

# ***Finding What You Really Want***

*Matthew 13: 44-46*

**First Presbyterian Church  
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It's a classic line when a love affair is on the rocks. I heard it last week on *Grantchester*, one of my favorite shows. (How could I not like a mystery show set in an English village that has as its central character a manly, handsome minister?!). She pleaded with him, "Sidney, what do you *want*? What do you want?" When a relationship is at an impasse, one person often cries that out in agony, "I don't know what you want. So I don't know what to do. Tell me what you really want." Sidney's answer was silence. The answer is usually filled with inner conflict that can't be expressed. I don't know. Something. Something more. Something else. Something that resolves the tension. I don't know what I really want.

This past week, I asked people in Bible studies what they remember really craving in their childhood. Something they had to have. Something they really wanted to do. The answers were ready at hand. A particular pair of white sneakers. The first two-wheeler bike. Getting to see the movie *Dirty Dancing*. Some folks got what they wanted, some didn't. But the heart of each memory was intense desire. We remember what we deeply felt we had to have.

This doesn't change when we become adults. Last summer, maybe a few of us knew we had to get to Green Bay for the first game. This summer, one or two of us spent a little bit of change making a pilgrimage to see the band U2 play in concert. This fall, one or two of us will be in line when the iPhone 10 gets released. One article I read questioned whether people would really pay the elevated \$1000 price tag, making their phone more expensive than their computer. Not to worry, I thought. Price means nothing when obsession is at work. One person can't stop thinking about a Viking River Cruise while another counts the days to the hiking in the Tetons. One needs a new gun while another pines over new floors. And another feels compelled to possess a work of art, yearning for creativity and meaning to flow from the object to the heart. Now it's no good snooting at another person's craving. The marketers know just how to find your unique desire to fan it into an unstoppable demand. And most of the time I go along not only willingly, but gratefully. Notre Dame vs. Miami, version 2017? Catholics vs. Convicts in Miami? I just bought my tickets this week!

Ambition fuels us with desire to succeed as well. We want people to admire our heart. To seek our services. To require our expertise. To watch us breathlessly as we run or dance or skate or balance on the beams. We want to win the money game, to master the art of the deal, and maneuver through the market with enviable finesse. We want people to respond to our success by giving us lots of money, awestruck admiration and unending gratitude. Desire for success drives us forward. And the rewards are considerable.

But we all know there is more we want than vivid experiences, beautiful objects, and a successful career. In the deep places of our souls, we crave relationships. We reach for authentic connections which may fill in the gaps of loneliness. We pine for people who can bring some sanity to our madness. We want to give our hearts to heroes who will solve our struggles. We want to invest our desires in someone who will satisfy those desires, then reawaken them and satisfy them all over again. The enduring cycle of wanting and receiving calls to us as an engine to drive our lives.

Quests are thrilling. Beautiful objects delight. Doing well satisfies achievers daily. Love is grand. All of these things, if they do not involve immorality and if they are pursued in balance, are great goods. These give us zest and passion for life.

But why are they not enough in themselves? Why doesn't having that \$200 shirt continue to satisfy me? Even if I buy another one? Why am I still bored even while I took that exciting trip? Why is prestige so precarious and success such a demanding master? Why doesn't the love of my life in herself fulfill me, complete me, know me and create me the way the songs and movies describe?

These bring us back to the question with which we started: what do we really want? In the deep down, heart of hearts places. What would change everything from the inside out?

The Bible tells us that our God is jealous for our love (Ex. 20: 4-5). He so desires a relationship with us that he will not easily let us go. He has built a mechanism into the human heart that prevents us from being truly satisfied in any quest, object, ambition or even relationship that does not have love for him as its inner core. If we love as an end in itself what is merely a gift from the Source of all, we will find those things to always disappoint. Be they jobs or spouses or objects of art or glorious ambitions realized. He will not let those created things satisfy us without him as the center. He loves us too much to let us go. He makes

himself the one true object of human desire. His beauty alone gives satisfying splendor to everything else.

In our Scriptures this morning, Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. A man walking through the field, or perhaps plowing in the field, stumbled onto this treasure. He knew that whoever owned the land owned what was on the land. So he determined he had to purchase that property in order to get the treasure buried on it. Sort of like discovering that there's oil under a swamp. You want to buy that swamp as quickly as possible before anyone realizes its true value. You are willing to double mortgage your house, liquidate your portfolio and even sell off some family heirlooms to raise the cash to get the land. Because what's on the land is worth more than any amount you could pay.

Jesus then used a second illustration. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found that one pearl, that pearl beyond compare, he went and sold all that he had in order to buy it. This is the art collector who finds an undiscovered Van Gogh coming to the market. The book collector who finds an original actor's copy of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Paul McCartney's first guitar. Old growth forest property with 300 year old poplars in the mountains. A virgin beach in the Caribbean. Something of great beauty, something long sought, something which will only increase in value through the years. It's worth everything that you have to possess it. The object of all your questing and seeking and striving. Something that creates urgency. I have to get this while I can. Now is the time. Everything depends on having this right now, no matter the cost. That's the Kingdom of Heaven.

