

Message Date: 12-27-20

ADVENT 2020: **God's Gift for Right Now**

Week 4: The Gift of A Greater Desire

✠ A greater desire

- *When I was a 4th grader.., out on the dirt playground during recess at Blanco elementary school... if the teacher wasn't watching us too close, my friends and I would inevitably be engaged in our favorite schoolyard game. You could say for us, it was our first place passion, and that was MARBLES. And we played for keeps... which we had been told was immoral and not allowed, which of course made us love the game even more. If you had come up to me and said, "Ethan, in a few years you won't even think about playing marbles", I'd have said, you're crazy...*
 - *And that was true, until we hit middle school and discovered the next great texas schoolyard game... WASHERS.... Then I moved to Fort Worth, and washers faded into the dirt, to be replaced by BASKETBALL. That dominated until I met my friend Terry, and we traded the driveway for the garage and our passion for GUITARS*
 - *You couldn't have dragged Terry and I away from our jam sessions, until... you know it, our attempts at playing guitars was replaced by our attempts at spending time with GIRLS.*

 - *As I look back across those stages of my youth, I can see multiple times where my 'first place passion' faded into the background, to be replaced by something else. And this never happened because I was told it had to happen, no demands, no requirements... these transitions happened because in every case, I came to discover a GREATER DESIRE.*

 - *TODAY WE COMPLETE our focus of ADVENT 2020. I pray they have been encouraging and fruitful for you, and so before we dive into this last study... I'm PE, SUNDAY 27th, TO*
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✠ God's gifts for life right now

- *THIS ADVENT SEASON we have explored how, in Christ, we receive God's Gifts to us for LIFE RIGHT NOW. These are Gifts that are OURS IN CHRIST, if we receive them, understand them, and choose to incorporate them in our lives, in how we THINK, FEEL, and ACT.*
 - *God's gift of spiritual and emotional rest. Pressures off.*
 - *Gift of the NEW WAY. The New Way of living where we begin to let go of our desire to control the OUTCOME, and instead engage life fully while trusting GOD with the outcome.*
 - *The gift of simplicity, even when life is complex, the gift of choosing what is best*
 - *Gift of INFLUENCE.. of letting go of our need to control. In Matthew six Jesus teaches us not to WORRY... and we worry because we are trying to control. We predicate our peace, our rest, on things happening a certain way, and as a result, that outcome becomes our greatest desire and we are no longer seeking God first...we are seeking our control first. BUT IN CHRIST, IN THE NEW WAY... God calls us to **give up the bondage and pressure of control, and enter into the purpose and significance of INFLUENCE***

- *THESE ARE ALL AMAZING GIFTS... they have the power to bring change and transformation to our lives. BUT HEAR! All of these gifts have in common the same foundational requirement- ONE THING that if absent will reduce these gifts to just another set of strategies limited by our own wisdom and will power.*
- *This ONE THING is the answer to the question "What is your FIRST PLACE PASSION?"*

† These gifts will only take on true transformational power when our first place passion, increasingly, is GOD. *Through our relationship with Jesus*

- *And as we saw last week, this is only possible BY FAITH, as our great desire for specific outcomes is replaced by a GREATER DESIRE to know and trust God in the midst of our situation right now.*
- *I've been blessed over the years to have done lots of hiking trips with my dad, including four week long back country Elk hunts. In all of those hikes we would have a goal- a desired outcome- to make it to a destination, be it a peak, high mountain lake.... In our hunt trips, the obvious goal was to get an Elk! But over the years- especially the more recent trips- I've come to learn that the greatest joy- and my true desire of those trips- is the gift of spending time with my dad as we just walked down the trail, or sat around the campfire. The destination, the goal, as important as it may have been, paled in comparison to the greater desire of spending time with my dad.*

† Reality! Two of the most powerful motivators for *how we actually live* are our greatest FEARS and our greatest DESIRES.

- *And God continually work to set us free from our fear as he increasingly becomes our GREATEST DESIRE.*
- *This is the miracle the writer of Hebrews captures in the statement we've seen multiple times this month...*

Hebrews 7:18-19 *The former regulation (the law, the old covenant, the old way-old strategy of living in relationship with God and the challenges of life) is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.*

- *What is the BETTER HOPE? If Christ has brought a BETTER HOPE, then there must have been an original source of hope... that is the OLD COVENANT God made with Israel...*

Deuteronomy 29:9 *Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do.*

- *OLD HOPE... Keep the rules, do the right things, life is better. Except that the law is an impossible standard, we could never keep it.*
- *Here's an amazing thought... IN HIS SOVERIEGNTY, GOD never intended for the old covenant- the law- to be the basis of our relationship with Him. From the time Moses walked down the mountain with the 10 commandments, the true purpose of the law was to demonstrate that we COULD NOT ACCOMPLISH GOODNESS, RIGHTEOUSNESS, on our own. The purpose of the law was to reveal our weakness, our sin, so we would instead turn to GOD.*

Romans 3:20 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.*

Galatians 3:23-26 *Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith (the new way) would be revealed.²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.²⁵ But now that faith (the NEW WAY) has come, we are no longer under a guardian, (under the law)²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons/children of God, through faith.*

† ***This is the Better Hope!*** That we may come to Christ by FAITH, as we are, with all of our baggage, our weakness, our questions, our hopes, our hurts, and entrust it all to him as we begin a new life as his children, accepted, holy, and dearly loved. Here, we will experience transformation a RESULT of our relationship with Him, not as a REQUIREMENT to be in relationship with Him.

