

What do you want?

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[0 : 00] I'm just going to move this. Sorry. So, yes, hello. Good morning. Nice to be with you.! Just for those of you who weren't able to be here yesterday, a couple of people asked me if the poem that I recited was available online.

It is available online. If you go to Reformed Mythologist on YouTube, you can look. There's a little playlist there called Poetry, and there is the poem that I was doing yesterday with the playing cards. So if you want to see a version of that, it's not, I think, quite as good as doing it in person, but if you just want to tell people, oh, yeah, there was this weird thing about playing cards and something to do with Jesus, that's where you can go and find it.

So I just wanted to say that and to say once again, thank you so much for having me this weekend. It's really great to be with you. And if you're visiting this church this morning, it's really great to cross paths with you this morning.

The Lord, I believe, has ordained it that you would be here and I would be here at the same time, and I think the reason is so that I can tell you about Jesus. So that's my conviction.

[1 : 04] We're going to do that as we look at John chapter 1, and just as we turn our attention to that, let's just bow our heads and I'll pray for us as we begin. O dear God, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts be pleasing in your sight.

O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen. Yo, I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want. So tell me what you want, what you really, really want.

I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want. So tell me what you want, what you really, really want. I want a, I want a, I want a, I want a, I really, really, really want a zig-a-zig-a.

With such words, the Spice Girls burst onto the public imagination in the mid-90s. Now you might be thinking, why on earth has Nate chosen to start a sermon based upon the Bible with a quotation from a girl band who have long since disbanded?

Well, because I believe that the Spice Girls were onto something with that song, Wannabe. Right? What do you want? What do you really, really want?

[2 : 29] There's a couple of reasons I want to start this. As I've already mentioned, I am a reformed mythologist, which means I'm a Christian who thinks about story and storytelling. And the idea that someone wants something is really, really, really, really, really important in storytelling.

Having spent a lot of time studying storytelling, I've read lots of different books by people who are trying to help you to write your story. Whether that's to write a novel or to write a screenplay for a film or a TV show.

And one of the most famous of these is a book called *The Anatomy of a Story*. And it's written by an American screenwriter whose name is Jeremy Truby. Now he says this at one part in the book.

He says, Rene Descartes, the French philosopher, you remember him? He said, I think, therefore, I am. Cogito ergo sum.

I think, therefore, I am. He said, In philosophy, you can go with that. I think, therefore, I am. But in story, said Jeremy Truby, it's I want, therefore, I am.

[3 : 40] A character in a story is defined not by what they think, not by their philosophy, not by their worldview, but by what they want.

Because it is the desire of the characters in the story that moves the story forwards. The character wants something, and if it's a good story, something gets in the way.

There's an obstacle. There's an intention. It meets with an obstacle. And the obstacle has to match the intention, or the intention has to burst through the obstacles until we get through to the end of the story when the hero has been through the struggle, through the agony.

That's why they're called the protagonist. They've been through the struggle, and they come out the other side, and the question is, did they get what they wanted? And typically, we call it a comedy when the character gets what they want.

Right? And we'd call it a tragedy if the character doesn't get what they want. But there's a special kind of tragedy where the character gets what they want, but it isn't what they need.

[4 : 56] And when we're watching a film, or we're watching a TV show, or reading a book, and we see a character who's really driven by something, who's really ambitious to get something, who's really desirous of a particular object or relationship, and we know that ain't going to do them any good, we're just waiting for the moment when they come to realize what we can all see, which is what they want, is not what they need.

So starting the sermon with the Spice Girls, I think I've now justified that. But if you were thinking, oh, we might need some more, because what's it got to do with the passage?

Well, let's look at the passage, and we'll see that Jesus' opening lines in John's Gospel, the first recorded words of Jesus in the Gospel of John, are to the disciples, he says to them, verse 38, what do you want?

Now first lines matter. What does someone say at the beginning? What do they say at the beginning? What does that set them up for? And Jesus asks these disciples who've started to follow him, he says, what do you want?

And the question we might then be asked to answer is what do you want this morning? Right? We're asking God.

[6 : 22] He can give us anything, right? Because he's God. So what would you want him to give you today? What would be the best thing that you could get this afternoon from God?

What would be the best thing you could get this week from God? If God could give you anything in 2026, what would it be? What do you want?

And is it what you need? And you might be thinking, what do I want? I don't know. I'm not sure. I'm not really confident about what I want. I haven't spent that long thinking about it. I just do stuff, I suppose. And it's interesting because what the disciples then go on to say when Jesus asks them, what do you want?

Is in that kind of realm of, we're not really sure, but we sort of think you, Jesus, might have some answers. So Jesus says, what do you want?

[7 : 32] They said, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying? If in doubt, when you're faced with a question, ask a question in response. Okay? What do you want? Rabbi, where are you staying?

