

Sermon Synopsis First half of 2019

True Desire: Getting what you really want

Psalm 37:4 Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Do you know what you really want? Your deepest and truest desires? People are paid huge sums of money to make you want things—they are advertisers and they are good at creating desire. Our culture creates desires for things, status, power, fame, money, comfort, pleasure. These things are not wrong in themselves, but also don't satisfy the deepest and truest desires of our hearts. You can get these things and still be unsatisfied.

Our text suggests that if you delight in the Lord, He will give you the right desires, true desires. What might those be and how does God meet them?

All of this ties into Augustine's disordered loves.

All of this mirrors our summary of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus: God, me, we, world.

December 29-30 God: I want to experience Him Joe

Our first and deepest desire is for God Himself. Augustine said that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Him. God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. (Piper) The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Psalm 37:4, Romans 11:36, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 2:10, Philippians 3:10-11 (GNB), Jeremiah 29:13

Practical instruction on experiencing God: PBJ, worship, church, mission group. What does it mean to delight yourself in the Lord? To seek God first?

January 5-6 Change: I want to be a better person Joe

Transition announcement at the end with a written copy passed out.

Great new years message—tie to our resolutions to be better.

Deep inside, we wish we were better. We want to be a better person, a better spouse, better friend, etc. We wish we were more _____ and less _____. We regret our failures and want to do better next time.

Ephesians 2:1-10, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 5:17, 12:7, Romans 7-8, John 21, Mark 9:14-29 (other stories of people wanting change, wanting to be better). Look up "better" and "change" and "transform".

How does delighting in the Lord change me and make me better?
Desiring God first changes me inside and out.

January 12-13 Love: I want to love and be loved.

Joe

One of our deepest and truest desires is to love and be loved. We want to know that we matter deeply to someone, that we are valued, treasured and loved. We long to belong. I have seen many people ruin their lives by pursuing love in the wrong ways and places. Pure desire becomes twisted, ruined, stained.

We love because He first loved us. We start with being loved by God. When I believe that and experience it, that provides a deep satisfaction that frees me to love others in a healthy way.

How does delighting in the Lord satisfy my desire for love?

1 John 4, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, etc.

How can we help people experience God's love in this service? I would like them to feel it.

January 19-20 Purpose: I want to know my life matters. Michael

People long for purpose; I want to know my life has meaning. I don't want to waste my life or feel like I don't matter and the world won't miss me. I want to make a mark, make a difference, have an impact. I want my life to count.

2 Chronicles 21:20 Jehoram passed away to no one's regret. That is said of people who lived for themselves.

Colossians 1:16 we were made for Him.

Matthew 22:37 we were made to love God and people.

Matthew 28:16-20 we were made for mission.

Hebrews 12:1-3, Galatians 6:9

How does delighting in the Lord satisfy my desire for purpose and meaning? Your life matters when you give it away to what matters most.

Why we hate to pray

Two weeks on prayer. Why do we hate to pray? Why are prayer meetings the lowest attended type of meeting? We hope this title appeals to vast multitudes of people who wish they were better pray-ers but keep bumping into the same issues that make them hate praying. We want to teach a better

way to pray for individuals and groups. The basic idea is that prayer is a conversation with God.

Jan 26-27 Personally Joe

Understanding that prayer is a conversation really changes it! In a good conversation, I connect with the other person. If we connected with God each time we prayed, if we left feeling like God heard us and we heard from God, I think we'd love to pray. So how can we do that? How can I have a connected conversation with God?

Feb 2-3 Together Joe

Super Bowl

Most people hate to pray in groups. It's awkward, uncomfortable. We each make little speeches to God that are often repetitive from one person to another, and are the same things we say each time.

I'm going to teach people how to have a group conversation with God that is alive, fun, easy and genuine.

40/40 Vision

Feb 9-10 A look back at the last 40 Joe

40th Anniversary Celebration. A fun trip down memory lane, highlight what God has done in the last 40 years. Tell stories. Share significant turning points. Embed values and cast vision. Finish with a peek at next week when we look ahead.

