. Jesus goes on to ask that those given to him be with him to see his glory, "because you loved me before the foundation of the world." The love in question predates the world, and — Romans 5:8 — it predated our repentance too: God shows his love in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

► 1:27:07

He flagged this next part in red in his own notes as a mid-sermon alert, and it is the hinge of the whole message. None of this means God winks at sin. "God can delight in you, but that doesn't mean we always please him." Any parent holds both at once. What it means is that there is no day on the calendar marked *today I do not delight in you* — and that the healing you need comes faster, not slower, once you believe you are treasured by the one asking you to change. God is not the referee. "He's the loudest person on the sidelines cheering for you."

Eric Liddell and the zebra cakes

► 1:29:45

Mark told the Eric Liddell story carefully, marking which quote was the film and which was the man. *Chariots of Fire* gives him the famous line — God made me for China, but he also made me fast, and when I run I feel his pleasure. Liddell himself said something quieter: it had been a wonderful thing to compete and bring home a gold medal, but since he was a young lad his eyes had been on a different prize, in a greater race that ends when God gives out the medals. He would not run the 100 meters, his

own event and probably his gold, because the heat fell on a Sunday. He ran the 400 instead, won it in 47.6 seconds, and set a record that stood for years.

Two things sit in that story at once: a man who knew exactly what he was ultimately for, and a man who could feel God's pleasure in something as ordinary as being fast. Which led to Mark's question for the room — what in your life is fine and good, and what has God actually called you to? Not because the good things are sinful, but because you will delight in the second kind in a way the first can never repay. "There's no easier way to miss out on the eternal joy that God offers you than pursuing as your primary objective worldly pursuits."

Then the running joke about his twenty-year "sugar fast," which his friends observed consisted entirely of sugar — and the point underneath it. A Little Debbie zebra cake is good. Every day, all day, it is disgusting even to him. "I was meant for much more than dessert. You were meant for much more than dessert."

The bag of trash

► 1:35:30

The story he had carried since his youth pastor years came from a conference speaker who had spent a few weeks serving with Mother Teresa's Sisters of Mercy — a place that took the dying off the street, shaved the lice from their heads, washed them, and loved them until they died. One day nobody would volunteer to take out the trash. He did, and people quietly warned him not to. The bags held human hair, excrement, filth. Before he reached the dump, a crowd took the bags off him, tore them open in front of him, and began putting into their mouths anything that might be edible.

His own application was the reason Mark keeps telling it: *that is what I am like*. God has laid out a banquet, and I am shoving into my mouth things that will never satisfy me. Mark added the guard rail — this is not a guilt exercise. Once you know God's delight in you, your appetite reorders itself toward what is actually better.

► 1:38:09

Which is why the Bible's frame for all of this is a wedding — one in a garden at the beginning, one in [Revelation](#) at the end, and the whole story in between a Father pursuing a bride for his Son. Paul says as much and admits how strange it sounds:

["This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."](#) The invitation, in the parable of the talents, is not to a wage but to a welcome:

“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”

MATTHEW 25:21 ↗

The bread that does not spoil

▶ 1:40:00

In [John 6:26–27](#) the crowd comes back to Jesus not because of the sign but because they ate the loaves and were filled, and he tells them not to work for food that spoils. Mark asked the room to feel the tension in that: they were genuinely hungry, and he had genuinely fed them. He is not scolding the appetite. He is correcting the order.

Asked directly what works God requires, Jesus gives one answer — believe in the one he has sent. No list. When they push for a sign and cite the manna, he closes it:

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

JOHN 6:35 ↗

Manna was a prophecy; he is the fulfillment. Mark was candid that he loses this most mornings — waking up and reaching for the phone, the news, the messages, taking his sustenance from anywhere but God. Lewis names the same failure: our Lord finds our desires not too strong but too weak, half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered, like a child who will not leave his mud pies because he cannot imagine a holiday at the sea. “We are far too easily pleased.”

Repent and believe

▶ 1:43:38

The two halves closed back onto [Mark 1:15](#), where Jesus opens his ministry with *repent and believe in the gospel*. In Luke, when you repent, heaven celebrates. In John, when you believe, you are doing the work of God. That is the assignment, and everything pleasing to God flows out of it rather than earning it.

▶ 1:45:40

He ended with the man he used to share the gospel with at work, who told him: Mark, I can tell you're the real deal — but I've done terrible things. "That's exactly who the gospel is for." Unworthiness is not a disqualification, it is the shared condition — all have sinned — and Christ makes us worthy. Sometimes God allows brokenness precisely to strip off the merit we are wearing like a crown, so we can stand on level ground at the cross. To the extent we understand we did not earn our salvation, that is the extent to which we can receive the goodness of God. He closed on Hope Chapel's founding passage:

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."

ROMANS 15:13 ↗

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Luke 15:6–7](#)
- [Luke 15:10](#)
- [Luke 15:29–32](#)
- [Psalm 16:11](#)
- [John 17:23](#)
- [John 17:24](#)
- [Romans 5:8](#)
- [Revelation 19:9](#)
- [Ephesians 5:31–32](#)
- [Matthew 25:21](#)
- [John 6:26–27](#)
- [John 6:35](#)
- [Mark 1:15](#)
- [Romans 3:23](#)
- [Romans 15:13](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. When Mark asked the room to close their eyes and hear “God delights in you,” what came up in you as the reason it could not apply?
2. Mark named the older brother as the character he recognizes in himself. Which of the three lost things in Luke 15 do you find yourself in, and why?
3. What does it change to hold both at once — that God can delight in you and still not be pleased with something you are doing?
4. Liddell knew what he was made for and could still feel God’s pleasure in running. What in your life is fine and good, and what is the higher purpose you have been putting off?
5. Where are you eating zebra cakes — taking your sustenance from something other than God — and what would you do differently this week to eat at the table he has set?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Mark Proeger is a longtime member of Hope Chapel who has been part of the church since its campus outreach days, when he handed out snow cones to freshmen at UT and invited them to church — including, as he tells it, a young Matt Ryniker, now Hope's pastor. He has served as a youth pastor in East Texas. He is married to Cesy, and preached this message as the second of two on the pleasure of God.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOioSsEghSc&t=4353s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.