

Matthew 15.29-39. Overcome Desires
“Overcome Desires”
Matthew 15:29-39

Introduction: Pg. _____

We journey through life loaded with desires. Deep within us there is a cry for more. We are always wanting. No matter how good life gets, we are always going to want something else. There is no end to this.

We see this in the 21st century phenomenon known as the #bucketlist. A bucket list is a list of things you want to do before you die. Things like...

- Walk the Great Wall of China.
- See a Musical in London.
- Go to the Masters Golf Tournament. (Replace?)
- Solve a Rubik’s Cube.
- Climb Everest.
- Swim with Sharks.
- And my personal favorite... Ride a Unicorn. [Can you do that? Let’s go find one. Just ask Santa Clause.]

From the mundane to magnificent, we look for something greater, something better, something truer, something more satisfying. Something as simple as better weather to something as complex as a better spouse.

What do you want in life? What is your heart chasing after?

FCF: One ancient writer said: “God has put eternity into our hearts.” (Ecclesiastes 3:11) He makes us with long for that which will bring lasting and complete satisfaction to the desires of our hearts. But here’s our problem. Our desires are not deep enough. Our desires are deficient.

This is what C.S. Lewis, the Oxford professor once atheist turned Christian, talked about in his classic work *Mere Christianity*. When Lewis analyzed the attitude of Jesus toward the prevailing desires of our hearts, he came to the following conclusion:

“If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that **Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak**. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a [vacation] at the sea. **We are far too easily pleased.**” - C.S. Lewis

Today, as we consider the work of Jesus, my prayer is that we will...

{P} The Point: Overcome deficient desires through the sufficient Savior.

At the end of Matthew 15, we come to a story replete with Jesus meeting the desires of the people. Read *Matthew 15:29-39*.

- Setting: Jesus is now in the hill country on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee known as the Decapolis. This means he is still in foreign territory interacting with Gentiles, non-Jewish people.
- When the people heard Jesus was in the region, about 10,000 people converged on him from the ten cities of the Decapolis with urgency in hopes that their suffering friends would be healed.

Throughout this account, we will discover... that Jesus can not only fulfill our greatest desires, but he wants to do much more by satisfying desires we don’t even realize we possess.

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I. Jesus can fulfill our greatest desires.

We all desire for our needs *and* our wants to be met.

- In this case, the people are rushing to Jesus because of his reputation as a miracle-working healer.
- If you had a sick child, or friend or sibling or parent, would you not do whatever you could to get to Jesus?
- I mean when we Yelp a restaurant and discover it has a 4.7 rating, we going and with some friends! :)
- What if a hospital near us healed people with a 100% success rate? MGH, Beth-Israel, Brigham & Women's, Children's are world-renowned, but Jesus was on a different stratosphere.
- One by one they came to Jesus...
 - The Lame: who could not walk.
 - The Blind: who could not see.
 - The Crippled: who suffered from a physical deformity and disability.
 - The Mute: those who could not speak.
 - Oh, and "many others": Whatever the illness, Jesus solved it. There is no calamity under the sun that will not crumble under the power of Jesus. Of course, that is what we would expect if he were God. :)
- There is not area of our body unaffected by sin. Sin has made a comprehensive mess of us, but there is something equally comprehensive: the restorative work of God's redemption through Jesus.
- And consider this: Jesus could have spoken a word and healed the crowds instantaneously, but he chose to spend time with each person. What further evidence do you need to believe God cares, not simply for the masses in a general sense, but YOU, as an individual?! You are in the circle of God's care and love.
- What if you could have sit on another hilltop a few thousand feet away and had the privilege of looking down on this crowd? Can you imagine what you would have seen?
 - The celebration? The take your breath away embrace of loved ones? Tears of joy? Laughter rumbling down the hillside? Jubilant songs? The dance of fulfilled dreams?
 - If we can read this without seeing and sensing that, we are missing something!
 - The kingdom of Jesus is a kingdom of joy and endless celebration.
 - After all, Jesus is the embodiment of joy.
- The response of the crowd of 10,000[-15,000] people is captured in verse 31...
 - They wondered. They marveled. They were amazed, astonished. They praised the God of Israel.
 - When they saw "the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing." they were witnessing the fulfillment of Isaiah 35:5-6, which describes the coming Messiah: **"Behold, your God will come . . . and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy."** (Isaiah 35:4-6)
 - When is the last time the jaw-dropping work of Jesus stopped you in your tracks?
 - Here's my prayer for us this Easter week: I'm asking God to absolutely wreck our hearts to the point where we just have to stop and be amazed and marvel and wonder and be astonished by who Jesus is and what he has done.