We don't know what we want, but we kind of think you might have some answers because you are a great teacher. And there's quite a lot of people in our culture, in our society right now, who are looking for teachers.

They're looking for rabbis. They're looking for wisdom. They're looking for influencers. The whole thing seems to have gone crazy and we're not sure which way's up and which way's down and what's important for us and what's really life is all about.

And so people are going online looking for rabbis, looking for teachers, looking for influencers, looking for people they can follow and they can be like, I'll just sit at your feet and you just tell me how to live.

And this is huge, particularly if you're a young man. That there are people online who will tell you what to do with your life, who will tell you they've sussed it out.

[8 : 42] This is how you deal with your finances. This is how you deal with your fitness. This is how you deal with your relationships. I know. And if you sign up, you'll get behind the paywall and then you can get even more bonus teaching from me.

And it's only workable, it's only viable because people are looking for wisdom. People are looking for someone to tell them how to live their life. We're not sure.

We're all a bit confused. Now the good news for these disciples is they have come to the great rabbi, the great teacher.

They've come to Jesus. And if you're exploring Christianity or if you're really not sure what you think about Jesus, can I commend him to you as the greatest teacher, rabbi, influencer you can ever have the possibility of sitting under his teaching.

Jesus will give you great teaching for how to live your life. He's the author of life, so he knows how it works. Will you come to Jesus as rabbi?

[9 : 47] Will you come to listen to Jesus as teacher? But don't get caught with the idea that Jesus is just a teacher.

Because some people can get caught like that. They think, well Jesus, he's like a great moral teacher, he's a great religious rabbi, and so he's going to be able to teach me and coach me through my life.

Jesus is my life coach. I'm the main character of the story, but Jesus is my mentor, and every time I don't know which way to turn or what to do, I just check in with Jesus, I get some wisdom.

Jesus is the greatest teacher the world has ever known, but he is not only a teacher. Now these disciples come to discover that as they spend a day with Jesus as the great teacher.

You'll see it progresses. Teacher, they said, where are you staying? Come, verse 39. He replied, and you will see. So they went and saw where he was staying and spent that day with him. It was about the 10th hour.

[10 : 51] Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what Jesus had said and who'd followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon, and isn't that the way with social media?

Isn't that the way with the good podcasts? Word of mouth recommendation. You should listen to this guy. Honestly, I listened to this guy when he was in the car the other day. He was on the train the other day. It was amazing.

It's brilliant. So insightful. So helpful. You should listen to it too. That's what we do when we find good teachers. But interestingly, Simon, sorry, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother doesn't say to his brother Simon, we have found a great teacher.

He says, we found the Messiah. We found the Christ. If you don't know your Bibles very well, if you're not really sure about what those two words mean, essentially, it means God's anointed king. So they've found a great teacher. They've sat under a great teacher. And then they're thinking, actually, this guy is more than a great teacher. He is a great leader. We can get behind this guy.

[12 : 03] Now, later on in the Gospels, we'll see how the disciples misunderstand what it means for Jesus to be the Christ. Because they've kind of got it locked into, that means we overthrow the Romans.

They've kind of got it locked into, Jesus is now going to be a great political figure. And so what we need to do is to get more people to listen to his teaching then we all march on Jerusalem, triumphal entry, today's Palm Sunday, and we go in there and we overthrow the Romans, we overthrow Herod, anoint Jesus as king in Jerusalem.

He can rule over the people. He can be a great political figure as well as being a good religious moral instructor. But they've misunderstood what it means for him to be the Christ.

Now, he is the Christ. He is the king. He is a great leader. But he's not only the Christ, the king, the great leader. Now, for many of us looking around, looking for wisdom and teaching, yes, we're looking for that on a personal level.

But on a national level, on an international level, aren't we looking for great leaders? And aren't we all a bit disappointed with the ones we've got?

[13 : 21] no matter what your political persuasion, no one's really looking around going, yeah, they're amazing, aren't they? They're so wise. They make such great decisions.

We're so glad that they're in charge. The question we've got to ask ourselves is, have we come to Jesus as rabbi? Have we come to Jesus as Lord, as teacher, and as king?

But then there's another way of thinking about Jesus that is given to us in this passage that actually might be a better starting point. It was the first reference to Jesus in the verses we had, verse 35.

The next day, John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, look, the Lamb of God. Now, just to say, I'm a massive fan of the new international version. My personal favorite is the 1984 version before they changed it all in 2011. Sorry, bit of Bible translation nerd for you here. But my preferred translation of this is not, the Lamb of God.

[14 : 31] It's from the King James version which says, behold, the Lamb of God. Now, that's my favorite biblical word. My second favorite biblical word is, hark.