We arrive in church believing that the pearl of great price is on offer. And we want it. We believe that the hidden treasure may be found. We're eager for it. We come expecting, hoping desperately, that we can catch the scent of heaven while we're here. We want to be taken up into something greater than daily life, to be drawn into the eternal realms. To know the true object of desire, what we really most want. And to sort it out from other pretenders to that highest good.

For without God in the world, we turn our deepest desire towards other people. And along the way or in the end, even the best cannot do it for us. Your presence may be truly comforting, but as an end in itself, mere touch does not assuage my loneliness. Your steady calm love may still the waters of my life, but even lying contented in your arms, if you are all I have, I do not know peace. Your forgiveness may set me free from the shame of what I said or did to you. But no matter how kind your heart towards me, you do not have the power to wash out the

stain of my wrong. You cannot make atonement for me. Your life may help me face the passing of the years unafraid. With you next to me I weather the griefs of all this dying. But in the end, I cannot prevent your death. Nor you mine. We may mean the world to each other, but it's quite something to learn that I cannot be the hero of your life's narrative. Not ultimately. I can love, but I cannot solve the mystery of your heart, your past, or your need.

Jesus alone is the one who does not disappoint. But more, he is the one who is comfort when we suffer. He is forgiveness when we feel stained by sin. He is peace when the world is chaos. He makes a way when there is no way. Jesus is the God who came to save us and the God who will come again to set all things right. He is the first and the last, the beginning and the end. He is living water and bread of life. He is the soul's sufficiency and the joy of all our desiring. We may not change anything in our external world, but knowing him changes everything inside us as we go through that world.

Have you found that this is true? Once you know who Jesus is, you are willing to give up all to have him. In fact, you find out that he demands we receive this pearl at the price of our hearts. Grace is free because I can't buy it, earn it, control it or demand it. It's all gift. Grace also costs your whole life because God doesn't let you experience it until we release all to him. Grace requires that we enthrone God in our hearts. Grace demands that we live *from* Christ before we can live *for* Christ. He's pretty serious that we not try to diversify our hearts. We don't enjoy the pearl until we stake it all on Christ. We don't get the treasure until we buy the field at the price of all we are.

C.S. Lewis clarifies the truth for us:

The principle runs through all life from top to bottom. Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ, and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.<sup>1</sup>

Of course I'm going to proclaim that Jesus himself is the pearl of great price. Participating in Christ is the path to having desire awakened and fulfilled. But this

pearl costs us everything. Can we trust Jesus to be what he promises? How can I know he is worth the gamble, every day, to release my life to him?

I cannot prove it to you. But I can tell you the gospel. For in it we learn something that turns the key. The story of Jesus tells us of God's great quest. In heaven, the Triune God looked upon the world he had made and his heart broke in love for us. God set his affection upon us. The Father sent the Son to retrieve the humanity that had gotten lost amidst disordered and chaotic desires.

So he stripped himself of glory and power. Like a diver peeling off his street clothes, the Son of God laid aside his divine privileges and power. And then he dove off the highest of high dives. God's Son plunged into the cold waters of our life on earth. Down he dove, deeper and deeper as the pressure crushed in on him. Towards the muck and weeds at the bottom of the ocean he swam. There, in the darkness of the sea of lost humanity, he stretched out his hands and laid hold of pearl. The true object of his quest. The pearl of great price. The human heart that was made to know and love God. In the gospel story, this plunge cost him his life. He died underneath that sea of death, but never let go of the precious pearl he had come to receive.

The miracle of this story is that on the third day, his Father recalled the Son from the icy, dark depths of all our dying and all our lostness. On Easter Sunday, Jesus burst the surface of the sea, drinking in sunlight and air, and holding in his hand the precious object for which he had plunged the depths most deep. The human heart forgiven. The human heart restored to right relationship with God. The human heart remade for everlasting life that begins now. He staked his life to secure the pearl of great price: us!<sup>2</sup>

God went first. He risked his eternal desire and fulfillment on encountering the sin and evil and chaos in our world. For a moment, it looked like a lost cost. He drowned under the sea of our death. He gave everything for us and died not letting go of the pearl he had grasped. We were worth it to him. And when his Father raised him from the dead, how great was his rejoicing. "I have them Father! The pearl you sent me to find. The object of our desire. I have them!"

Jesus bought the field of our flesh to gain the treasure which is people made new. He gave everything for the pearl that is our hearts restored. Can we trust someone who loves us that much? Can we give ourselves anew to such a God? He does not ask us to do anything he was not willing to do. He pleads with us that

what we really want, what we most desperately want at the heart of all our desires is nothing other than him. He changes everything. He puts the savor back into life.

Are you all in? Will you yield your heart? Stop hedging your bets? Trust that Jesus is the joy of man's desiring? He is the pearl. He is the heart of what we are seeking inside every other desire. And he is worth everything.

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<sup>1</sup> C S Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.

<sup>2</sup> This image is also sourced in C.S. Lewis, from *Miracles*, chp. 14.