Feb 16-17 A look ahead at the next 40 Michael/Joe

What will stay the same, what will change? What do we hope we'll look like 40 years from now, and what will we do in the next 3, 5, 10 years to kick start us?

RESIST

Deep breath...I'm not talking about the political uses of this label (see Resist, the foundation, or #Resist directed against President Trump). I wasn't even aware of those when I chose this title. This isn't about political

resistance—I'm talking about spiritual resistance. (Of course this can have political implications.)

In the New Testament, Christians are described as “foreigners and exiles” (1 Peter 1:1, 2:11, Hebrews 11:13) no matter what country they are in. What does it mean for us to live *in* the world, but not be *of* the world (John 17)? How do we engage our culture without being conformed to it (Romans 12:1-2)? The culture we live in makes its mark in us—it is unavoidable. But if we're not careful, culture creeps and replaces God, and we begin to look more like our culture than our Lord.

Daniel living in exile in Babylon provides a great perspective on what it is like for us as Christians to live in exile wherever we are. Daniel was exiled to Babylon, but stayed true to the Lord—He lived in Babylon but never let Babylon in him. He resisted the culture creep.

I'm excited to do some great OT stories. And of course, we want to always bring it back to Jesus!!

Jerry Sittser sent me this:

The So-called Letter to Diognetus: This is an example of a text from the early Christian period, written as early as the 130s and as late as the 170s, that sets the stage for the catechumenate. It introduces a number of ideas and motifs that prevailed as Christians tried to engage the Greco-Roman world. The unknown writer of this letter (it could be Aristides) wanted to explain the central features of Christian belief and practice, the basics we could say, specifically what set it apart from the Greeks and the Jews. It is the first text I am aware of that mentions the idea of a “New Race” or “Third Race.” The writer offers a superficial critique of two competitor worldviews, namely, Paganism and Judaism; but he spends most of his time explaining how and why Christians were considered a Third Race. It is apparent that this kind of distinctive identity, outlined so clearly in the letter, would require a process of training that would produce the kind of Christian reflecting this “Third Race” image.

“For Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest of the human race by country or language or custom. They do not live in cities of their own; they do not use a peculiar form of speech; they do not follow an eccentric manner of life. This doctrine of theirs has not been discovered by the ingenuity or deep thought of inquisitive men, nor do they put forward a merely human teaching, as some people do. Yet, although they live in Greek and barbarian cities alike, as each man's lot has been cast, and follow the customs of the country in clothing and food and other matters of daily living, at the same time they give

proof of the remarkable and admittedly extraordinary constitution of their own commonwealth. They live in their own countries, but only as aliens. They have a share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land. They marry, like everyone else, and they beget children, but they do not cast out their offspring. They share their board with each other, but not their marriage bed. It is true that they are 'in the flesh,' but they do not live 'according to the flesh.' They busy themselves on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, but in their own lives they go far beyond what the laws require. They love all men, and by all men are persecuted. They are unknown, and still are condemned; they are put to death, and yet they are brought back to life. They are poor, and yet they enjoy complete abundance. They are dishonored, and in their very dishonor are glorified; they are defamed, and yet vindicated. . . . They are treated by the Jews as foreigners and enemies, and are hunted down by the Greeks; and all the time those who hate them find it impossible to justify their enmity."

Feb 23-24 Daniel 1—Resisting Babylon's fare Joe

What are we ingesting and how does it shape us? I'm not thinking primarily of food, but media, ideas and values.

Mar 2-3 Daniel 3—Refusing Babylon's idol David

What are our cultural idols and how are we caving in and bowing down when we should be standing up and resisting?

Mar 9-10 Daniel 4—Refuting Babylon's power Josh

What are the power structures of our culture and how do we live under the reign of God in the midst of them? What does it look like to be citizens of heaven while living in America?

Mar 16-17 Daniel 5—Rejecting Babylon's payoff Michael

What does our culture offer us as a payoff for cooperation and what does it look like to resist and stand for truth even at great risk?

Mar 23-24 Daniel 6—Remaining true despite Babylon's threats Joe

How do we respond when conformity is demanded? What does courageous resistance look like?

