

“Wanting to Want What You Don’t Want but Should Want”

John 7:1-17

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Sermon

Last week on vacation I was watching TV with my two sons, and I saw this:

[South Park TV clip:]

Father (with Mother), standing in the back of a church, speaking to the preacher during a service: Where is our daughter?

Marcie, coming out of a pew: Dad?

Father: Marcie, you’re coming home this instant!

Preacher: We are saving your daughter from the clutches of Hell, sir!

Father: You’re not going to make my daughter part of your cult!

Preacher: Your daughter could die tomorrow, and then what?

Father: You’re just a stupid, little, fat kid who thinks that... Ah!

[Beam falls from the ceiling and hits Father on the head]

Mother: Steven? Steve, no!

Preacher: The Lord has spoken again!

Mother: Steven! Steven!

[Blood pours from Steven’s head. New scene: a large crowd standing in front of flames]

Father, in Hell: Where...Where am I?

Crowd in Hell: Where are we? What’s happening? Ahhhh!

Hell Director on stage, tapping on and speaking into a microphone: Hello, newcomers, and welcome. Can everybody hear me? Hello? I’m the Hell Director. Looks like we have about 8,615 of you newbies today, and for those of you who were a little confused, uh, you are dead, and this is Hell. So abandon all hope, and yada yada yada yada. Uh, we’re now going to start the orientation process, which last about...

Old man in crowd: Hey, wait a minute! I shouldn’t be here. I was a totally strict and devout Protestant! I thought we went to Heaven!

Hell Director: Yes, well, I’m afraid you were wrong.

Another man in the crowd: I was a practicing Jehovah’s Witness.

Hell Director: You picked the wrong religion as well.

Another man in the crowd: Well, who was right? Who gets into Heaven?

Hell Director: I’m afraid it was the Mormons. Yes, the Mormons were the correct answer.

Crowd: Awww.

I love that. “The correct answer is...” At least in America, religion has portrayed faith as simply the correct answer to a test that we can pass or fail. So if you believe the correct doctrine, you’re saved, born again, and win the jackpot. And if you don’t, you’ll be tortured in Hell forever. And so we’ve spent a lot of time arguing that our doctrine is correct, and then threatening people to believe it. But is that what saving faith is?—Our choice of correct doctrine?

Well, how do we know the right doctrine?

- How do we know what the truth is, so we can choose to confess it?
- How do we know what the good is, so we can will it?

- How do we know what's right, so we can make the right decision?
- How do we judge truth, so we can choose to be true?

That's the big question in John 7.

John 7:1:

After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

...because they were offended in John 6. As I hope you remember from last time, in John 6 Jesus basically reveals that apart from Him we are all monsters: zombies and vampires, the walking dead seeking the body and blood of the living. And apart from Him, we cannot choose the good at all. So in our last sermon, we preached on the Monster Trap: Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He traps monsters using their own bad motives and replacing them with His good motive: Himself.

It was our evil judgment—our bad choice—that took Jesus' life.
It was God's good judgment—His good choice—to give Jesus' life.

In other words, our choice—our will—our judgment is sin, always, sin. And God's choice—God's will—God's judgment is grace, always, grace.. That's offensive. Nothing is more offensive than grace. So if you found the last sermon a bit offensive, that's good. Perhaps it means you're getting it: grace.

John 7:2-8:

Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world [prove it]." For not even his brothers believed in him. Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."

Christ's time is His Father's time. He will wait for His Father's prompting, for He wants what His Father wants. His brothers want what they want. So their time is always here.

John 7:9-14:

After saying this, he remained in Galilee. But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray." Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him. About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching.

"The middle of the Feast of Booths," or Feast of Tabernacles: For seven days, Israel was commanded to live in tents like they did on their journey from bondage to freedom. The eighth

day, the great day, they celebrated the harvest. Remember, we are on a journey through this world. And there is a harvest of this world.

Well, the Jews grumble and wonder where Jesus is leading them. Just like the Israelites grumbled and wondered where the pillar of fire was leading them. The pillar of fire and Jesus... maybe they're the same thing.

John 7:15-19:

The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied [he has no credentials]?" So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law."

In other words, you know about the good, but none of you loves the good, because you seek your own glory. You seek your own will. "No one seeks for God, no one does good, not even one," says Scripture. All are monsters.

John 7:19-24:

"Why do you seek to kill me?" The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?" Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel at it. Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

Moses and the prophets reveal that circumcision is really about the heart, that something is fundamentally wrong with our hearts. It's our hearts that trust or don't trust, says Paul in Romans 10. And our hearts must be circumcised: the outer skin cut away from that most tender part of our being—that part with which we trust and love and judge. "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

What is "right judgment"?