It just means the same as listen, but it sounds more important, doesn't it? So if you want to get someone's attention, don't say to them, look at this. Say, behold. If you've made some Lego or a

cake, or I don't know, whatever you've done, something for your boss at work, don't just bring them and say, look at this report.

Say, behold. Sounds way more important. Way more urgent. People go, what is that? Give this your full undivided attention. Behold, the Lamb of God.

Now, the whole of the Bible is really just one great big behold. A great big, will you pay attention? Will you look in this direction?

Will you look at the Lamb of God? Will you behold the Lamb of God? But then, what does it mean that he's the Lamb of God? Well, it's actually what it means for him to be the rabbi, to be the teacher, to be the king, is to be the Lamb of God.

[15:46] Now, lambs are not typically great teachers, right? If you go to the farm, I know some farm, Seaford, New Haven direction, it's lambing season, go find a little lamb, sit and learn.

Not a lot you're going to learn from that lamb, I'll tell you. Just bounces around a little bit, makes a bit of noise, falls asleep every now and again. If you really want to get the best out of that lamb, you really want to kill it and then cook it with some mint sauce or something and then eat it up, you know, like with some roast potatoes, you know, some nice parsnips or something in there.

You want to take advantage of the lamb. Actually, the lamb, the benefit of the lamb, I mean, you can get some wool from it, but the benefit of the lamb is that it dies.

That's kind of what the lamb's for. So if Jesus is the lamb, the benefit that's going to come from him being the lamb is not going to be in his teaching, not going to be in his leadership, but it's going to be in his death.

Now, if we're not sure about why Jesus might have to die, well, helpfully, John the Baptist uses this behold the lamb of God as a bit of a catchphrase. It's kind of his thing to say.

[17:06] So if you look up the passage a little bit further, verse 29, John sees Jesus coming towards him. He says, behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

That's why the lamb's going to die. Jesus has not just come into the world so that he can give you some teaching and be your life coach and help you to live your life 20% better than you were last week.

Jesus has not just come into the world that he might improve your spiritual dials on your spiritual dashboard by up to 45%. Jesus has not just come so that he can rule over things.

No, Jesus has come to take away your sin. That's why he's here. That's what he's about.

That's why he's called the lamb because the lamb is going to die. And that's going to be the benefit that we get is that as the lamb of God sheds his perfect blood that your sin, my sin, your shame, my shame can be washed away.

[18:32] Now, what is it that you want? What is it that I want this morning?

We said that wanting, desiring, like the intention is about the character at the heart of the story, right? There's a character in the story, what do they want?

What's getting in the way of them getting what they want? Will they get what they want at the end?

Now, life is a story, but you are not the main character, and I'm not the main character.

The main character of the story of life is God himself. So, the question isn't what do you want? The question is what does he want?

And what the father wants is to bring glory to the son. And what the son wants is to bring glory to the father. And what the spirit wants is to bring glory to the father and to the son.

[19:36] And what are they going to use to bring glory to themselves? They're going to use you. They're going to use the church. They're going to take sinful, broken, fragile, fractured, shameful people, and they're going to make them into something beautiful.

They're going to take a creation which is dark and diseased and make it shine. As we come to Christ, as we come to the Lamb of God who takes away our sin, we then find we're given new life in his resurrection and we then need instruction for how we're going to live this life out.

And that's where Jesus comes in as Rabbi. As we're looking about the state of the community or the nation or the world, we're thinking, when is it going to be put right, we're looking up at Jesus as the Christ, as the risen one, as the one who reigns over heaven and earth.

And that the whole story is working itself out until the people of God dwell with God to worship him for his love, for his mercy, for his kindness to us.

And when we understand this, when we get this, when we understand who Jesus is, the Lamb of God, he's the Rabbi, he's the Christ, when we understand this, we want to tell everyone else.

[21 : 11] We're like, when people say, it's like one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. That's the work of evangelism. One person who's found their sins washed away, who's found their life renewed in Jesus, just tells another person who's living in sin and darkness about Jesus.

God and says, he could take away your sin too. He could be your rabbi too. He could be your Lord too. Come and join our church.

We're part of a group of people. We're all just trying to live for Jesus. We're trying to give Jesus the praise and honor and glory that he deserves because he's the Lamb who was slain.

Because he deserves all the praise, he deserves all the glory from angels and archangels, for multitudes of people from every tribe and tongue and nation.

He deserves it all because he is the protagonist. He's the one who's gone through the agony and he's come out the other side to get what he wants and it's what you need.

[22 : 17] Let me pray for us as I finish. Oh dear God, we thank and praise you that in your mercy and in your grace you came to those of us who were in darkness to rescue us and to set us free.

We thank you that in the of us. Let me pray for those of us. of us. Let me pray for those Let me pray for those of us. of us. Let me pray Let me pray for those