

Seeking Gods Will

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[0 : 0 0] after all of that. It's really good to be with this cult-like group of people. You know, I was thinking the other day that what I, in case you're wondering, we've been in the citizen letter section yesterday and today, and yesterday you were called a cult-like group of people.

I think they said something about slavishly following the Bible or something, which we're going to do in a moment. And, you know, I was thinking, don't cult leaders, don't they either get lots of money or lots of wives?

And I'm really happy with Louise, so I'm looking for the payoff financially since we're now cult-like. So stay tuned to the letters pages of the citizen.

We'll have more revelations about our identity from different people. If you are tempted to write the citizen, which, you know, you're completely welcome to do, you know, make sure you do it with a sort of a smile and, you know, don't come across as angry or anything like that and be short and brief.

But, you know, it's often best just to say nothing. Billy Graham, that was his policy throughout the years. No matter what mud they slung at him, they didn't respond.

[1 : 2 7] And that's often maybe just the best thing. And we'll just go about trying to know Jesus and love him and serve him and follow him. And so let's turn to the Bible today.

Since we're, I think it was slavishly following it or something. So wouldn't it be good if that was even more true of our lives? Like, I would just think, you know, why is that an insult?

Like, I just wish I could, that would be more true of my life. There's so much of my life that's not in keeping with the Bible. It would just be wonderful if all of it was. Yes. So, yes.

So, John 2.13, page 919. Some of you have your own pew Bibles with you. And you can follow along in there. And just at the bottom of page 919, John 2.13.

Now, the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. You know, I just want to pause right there, just off the bat. You know, one of the things which is so cool about Jesus is he's just so humble.

[2 : 3 9] You know, you think about it for a second. How many of us, if we haven't known somebody personally like this, we've at least seen stories of it. You know, like, what's the boss's son like when he goes into the store or the workplace?

I mean, you just think about it. There's story after story after story of the, you know, the dictator's son, the king's son, the boss's son, and they don't think the rules apply to them.

Right? And that's just such a common type of thing. You know, the rules don't apply to me, you know, because I'm the, you know, I'm the boss's son, and I can sort of do whatever I want. And, you know, Jesus is God's son, and he knows that.

And he could say, you know, I don't have to do that Passover stuff. You know, like, in fact, you know, give me some pork to eat. You know, I'd like to have a nice roast pork sandwich, because these rules don't apply to me.

I know how they really work. And Jesus could have come to earth and just been, like, sort of just like that, you know. But instead, one of the things which is just so cool about him is that just as he comes to earth out of obedience to the Father and of love for you and me so that he will die upon the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, at the same time he comes and humbly submits to even the least of the commands of his Father to us human beings.

[3 : 58] It's just one of the things which is so cool about him. I mean, how could we trust him as Savior if he had been so arrogant in this life? But the fact that he was willing even to submit to tiny rules like this, rules which he knew, and we see in this text, he knows that these rules are going to pass away because something greater is being done by God in him.

Still, he applies. So here it is, verse 13. The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus, like a faithful Jewish man, went up to Jerusalem.

Verse 14. And he found in the temple... We're a certain type of high church. We have lots of bells and whistles when we worship.

This is sort of like urban high church light or something. I don't know what it is. Verse 14. And he found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves and the money changers doing business.

When he had made a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And he said to those who sold doves, Take these things away.

[5 : 12] Do not make my father's house a house of merchandise. Now, just sort of pause there. There's sort of a really important principle and lesson here.

The first thing for us to understand is, you know, because we sort of know, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, they shouldn't have been doing this, let's move on to the next lesson. We sort of move to the lesson and to Jesus' words a little bit too quickly, if you're at all like me.

Because, you see, the money changers and the people who were selling things in the temple, they would have thought that they were doing something sacred and holy. And most people would have agreed with them.

Note that in the story, and by the way, in case you're wondering about it, there's two times that Jesus does this in his ministry. This time, John gives us how virtually at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, Jesus cleanses the temple.

And Jesus will also do it three years later, a couple of days before his death upon the cross. And so twice he does it, and in both cases it has sort of different contexts and lessons that we can learn about it.

[6 : 23] But John is the only one of the four gospel writers to record how at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he cleans out the temple. And you'll notice in here that Jesus is not making any claim that the merchants are ripping people off, that they're charging too high interest rates, or charging exorbitant prices for the doves or the animals.

He's making no claim about that at all. And from the perspective of most of the people, the religious authorities, the theologians, most of the people there, these guys were involved in sacred work, not secular work.

These guys were only being helpful in the worship of God. Why? Because when you came to the temple to celebrate Passover, you had to pay the temple tax.

You had to pay the temple tax in pure silver, and that meant you had to use a particular type of coin. Most of the people, you know, they come from rural areas. They don't have that right type of stuff.

And so it's really, really handy that right there in the temple, there's somebody who can take, you know, their nickels and dimes and loonies and toonies and all that stuff and give it to somebody, and they can give back to that person.

[7 : 34] They can give back to you that which you need to pay the tax as a faithful Jew. And you have to come and have some type of a sacrifice. And, you know, it's maybe hard to carry a goat on your back or something like that.

So you bring the money, and the animal is right there. And so, you know, from the people's point of view, from many of their points of view, these guys who were selling things in the court of the Gentiles were involved in sacred work.