Remember, John describes Jesus as the Judge who judges by not judging. God's judgment is grace. "Judge with right judgment, not appearances." Then for the rest of chapter 7, everyone keeps trying to judge Jesus by appearances so they can decide whether or not to choose Jesus. They judge the Truth so they can choose the truth. They ask:

Will he prove himself?
What effect does his teaching have?
What are his credentials?
Does he fulfill prophecies?
What do the authorities say?

They're asking, "How do we know his doctrine is true?" But Jesus just told them how they might know that the doctrine is true. Verse 17: "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority."

He's saying: If you will the truth, you will know about the truth. If you will the good, you will know about the good. But that's backwards, isn't it? Shouldn't it be: If you know about the truth, then you can will the truth? If you know about the good, then you can choose the good? But He says, "If you will God's will, then you'll know." If you will God's will.

Who wills God's will? Not us monsters.

How do we will what we don't will and can't will but should will?
How do we choose what we don't choose and can't choose but should choose?
How do we want what we don't want but should want?

The word *theo* is translated "will." Even more accurately, it's translated "desire" or "want." So this is a word-for-word transliteration of verse 17: "If any might want the want of him to do, he will know about the doctrine."

So how do we want what we don't want but should want?
Can you just decide to want what you don't want?
Can you "should yourself" into wanting to do the good?

You can should yourself into doing the good, or what appears good; however, if you should yourself into doing the good, doesn't it just reveal that you are not good? It reveals that you don't want the good, because you had to should yourself into doing it. You see, when we turn the good into a law that we should fulfill, when we turn goodness into our responsibility...

- It only reveals that we are not good.
- It only reveals that we don't want the good.
- It reveals that we simply want to use the good in order to obtain the bad, which is our own self-centered will.
- It reveals that we don't freely choose the good, for, in fact, we choose the good constrained by the bad—our self-centered will or choice.

Our will is only free when every choice is entirely love: God's choice. You can't will yourself into being good.

Jesus said, "If any might will God's will to do"...and what's God's will?—the good. And the good is faith. Jesus said, "This is the work of God that you believe, that you trust." Can you should yourself into trust? Has anyone ever said to you, "You should trust Jesus. You should have faith"? And you think, "Oh, I never thought of that!" See, trust isn't something you can create with your own will. Trust is created by the revelation of another's will—the one you are to trust. You can't will yourself into faith.

Or think of it this way: Jesus said, "If any might will God's will to do." Clearly God's will is God's Word, and God's Word is Jesus. Jesus is a person. "If any might will Jesus to do." We are to will Jesus to do.

1. If you try to make that happen, you turn Jesus into your slave, and you use Him for your evil—your will.
2. But if you let that happen, Jesus turns you into His body and animates you with Himself—who is Love.

You see, the good, faith, God's will...is a person that we are to want. If you try to should yourself into wanting a person, it simply reveals you don't want that person—except to use that person. So eventually, you will despise that person. You'll crucify that person. When love becomes a law, which we think we can choose to do, "sin becomes sinful beyond measure" (Romans 7:13). I'm saying, you can't should yourself into love...not real love. Love is not a reality you can create with your will. Love is the reality that creates you and your will.

Love is God; God is Love.
Love is the choice that is God Himself.
And God must place God within you by grace.
When it happens, it's called faith and manifests as love.
You can't will yourself into love.

So you don't choose the good—choose faith—like an answer on a test.

You didn't choose the Good; the Good chooses you.
You didn't choose faith; it's more like faith chooses you.
You didn't choose love; Love chooses you.
You didn't choose Jesus; Jesus chooses you.

Being saved is like falling love. Not a test you take but a test that takes you. You really don't choose to fall in love. That's why we say, "He was smitten. She captured his heart. The trap was sprung." It's the monster trap.

I didn't choose to fall in love. I chose to ask Susan on a date, because I judged her appearance. She appeared awesome in her white, polyester pants. That was my motive; that's what I wanted. I was a monster. At youth group I was told I should want *her*, that is, want her heart. But how do I choose to want what I don't want but should want? I wanted her attributes not her heart.

Do we ever want God's attributes and not His heart? If so, we're monsters.

Well, I couldn't make myself want her heart; I didn't know her heart. I was a monster, but she was a monster trap. I mean, she loved me and so let me break her heart. It has happened far more than once. But I remember the first time. I've told you the story. I broke her heart and later went looking for her and found her. I saw her from a distance and watched her from a distance. She was walking in the rain in the park weeping over me. I saw her heart, and it was broken over me. And then suddenly my heart broke over her. I wanted her. I didn't judge her heart; her heart judged me and created in me a new want, a new want, a new heart. That's how she trapped me. She romanced me. That's the monster trap. She drew me to herself...with grace.