The Biggest **BUT** in the World

There are multiple places in the New Testament where the phrase “but God” indicates God’s intervention in our lives, in ways small and large but always powerful. We’ll look at some of the ways God intervenes—including the biggest of all on Easter: But God raised Him from the dead!

Mar 30-31 But God made us alive! Joe

Ephesians 2:1-10

First, a description of our condition: we were dead in our sin. 1-3. Paul graphically describes our fallen condition: dead in our sins, we followed the ways and the ruler of this world, we gratified the desires of our sinful nature, and we were deserving of wrath!

Second, a description of what God has done: but God made us alive in Christ. 4-10. Paul beautifully describes our new life in Christ. Jesus didn’t come to make us more religious, but more alive!

This is a good opportunity to talk about telling your story and making Jesus the star. “Go tell what great things the Lord has done for you.” Paul spends 3 verses describing our fallen condition, and then 7 verses describing what God has done for us in Christ.

Great gospel message!

April 6-7 But God disciplines us for our good Michael

Hebrews 12:4-11

There were so many good “but God” passages. I decided to use this one because it is so different from the others, and addresses an issue we rarely talk about. Why do bad things happen to good people? Or, what is God trying to do when bad things happen to us?

First, they disciplined us as they thought best.

Second, but God disciplines us for our good.

The Hebrews passage compares the sometimes capricious or selfish or misguided discipline of our parents (and others) with the always-for-our-good discipline of our Heavenly Father. (There will be some teaching moments for parents here.)

We will carefully distinguish between punishment and discipline (which is aimed at teaching, instruction). We’ll talk about the natural reproofs of life (do something stupid or sinful and you suffer—and hopefully learn from it).

We'll talk about God's hand in all this—which is good. He's a good Father, and His discipline is a sign of His love for us.

April 13-14 Collide Conference Guest Speaker: Tim Timberlake

April 19-21 Easter: But God raised Him from the dead! Joe

Acts 2:24, 3:15, 10:40, 13:30

First, what we did: we murdered God's Son, nailing Him to a cross, and sealing Him in a tomb.

Second, what God did: BUT God raised Him from the dead!

This is the ultimate and most important "BUT"! We rebelled against God and our rebellion reached its worst when we murdered God's Son! We tortured and crucified Him; we spat on Him and beat Him; we mocked and cursed Him. We did our worst. BUT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD!

Human sin never has the last word. God does.

Jesus' resurrection changes everything!

I want to emphasize at Easter the start of the new series below.

Let it go!

Unoffendable

Forgive everyone always.

I want to follow Easter with a high draw series (even though it's the lowest attendance time of the year), and that is usually a relationship series. I recently read the book *Unoffendable*, and would like to borrow from it, and use some ideas about anger, offense and forgiveness to challenge people to forgive everyone always, keep short accounts, get rid of their anger and become unoffendable.

April 27-28 Get rid of all anger Joe

Really? Get rid of all anger? Yep! That's what Paul wrote to the Ephesians. We'll talk about why that's a good idea, and how to do it.

We'll look at Matthew 5 where Jesus linked murder and anger, forbidding both.

We'll look at some Bible stories that show that anger (like alcohol) never makes you smarter! When you get angry, you say and do things you'll regret. First story: Cain got angry with Able, and the rest is history.

We'll talk about righteous anger, compare our anger to God's and see the differences and why we're not built for anger or qualified for "righteous anger."

Let it go!

May 4-5 Bloomsday Saturday NWLC students!

We can talk about content for this Saturday. I believe the plan is to select 4 NWLC students, give them a text and 8 minutes each to deliver the word. We can select Scripture/content from this series, or something else. Let's talk.

May 11-12 Forgive Everyone Always Mother's Day Michael

Matthew 18:21-35, Luke 6:37.

How much should we forgive? Aren't there limits? That's what Peter asked Jesus, and Jesus responds with one of the most radical shocking stories in the Bible! Essentially, Jesus says that we must forgive every time—forgive everyone always.

And Jesus ties it to two things.

First, our own sinfulness. We have been forgiven a much larger debt by God than anything that anyone owes us. If God has forgiven us everything, we cannot do less for others. Are you forgiven? You must forgive.