But there was more on the horizon.

- This time of healing and teaching ministry lasted three days! Which carried an inherent liability. The people were running out of food. If they left in their current condition, they might faint on the way.
- Why, you ask? Because they were in the wilderness with no access to food. (No Chipotle. No Regina's. No Stop & Shop. No Market Basket)
- You know what it's like to run out of food. Some of you suffer from a serious condition related to this. That's right "hangryness!" :)
- So Jesus takes their limited resources, just seven loaves of bread and a few small fish, and he feeds the entire crowd!

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- Some Observations on this miraculous move from Jesus.
- The compassion of Christ moved him to meet needs. In verse 32, he says: “I have compassion.”
 - This word tells us Jesus was “very deeply moved by the plight of the people.”
 - Not just concerned. Affected to the point of Action. We can say we are concerned for hungry children, but if we do nothing nothing to help, how much do we really care?
- We are slow-learners when it comes to the work of Jesus.
 - The question the disciples raise in verse 33 is perplexing.
 - If we rewind one chapter, we learn Jesus just fed 5000! He was more than competent to get the job done.
 - But their faith was still growing, and like them, we need repetition. We need reminders of God’s power. We are prone to quickly forget or quickly doubt, but then the most glaring reality we see is that...
- Jesus does much with little, providing a superabundance.
 - Every one ate. This wasn’t just a little snack. We’re talking meal. All 10,000 people walked away satisfied.
 - *And* if there is any doubt, after all was said and done, the disciples took up seven baskets full of food. Superabundance.
 - But the superabundance says more about Jesus than simply his ability to provide to food. It says something about the liberality of his love.
 - I’m not one to find a lot of hidden meaning in Scripture, but there seems to be some very plausible symbolism in the 7 baskets. Let me explain.
 - When Jesus fed 5,000 people in Jewish territory, how many baskets did they collect? Twelve. How many tribes of people make up the nation of Israel? That’s right. Twelve. Jesus is the Savior, the provision for the people of Israel.
 - But now, you remember, we find him in Gentile territory, and they collect seven baskets? What does the number seven represent in Scripture? Perfection or Completion. What’s that got to do with this crowd? Jesus is the Savior, the provision for all people.
 - God’s love, mercy and grace in Christ is superabundant. It is big enough, complete enough, perfect enough for the entire world.
 - That is what the cross is all about. Jesus is the bread broken for us. As his body was broken for us, bleeding and dying, God’s redeeming love flows to all who receive the gift of life he offers us by faith.

T: Physical healing. Physical hunger. Jesus can fulfill our greatest desires, but often *our greatest desires* are not great enough. Jesus wants more for us.

I hope you will discover in a new way or a renewed way that we can . . .

II. Find in Jesus the fulfillment of your ultimate desires.

Believe it or not, we should actually take stories like these as a warning for us. Here’s why: many people who hung out with Jesus, heard him teach and experienced his healing power did not really experience Jesus in his fullness.

[It is possible to embrace part of Jesus and miss Jesus.] It is possible to remain at the level of deficient desires and miss the full sufficiency of Jesus to fulfill our ultimate desires.

Let me show you how this works:

Deficient Desire #1: Desiring Jesus for our own Selfish Gain, our own agenda.