On May 28, 1983, I vowed myself away, saying, "I do." And I did it with a big, old smile on my face...because I wanted to.

I suppose you could say that was my choice. But I can never take credit for that choice. But imagine if I did, if at the reception, someone asked, "Why did you get married?" And I said, "Well, I didn't want to, but I realized I should. I've discerned what's good, and I've disciplined myself to choose what's good. Yeah, it's hard, but it's the right thing to do, so I did it because I should." That would have broken Susan's heart. And since we've been married, I have broken her heart. Yet with it, she still traps the monster, and that's to her credit, not mine.

But now imagine if at the reception I stood up and said, “Well, I didn’t want to, but she trapped me with her love. I was smitten. I fell in love.” That would be entirely different. You see, I fell in love. I didn’t should myself into love. I didn’t will myself into love. And imagine if I had tried:

Susan and I figure that we must have both eaten at the same time at the Denver Drumstick with our families sometime around 1968 or 1969. Imagine if a time traveler from the future suddenly appeared, pointed to Susan, and spoke to me saying, “You, Peter Hiett, should love that girl on the other side of the restaurant. You should give her all your earthly possessions. You should vow yourself to her in an unbreakable covenant, stand naked before her, and love her from the depths of your heart. You should, and if you don’t, you’ll burn forever in Hell!” Well, if I believed, then by May 28, 1983, I would have grown to hate that girl...or I would have been committed to an insane asylum...or I would have taken my life. I would have, if I would have tried to should myself into falling in love.

But now imagine if the time traveler didn’t say, “You should,” but “you shall,” and “you will want to. She will be your wife.” Well, that would be weird, but good. I was pretty insecure, and I think it would have filled me with hope. I think I would have thought, “Wow, I want to meet this girl.”

In Exodus 20, I AM that I AM (from beyond the future) spoke from the fire on the mountain and said, “You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make idols and worship them. You shall not take my name for your vain purposes—your glory.” The Ten Commandments. Are they a threat? Or a promise?

In Deuteronomy 6 the voice in the pillar of fire told Israel, “You shall [perfect tense] love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

“You shall,” not “you should.”
“You shall,” and did they? Not in that lifetime.
“You shall,” so is God a liar?

In Matthew 22, Mark 12, and Luke 10, the same voice (The Word of God)—Jesus says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.” “You shall.” It’s future active indicative. It means, “You will.” See? That’s a promise. A promise from the future. Jesus is promising His faithless bride a new heart. At the end of this journey, we are marrying Jesus. And the fruit of this journey, the harvest of the earth, is faith and love—a new heart—a new want.

If you don’t want to be married, marriage must be Hell.
But if you want to be married, it’s a taste of Heaven.

Later in that *South Park* episode, Saddam Hussein goes to Hell and loves it in Hell. So Satan sends Saddam to Heaven to live with the Mormons. That’s Saddam’s Hell—making things out of egg cartons with Mormons forever. Without a new heart, a new want, Heaven must burn like Hell. Maybe our biggest problem is that we don’t believe that God will give us a new want. When we don’t trust His grace, we hide our hearts—our wants—in fear.

One day many years ago, driving in our minivan, my daughter Elizabeth confessed her heart to me. She said, “Daddy, I don’t want to be a mommy when I grow up.” I said, “Oh, honey, how come?” And she said, “I don’t want breasts.” Understand? She couldn’t believe her wants might change, that what seemed like Hell could really be Heaven.

One day on a ski lift, I tried to explain the birds and bees to my son. He looked at me and said, “Daddy, could we talk about something else? You’re freakin’ me out!” He couldn’t conceive that his wants might change and what sounded like Hell could feel like Heaven.

Did you know that God will change your heart? And He *is* changing your heart. He is creating in you a new wanter, a new chooser. Human words fail us now, but... You didn't choose Him; He chose you, to one day choose Him in freedom. You are predestined...for free will, when you will only will love, in freedom, not like a robot, but like Jesus.

After the last message on John 6 and the Monster Trap, a friend wrote a wonderful letter and asked the question that I hoped someone would ask: "What about Deuteronomy 30?" You see, there are two places in the Old Testament where Israel is commanded to choose: Deuteronomy 30 and Joshua 24.

In Joshua 24:15, Joshua says, "Choose this day whom you will serve." And then he says, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And then Joshua says to the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord." So, you see, the only way to choose to serve the Lord is to be a part of Joshua's house. And who is Joshua? Well, Joshua is the Hebrew word for Jesus. He's the one who leads God's people to the Promised Land. And to be a part of Joshua's house, you must be married to Joshua/Jesus. And the only way you can marry Jesus is if He chooses you and romances you until you choose Him, because you've been chosen. You are His Bride, the Church, and He is your Bridegroom.