– ***And back to Hebrews, the true gift of this better hope is that we may DRAW NEAR TO GOD. That we may trust him, experience him, as our FIRST PLACE PASSION. As our greatest desire, right now, wherever on the path we way be.***

† So here's the question! What does it look like to *draw near to God*? To daily walk the path where Christ is our greatest desire?

– ***FEW THOUGHTS..***

- It doesn't mean we have to let go of all our SECOND place desires.

– ***I love music. It is a passion. Christ as my greatest desire doesn't mean I have to stop loving music. It may mean I stop loving SOME of my music, if it conflicts with my love of Jesus. (Drag race?)***

– ***In Matthew 6, where Jesus calls us to SEEK HIM FIRST, he doesn't tell us we have to turn away from the other needs, passions of our lives... Instead, he tells us not to WORRY about them. To surrender control of them, as HE BECOMES our FIRST PLACE PASSION, and all these other things take their proper place.***

- Through obedience?

– ***Some will say, "Christ becomes our greatest desire through our OBEDIENCE". Make no mistake, obedience is core to a relationship with Christ. Jesus said, 'you love me, if you obey me'. But obedience will rarely last apart from a relationship of love and trust with Jesus. In the long term, obedience is a result of Christ being our greater desire, not the cause.***

- God's gift of relational practices

– ***Of course, God has given us, and called us, into many relational practices.***

- ***Gift of his Word. Knowing what is true, engaging with scripture.***

- ***Gift of community of believers.***

- ***Gift of service, generosity, compassion... loving God by how we love others***

- ***Many more...***

– ***These are all wonderful- essential gifts by which we experience and mature in our relationship with Christ... but lets get a little more personal...***

† When we wake up on a regular morning, with the hopes, goals, and things we want to happen in the day before us, what does it look like to CHOOSE for Christ to be our greatest desire?

– ***Let me suggest this... one passage (could be many others) that penetrates to the heart of this choice... the choice of each day, each moment, how we set our mind.***

Colossians 3:1-4 *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

– **Great verse to memorize. TRUTH, and a CALLING.**

- As a believer, you have been RAISED with Christ.

– **You are a new creation. Old has gone, new has come.**

- *You died*, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

- **The old person we used to be- the person defined by our own strength and wisdom (weakness and folly) that person has died.. lost power over us... Our life is BOUND UP with Christ. Inseparable from him. Image of camo... indistinguishable... we have taken his yoke upon us, we are in UNION with Christ.**

- As a believer, Christ is your LIFE!

- **He is our center, our source**

- In Christ, we have the hope of ETERNITY.

- **In God's timing, by THE END or OUR END, we will be fully present with God in his Glory.**

– **BECAUSE THIS IS WHO WE NOW ARE... God calls to us, invites us, to SET OUR MINDS upon him. TO SET OUR HEARTS on what is TRUE of Christ, what is true of us in Christ.**

✠ A call to prayer

– **Prayer: “Lord, as I enter today, I look to you. Lord, when I am tempted to choose the old way- to try and claim control, to stress out... Lord, help me to trust you and choose the new way. Lord, there are many things in my life, on my mind right now. You know what these are... some are good, many are important, some are distractions, some may be unhealthy. LORD, TODAY, I look to you, by your spirit help me to keep my eyes on you, to seek you first, so that all these other things may have their proper place.**

– **Jesus... THANK YOU for what you have done, for the miracle of new life you have given me. Lord today, help me to find my identity in you above all other things.**

– **LORD, today, I want to draw near to you. THANK YOU that you have drawn near to me, that you love me, and you will never leave me. Lord, help me to engage this day fully, to be a person of influence, and to trust you with the outcome.**

– **1600 years ago Saint Patrick wrote down his “Lorica...” his morning prayer, a few excerpts...**

I arise today through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through a belief in the Threeness, Through confession of the Oneness, Of the Creator of creation.

I arise today, Through God's strength to pilot me;
God's might to uphold me, God's wisdom to guide me, God's eye to look before me, God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me, God's hand to guard me, God's way to lie before me, God's shield to protect me,
God's hosts to save me from snares of the devil, From temptations of vices, From everyone who desires me ill,
Afar and anear, alone or in a multitude.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,
Christ in the eye that sees me, Christ in the ear that hears me.

I arise today, Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through a belief in the Threeness, Through a confession of my Oneness with the Creator of creation