

11-9-25

It's Okay to Want

Mark 10: 35 – 52

Today I have a message that after hearing it, I think will make us all rest a little easier tonight. And who doesn't want a more restful night's sleep?

The title of my message is ... It's okay to want.

Call me crazy, but I think that we Christians struggle with wanting things. Not that we don't want things – we all want lots of stuff, more stuff than we'll ever care to admit.

It's that we are not very good at expressing our wants. Why?

Well, simply put, I think it's because we think that if we verbalize our wants and desires, we're afraid that we're going to be looked down upon and judged by our fellow Christians. We're afraid that our brothers and sisters will view us as selfish, self-centered or unspiritual which is contrary to the type of person God wants us to be.

For example, when we take a moment to read a list of the fruits of the spirit like the one found in Galatians 5: *“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness and self-control”*, we typically don't walk away thinking ... Boy, how great it would be to go to Home Depot right now and buy a new grill.

Instead, our spirit is pricked by the thought that we probably spend far too much time attending to our own creature comforts than we do exercising the fruits of the spirit toward others.

This is a prime example of how the Bible interacts with our mind and soul – which is a good thing. It's a transformative process.

This is why we need to constantly keep God's word in front of us, so it can do its holy work in us.

But can't you almost feel your brothers and sisters judging you when you do express your wants?

Look at him, telling God what he wants. There are people out there who are starving and imprisoned and in the midst of war, and he's sharing about how he wants a new snowmobile, a better job, or more comfortable living conditions – and he's asking God for it! What gall! What nerve!

I'm sorry to say that I've sometimes been that judgmental person, and maybe I still am on a certain level, but I want to be better. And maybe it begins by understanding the truth that God says it's okay to want and to express those wants.

It's okay to have wants and desires and dreams because this is how God has made us.

But somewhere along the line, we've been told over and over again that having and expressing wants is ungodly and unbiblical. After all, didn't Jesus say to his followers that *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it."*

And once these verses are beaten into our heads long enough, it's no wonder that we are extremely gun-shy about expressing our wants and desires.

We fear that in doing so, we might be seen as ungrateful for what God has already given us and discontented in our current situation .

We might even be thinking to ourselves ... “Why can’t I just be content with who I am and what I already have?”

Assessing our level of contentment is not a bad exercise, but it doesn’t mean we have to stuff all our wants and desires deep inside where they’ll never see the light of day.

In other words, denying ourselves for Christ and the Gospel doesn’t necessarily have to equate to nixing our wants and desires. Our desires aren’t necessarily bad or evil. Their origin doesn’t have to be from a bad place.

Does this make sense at all? I think sometimes we forget this.

We can have godly aspirations and desires because God puts them in us.

So, how do I know that it’s okay to want and to acknowledge and express feelings of want?

I know this from reading my Bible.

Did you catch that in our reading this morning from the tenth chapter of the book of Mark that Jesus asked the very same question twice in a matter of just a few verses?

To James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Jesus responded to their request by asking, “*What do you want me to do for you?*”

I don't know about you, but I don't detect any sarcasm or skepticism or judgmentalism here. I think Jesus, straight up, wanted to know what these two brothers wanted. He knew that they wanted something or he would never have asked the question.

So, Jesus was genuinely interested in what they wanted. And when they did make their request known, Jesus didn't scold or rebuke them. He basically said that he could not grant what they requested. The positions they sought? They were already reserved for others whom God had chosen.

Yes, Jesus did make the comment that these two men did not fully understand the magnitude of their request, but he did not hold it against them.

He did, however, use their request as a teaching opportunity, essentially saying that if one truly wants to seek a position of power, privilege, and prestige then he'd have to demonstrate humility and a willingness to serve the least individuals.

But the point I want to make here is that Jesus did not condemn the men for asking even if their motivation for asking or their intention for asking seemed off color and askew.

And what's even more interesting is that while Jesus refrained from chastising them, their fellow comrades were not so tolerant. They quickly piled on.

