

## **One thing**

Luke 14:25-33

September 8, 2013

What do you want?

I want a new kayak, a Current Designs Caribou. I want my fantasy football team to win this weekend. I want to go fishing.

I want to sing. I want good friends. I want my Mom to have a speedy recovery and a happy result from her hip replacement surgery.

I want to be able to retire -- someday -- with enough money so that Lynne and I can do some of the things we have dreamed about doing. I want to live into my 90's. I want to live into my 90's in good health.

I want my children to have good lives, not just productive lives, but good lives. I want them to be well-loved and I want them to love well, especially to love God well, to find their direction and purpose and rest in God.

I want my grandchildren to have good lives. I want them to be able to grow up in a world that is not hell-bent, where they can still see and hear and taste beauty, where their bodies and their spirits will not be disturbed by violence.

I want a world that is not disturbed by violence. I want peace and freedom from mortal fear, peace and freedom from mortal harm, in Syria, and in Egypt, and in the Sudan. I want violent people to stop being violent, including us.

I want our church to be a place of peace, a place of healing, a place where people, like us, find ourselves and find God.

I want the Job Foundation to make a real and lasting difference in the lives and futures of the children of Waterloo. I want the work of Rotary and our church and others like us to make a real and lasting difference in the lives and futures of the children of Chinandega, Nicaragua. I want the Martin Luther King memorial to be built in Washington Park and serve as an emblem, not of everything that divides us, but of the deeper truths that bind us to each other as human beings.

I want laughter. I want to hear lots of laughter in our church, lots of laughter in my home, lots of laughter in the schools and workplaces and on the streets of Waterloo and Cedar Falls. I want joy.

I want many things. I want many. many, many things.

What do you want?

Purity of heart is to want one thing.

Jesus said that those who are pure in heart are happy, because they will see God. If you are pure in heart, you will be happy, and you will see God!

Purity of heart is to want one thing; to set aside every other want for the sake of one single want; to subsume every other desire into one overriding desire; to live, not primarily, but entirely, for the sake of one thing.

Purity of heart is to want one thing.

“None of you can be my disciple unless you give up everything you have.” Which is another way of saying the same thing. You can’t follow Jesus if you are being pulled at the same time in other directions, if you are clinging to other desires. You can be a disciple, a follower of Jesus, only if you love him more: more than your father and your mother, more than your husband or your wife or your children or your grandchildren, more than your brothers or your sisters or your friends, only if you love him more than yourself.

If you want to follow Jesus, you must want to follow Jesus. You must want this one thing. Everything else must go. Everything else must be given up -- every other want, every other desire, every other love. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength.” Not with most of you, not with the best of you, but with all of you.

Anybody else want to head for the exits now?

But listen again. Purity of heart is to want one thing -- not to be perfect, not to be complete, not to be without doubt or flaw or hesitation. Purity of heart is to want one thing, to choose one desire above all other desires, to long for one thing. Or is there something else you want more?

I’m not sure I would be here, I’m not sure you would be here, if we did not want this one thing, if we did not long ... to see God. We give things up, we make sacrifices, for other loves. What are you ready to set aside, what are you ready to sacrifice, for this love? And why do we make sacrifices for love? For the joy! For the wanting! For wanting this one thing!

Purity of heart is to want one thing. Can you imagine what that looks like, to direct your whole being toward the pursuit of God? To work out of a desire to serve God, to play out of a desire to enjoy God, to make plans out of a desire to please God? With thoughts and feelings that are at the same time prayers, and with prayers that are not about what God can do for you or even about what you will do for God, but about wanting God, longing above all else for God's presence?

Take a look at yourself. Take a good look at all of us. Aren't we the most strange and wonderful and absolutely silly creatures? We look funny, don't we? All our different shapes and sizes and colors and goofy features? Just look! And the way we act? We are so silly, most of all when we try to take ourselves seriously, all too seriously.

And what is the impact, the truly lasting and meaningful impact, of the things we do, in the grand scheme of things? What did I do yesterday, what did you do yesterday, that will be remembered for generations, that is worthy of being recorded in the history books? And does most of the stuff that is being remembered and is being recorded really matter in the grand scheme of things? Does it really matter whatever it is the Kardashians are doing?

We spend all kinds of money, we expend all kinds of energy, we consume all kinds of food and entertainment and experiences, but for what? What is it all worth? What does it all gain? When I die, when you die, we won't take anything with us, and all that we did and all that we were will fade into the ether.

That's mostly what we see when we take a good look at ourselves, but what does God see? God sees God's own children, made to be like him, called to be like him. We are made to be God's people, called out to be God's own people -- holy, set apart, distinctive. We have a reason for being. We have a purpose that matters. The smallest act of love, the tiniest gesture of generosity, a single sentence spoken in kindness ... reverberate into eternity! It matters!

What do you see when you look at yourself? What will you choose for yourself? What will you pursue? Who will you pursue? What do you want?

From this Sunday through Thanksgiving Sunday, until the beginning of Advent, we will be reading together lectionary lessons from the gospel of Luke, paying special attention to what this gospel reveals about the distinguishing marks, the distinctive traits, of the followers of Jesus. And the first mark, revealed in today's gospel lesson, is this: followers of Jesus are all in!

You can't dabble with discipleship. You can't follow Jesus sort of. You can't be a half-way, half-hearted lover ... literally. It's all your heart or none of it.

Purity of heart is to want one thing. If you want to go with Jesus, you have to want to go with Jesus. You have to want one thing, this one thing.

What do you want?