Second, our own forgiveness. If we refuse to forgive after being forgiven, we won't be forgiven! I don't understand this, but it sure gets my attention! I can't afford not to forgive. Do you want to be forgiven? You must forgive.

I must forgive for my own sake! Forget the other person! We get so hung up on them—"they don't deserve to be forgiven," or "I'm going to punish them by not forgiving them." But my unforgiveness only hurts me, not them. I must forgive for my sake! Be selfish and forgive others—every time

Let it go!

May 18-19 Become unoffendable Joe

Being offended has become a national sport! Everyone is offended. We are easily offended and eager to let everyone know we're offended. We all have thin skin.

A few verses: Psalm 119:165 (KJV), Proverbs 17:9, 19:11.

What if Christians were known for being unoffendable? What if we get rid of anger and become quick to forgive? What if we are filled with patience and mercy instead of anger and intolerance?

Two critical ideas: First, most offenses are unintentional and often misunderstood. We don't know what other people intended—so go with positive instead of negative attribution. Second, even if people intended it for evil, you don't have to take offense—that's like someone handing you a cup of poison and you decide to drink it! You can choose to let it go.

Love covers a multitude of offenses. 1 Peter 4:8

I'm going to explore these radical ideas. Here's a big one: life goes so much better when you simply decide to stop being offended. You are going to be so much happier! Let it go!

May 25-26 Forgive Everyone Always...Again! Joe

Matthew 6:6-15, Mark 11:25-26

Jesus was teaching His disciples about prayer and adds this important truth about forgiveness: When you pray, if you hold *anything against anyone*—that's all-inclusive—forgive them so that God may forgive you. *Anything against anyone!* In other words, forgive everyone always. Forgive everyone everything every time!

Every time we pray, we ask God to forgive us (Matthew 6:12), and we also forgive anyone who has sinned against us. That second part is what is overlooked. We remember to ask for forgiveness; we forget that we must also give it—every time to everyone for everything. And that's hard.

Here are the key ideas:

Forgive every time you pray. Make forgiveness a regular part of your prayers.

Forgive anyone for anything. Make forgiveness universal—everyone always!

Forgive so you can be forgiven. Understand that forgiven people must forgive! We literally can't afford not to forgive. However much you want to nurse that hurt or hang on to that bitterness, it's not worth it! Is your own forgiveness worth sacrificing just so you can stay offended at someone else? No way! Let it go!

June 1-2 Forgive Anyway Amy

We have so many reasons *not to forgive*. And we are quick to use them as excuses. But let's look at Jesus on the cross—Luke 23:34—who said, "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing." There's our model. Forgive like Jesus did.

Had they repented or admitted they were wrong? No. Jesus forgave anyway. They were in the act—and Jesus forgave anyway. Don't wait until people repent. Forgive immediately—let it go.

Did they know or understand what they were doing? No. Jesus forgave anyway. But while they didn't understand that they were murdering God's son, they did know that they were doing something wrong, committing a horrible injustice. So even though they knew what they were doing, Jesus forgave

anyway. Whether people know what they're doing (intentional) or not (unintentional), forgive anyway. Let it go.

Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13

Forgive so Satan doesn't take advantage of you: 2 Corinthians 2:10-11

Forgive because Jesus already has! Matthew 26:28, Luke 23:34

Let it go!

June 8-9 Get rid of all anger...again! Joe

I want to finish here, where we started, with this radical idea that we should get rid of all anger. Of course we'll feel anger sometimes, but we can't afford to hang on to it. We need to let it go.

What about injustice? Of course we feel anger then, and it may even be considered "righteous," but it rarely leads to constructive action. Action motivated by anger tends to be punitive and vindictive. It often perpetuates more injustice: an eye for an eye, and soon we're all blind.

Love is constructive and leads to peace. Anger is destructive and leads to conflict, murder and war. We want shalom; we want the beloved community—anger can't lead us there. (I've got some stuff on this from my MLK talk).

God is slow to anger—and He is righteous! We need to be slow to anger, and then quick to let it go.

I'll talk about my own struggle with anger, and how much happier it is to live without it. Just let it go. Get rid of anger and get to love. Better to be motivated by love than anger! Let it go!