- We want God as long as he clearly benefits us! This happened when Jesus performed this same miracle in Israel, feeding 5,000. After they “*saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed*

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the Prophet who is to come into the world!" And Jesus, "perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king,... withdrew... by himself." (John 6:14-15)

- The people wanted a king, but Jesus was not the kind of king they expected.
- After Jesus withdrew from them, they found out he went to the other side of the sea and chased after him, actually hopping into boats and scurrying across the sea as fast as possible. When they found Jesus, he told them: *"you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."*
- In other words, they wanted Jesus for what they could get out of him, not for him.
 - Picture of a child or spouse who loves only for the "benefits."
 - Jesus is not a Genie. He is not a Cosmic ATM. He is not an Uber Driver, whose job is to get us from point A to point B, with the quickest route, of course...
- This is wrong, because these miracles were designed to show people that Jesus is supremely valuable, infinitely more valuable than any gift we could enjoy from him, which leads us to another deficient desires.

Deficient Desire #2: Desiring Jesus less than anything else.

- Many of our desires are honorable and right. Others are shameful and wrong.
- At times, we desire what God says is off limits.
 - When God says to live at peace with one another, we get angry and fight.
 - When God says to trust that he is in control, we try to take control, which leads to anxiety, fear, and worry.
 - When God says to keep our sexual experiences within the confines of marriage, we hook up for instant gratification or access the endless stream of pornography at our fingertips. By the way, if anyone of you were to come to me, and say I'm struggling in this area, I would be sad but not shocked. I've been there. We have to fight this together. That goes for men and women.
 - But here's the good news for our anger, anxiety, and lust. God overcomes those desires by giving us a greater desire for him.
 - This is the secret, as Thomas Chalmers put so eloquently: "The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one."
- But, that's not our only issue. God not only wants to replace your impure desires; he also wants to upgrade our pure desires. Often we have pure desires, but often they are still deficient.
- These miracles are called signs in the gospels. A sign points beyond itself to a greater reality.
- Each of these miracles are designed to show people that Jesus is the greater reality that fulfills the ultimate desires of our souls.
 - Jesus not only wants to cure Physical Blindness, > he wants to give Spiritual Sight.
 - He wants to take our weak legs, our lame legs, and > strengthen them to walk the path God desires for us.
 - You want bread? I am bread.
 - Are you thirsty? Take a drink that will forever satisfy you.
 - Are you tired? I'll give you rest that will last for longer than a day.
 - The ultimate longings of our souls for justice, peace, friendship, and love are all located in God!
- In fact, anything we enjoy in this life is meant to be a window that we look through to see the greater reality of a God who is both the source of that enjoyment and the ultimate fulfillment of that

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enjoyment. This is true whether we are talking about a cup of coffee, a good conversation, a 78 degree sunny day after a long winter, or sex. They are windows to look through to find God as the source and ultimate fulfillment of our desires for relationships, meaning, and pleasure.

Conclusion:

"If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world." ~ C.S. Lewis (*Mere Christianity*)

- You were made for God, to know him, love him and enjoy him forever. Nothing in this world will bring lasting and complete satisfaction except for him.
- Many of you know that today is Palm Sunday. The Sunday before his crucifixion and resurrection when he rode into Jerusalem on the back of a young donkey, and as Jesus made his approach into the city, the people waved palm branches and laid them on the road for his triumphant entry. But as Jesus rode by, they shouted, "Hosanna, Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."
- The word Hosanna was a cry that meant "Please, save" and it came to mean: "Salvation has come."
- But they could not have known the cosmic scope of Jesus' salvation.
- Jesus was riding in not simply as the long-awaited King of Israel, but he was riding in as the King who was bringing this other world to us.
- The good news of Good Friday is that Jesus died for our wicked and deficient desires, so that we can experience all God desires for us.
- And the good news of Easter is that Jesus rose from the dead, guaranteeing that it is all true and that we will not only experience it in this life, but most fully and freely in the one to come.

Response:

- My desires have been too weak. Give me more of a desire for more of you! Hosanna.
- I've never gone all in. I've wanted what I can get from you, but not you! Hosanna.

Connect Card. Pray.