In Deuteronomy 30, through Moses, God says, "Israel, I set before you life and death, good and evil. Choose life...loving the Lord your God." In the next chapter He tells Moses, "They will forsake me as they are inclined to do." And we know they did, and they died. Yet in the previous chapter, God told them He will "circumcise their hearts, and they will love Him with all their hearts." How is that possible? Well, Ezekiel prophesies (chapter 37) that God will "raise the whole house of Israel from their graves, bring them into the Promised Land, and breathe His Spirit into them." He will create a new heart, a new wanter, within them.

Well, back in Deuteronomy, right before God says, "Choose," He says:

This commandment [this word] is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may bear it and do it?" But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

"The word"—What is the word? Listen to Paul in Romans 10. He tells us:

Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will descend into the abyss [the deep, the sea, the grave] (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim)....

Do you get what Paul's saying? He quotes Deuteronomy 30 and reveals that the good choice in you is Christ in you, which is the Word of faith in you, which is the Spirit of God in you—a new heart in you—a new wanter placed within you.

And how does that happen? You know: the Monster Trap. God attracts us with His attributes and lets us break His heart. We take His life, and yet He gives His life on the tree—the cross. He allows us to sin and then exhibits His infinite mercy. Jesus Christ, the Great Bridegroom, is God's heart, broken, lifted up, and nailed to the tree for all to see.

In John 12 on Palm Sunday, Jesus calls out, "Now is the judgment of this world.... And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." "I will draw." A great translation is, "I

will romance.” “I will romance all people to myself.” You see, we try to judge the truth on the tree, but even as we judge the truth, the truth on the tree judges us. The Truth is Jesus. The Truth judges us, redeems us, and sanctifies us, sending His Spirit into our hearts, making them new.

So we don’t argue people into the kingdom. We don’t threaten people into the kingdom, including ourselves. We preach “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

Faith cometh not by arguing and threatening.

Faith cometh by something else.

Faith cometh by the revelation of God’s will—God’s choice, and He is love.

Faith cometh like this:

The Archbishop of Paris once preached a whole sermon around a story. He stood in the pulpit at Notre Dame and told how 30 years before, three young students had come into that cathedral. They were rough, rude, and cynical. They did not believe. Two of them dared the third to enter the confessional and make a bogus confession. They bet him that he didn’t have the nerve, but to win the bet, he did it. He was a monster.

The wise, old priest saw the ruse but listened just the same. He listened to the lie, sensed the arrogance, and then said, “Very well, my son. Every confession requires a penance, and this will be yours. Go into the chapel, stand before the crucifix, look into the face of the crucified Christ, and say, “All this you did for me, and I don’t give a damn.”

The young man swaggered out of the confessional and to his friends to claim the bet. But they insisted that before they paid him, he must finish the performance and complete the penance. So he went into the chapel, looked into the face of Christ on the cross, and began, “All this you did for me and I don’t...” His voice faltered. “All this you did for me, and I...” He couldn’t say it. He never finished the sentence. It began for him a painful experience, but one that changed his heart—his want. The Archbishop, telling the story, leaned over the pulpit and said, “That young man was this man, who stands before you to preach.”

And that’s how you come to want what you didn’t want but should want and need to want and shall want. You *will* love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself. You will.

Communion

Because on the night that Jesus was handed over, He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you. Take and eat. Do it in remembrance of me.” And in the same manner, after supper, He took the cup and said, “This is the new covenant, also called the eternal covenant, in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me.”

So, in the name of Jesus, bring that old want, your dead heart, your sin to the table. And God will fill it with His want, His heart, His grace. In Jesus’ name, worship Him. Amen.

Benediction

What is your journey through this world? What is the fruit of the journey? Your journey through this world is a love story. It is the romance of God. And the fruit of the journey is a new heart. Have you ever read a romance story? At the start, there’s always somebody with a bad heart. Then their heart changes at the end. What they didn’t want at the start they want desperately at the end. And they live happily ever after. It’s a love story.

And who’s writing your story? You? No. God. He’s writing it according to His will. You may try to write yourself out of the story, but your will is not stronger than His will. And His will is always

glorified. And what is God's will? It's God's Word. And who is God's Word? Jesus. And what is His Word to you His Bride?

You will love me, the Lord your God, with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.
And you will love your neighbor as yourself.

You need to know that. Because when you really know that, you're free. "Who the Son sets free is free indeed." You are predestined to love the Lord your God in freedom. In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. It's a command and a promise, and it will set you free. In Jesus' name, amen.

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