Mark comments that *“when the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.”*

The term indignant means to become angry at an unwarranted accusation, injustice or meanness. Also to deem something unworthy.

The ten certainly made their feelings known that James and John were unworthy to make such a weighty request. And maybe part of the reason why they were so angry is that they realized that James and John were simply verbalizing what they themselves were already thinking.

We'll never know for sure, but the takeaway for us should be that we Christians are much harder critics of each other than Jesus is on us! And yet Jesus is the One who has been offended by our actions! It's his laws that have been broken, not ours!

This truth of God's grace and mercy toward us is demonstrated so clearly in Exodus 34 with Moses, who, having completed chiseling out the two stone tablets which spelled out the ten commandments and which he had broken the originals, by the way, because of his anger toward the rebellious Israelites, the Bible says that The Lord God passed before him proclaiming his holy name and saying, *"The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin."*

God's response to our indignation toward others and our rebelliousness toward Him is to reveal himself to us and give us a second chance!

We Christians toward one another? Not so much.

But fascinatingly, Jesus poses the question ... *“What do you want me to do for you?”* not once but twice within a few short verses!

On this second occasion he asks blind Bartimaeus, the poor beggar outside Jericho’s city gates. And Bartimaeus is quick to respond with complete simplicity, hope, and sincerity: *“Rabbi, I want to see.”*

If there has ever been a more authentic and genuine interaction between two men, show me, because I can’t think of any off the top of my head.

“What do you want me to do for you?”

“Rabbi, I want to see.”

There’s such honesty and beauty in this interaction that frankly goes beyond words.

One man has a great desire to see again.

The other, driven by a deep, personal and loving desire to fulfill another’s desire, makes it happen: *“Go, your faith has healed you.”*

Do you see what happened there?

In a very real sense God demonstrated to Bartimaeus - and by extension us – the great and divine desire God has for us to be healed and saved and brought into his family.

Remember Jesus’ reaction as he approached Jerusalem and he saw the city? He cried over the city. He wept over the city because he wanted so much to bring peace and light and hope to everyone who was stumbling around in the darkness searching for purpose and meaning and hope.

All they had to do was ask him and believe in him and he would have given them everything they wanted. But they didn't ask.

How about you?

Do you share with God your hopes and dreams and desires and wants or do you stuff them all inside because you're afraid God will think you're being selfish and unchristian.

Maybe you don't want to share your hopes and dreams and wants with God because you think God doesn't answer those types of prayers. He's only interested in our needs, not our wants.

If that's so, then why did David pray in Psalm 20, *"May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed"*?

And in Psalm 21 David refers to God as giving him the desires of his heart writing, *"You have granted him the desires of his heart and have not withheld the request of his lips."*

And I know what you're thinking ... well, that's fine for David. He was the King of Israel. The most prominent and powerful man in the land. Of course, he got all that he wanted and more. And He didn't even have to ask God for it. He could just tell one of his servants to go out and get it, and they would.

But maybe that's the point!

The man who had all the earthly power and prestige and position still asked God for the desires of his heart!

How much more then should we be asking?

Maybe it's because David knew how fleeting and tenuous our earthly treasures are and how quickly they could disappear.

Remember the parable Jesus taught about the rich fool whose land produced such a large crop that he decided to build bigger barns to store it all?

Well, there was nothing wrong with him building bigger barns. What was wrong is that he put all his faith in himself and his good works never acknowledging God's provision and protection. So all of his work was for not.

I conclude my sermon with this thought:

Don't be afraid to share your hopes and dreams and wants with God. He's big enough to handle them. You may be afraid to do so, because you may have the mindset of George McFly from Back to the Future who famously said ... "I don't think I can handle that kind of rejection."

No, express all your wants to God and I guarantee that you'll be surprised what he gives you. More than that, you'll be taken aback by how your hopes and dreams and wants change as you interact with God more and more.

In Psalm 84:10 the Psalmist writes, *"Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold for those whose walk is blameless."*

He probably didn't come to that conclusion overnight. It probably came to him only after he shared with God his wants and desires.