They were helpful. They were doing good. And yet Jesus, as he comes, he makes a whip out of cords, and he drives them out of the temple.

And when he drives them out of the temple, this is what he says. Take these things away, verse 16. Do not make my father's house a house of merchandise.

See, the key principle here is that, first of all, like these are a key principle for how we grow as a Christian, that, first of all, we have to seek God's will.

[8 : 38] And secondly, once we start to seek God's will, God's heart, we have to do God's will God's way. See, it's really, really easy for us to slip into thinking that we're just going to seek God's will.

And then once we've decided, you know, I mean, for a lot of people that's a big growing step to even seek God's will, because it's really easy just to seek the will of the tribe, the will of the institution, the will of your boss, the will of your culture.

It's really easy just to sort of fall into any of those types of things. One of the reasons that churches need to constantly be reformed by God's word and renewed by God's Holy Spirit is because it's easy for us to think of ourselves as a club, as a social gathering.

I mean, one of the other things about that letter the other day is like, you know, sort of sniffing. Most of you folks aren't real Anglicans, you know, as if that's somehow a bad thing, you know.

Like, you know, like we should put a big sign, this Anglican church welcomes non-Anglicans. Like, that would be a good thing to put on the door of our church. Not, you know, not only Anglicans need enter in here.

[9 : 49] That's like a, you know, that's like a dumb thing to do. But anyway, but churches, you see, constantly can slide into thinking themselves as a carrier of a particular ethnic culture or high culture or a club or an institution.

And it's easy for us to slide naturally into this. And we constantly need to be challenged by the word of God and challenged by the Holy Spirit, not to seek our will and the will of our culture, but to seek God's will.

But then once we are challenged to seek God's will, we have to be, we have to seek God's will God's way. You see, in a sense, they were seeking God's will.

God wants people to worship him appropriately. But then they, then they, they move the money changers and the animals into the court that had been reserved for outsiders, the court of the Gentiles.

In other words, all of a sudden to do that, they said, well, it doesn't really matter to us that there might be Gentiles that want to come to the house of the house of the living God to pray and to seek his face. We're going to, we're going to take that room up and we're going to completely fill that up so that only insiders can come in and that outsiders are kept out.

[11 : 05] And, and, and, and, you know, gosh, you know, it's really, really important that we just go through the outer form of the ritual. And that's all that really matters. Because if you think about it, it's hard to have the, the inner life of what God ultimately desires.

Like, how could you gather there to pray if behind you two men or a group of men are bickering over the price of a goat? How, how could you come and adore God or weep before God if, if there is the bleeding of animals and all of the things that's, that's required to try to get animals to stay, you know, calm and in place?

And, and so what, what happened is that they, they, they appeared to be seeking God's will to worship. They, they dealt with what was plausible and, and what was just good within their own reason.

And so they didn't seek to do God's will in God's way. And before you know it, they're not even ultimately doing God's will. And that's a constant challenge for us in churches, you know.

You know, we, we have, you know, a commitment to evangelism. Well, does, does a commitment to evangelism, does that, you know, if does that just end up getting translated into getting more and more people in the church?

[12 : 18] And if, if that's all that is, then maybe I, I better never talk about sin or I never, but I should never talk about anything that's controversial or I should never talk about anything that's hard. And, and maybe I should take a lesson from Abercrombie and Finch or whatever that company is and, and, and I should make sure that all of the band, we just pay really, really hot chicks to play in the band.

And, and we just have hot chicks as servers because that'll draw people in. And, you know, if you think about it, that's just really practical because, you know, if you get the guys coming in, other people will come in. And, and so, you know, we just pay to do these types of things and we want to get people in.

And I hope you're not offended by me saying that, but that was in the National Post yesterday in the business section about a marketing way to try to build somebody's business. And maybe we could learn from that because after all, we want to, one moment, whoa, one moment.

Yeah, we seem to be seeking God's will, but all of a sudden, we're not doing God's will in God's way. And all of a sudden, when you're not doing God's will in God's way, you're not even ultimately doing God's will.

God wants us to be willing to be, appear to be stupid. God wants us to be willing to appear to be foolish and dumb and ignorant and uncultured because he wants us ultimately to trust in his word and his way.

[13 : 47] I mean, some of us can be dumb and ignorant effortlessly. He's not encouraging that. He's just saying that if God's word says this, that we are to try to trust that somehow preaching of sin and preaching of Christ crucified and a concern for evangelism, that if we seek God's will and we seek to abide in God's will by doing God's will, God's way that God will bless this and he will bless it to all eternity.

And often that means that we have to appear to be fools for Christ. And sometimes it means that in the Ottawa citizen, they will call us cult-like. And so, you know, pray that we as a congregation will not ever, you know, we're not conservatives.

We're not traditionalists. If we ever become conservatives or if we ever become traditionalists, pray that God will do something to us to shake us up. Because God doesn't call us to be conservative.

In fact, what he's calling us to be is to be so wholehearted in obedience to his word and desire to follow Jesus that we will leave safety and we will launch out to do his will.

God calls us to be wholeheartedly devoted to him, to learn what that means. Let's continue on. Verse 17.

[15 : 16] Then his disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for your house has eaten me up. So the Jews answered and said to him, What sign do you show us since you do these things?

Jesus answered and said to them, Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. Then the Jews said, It has taken 46 years to build this temple and will you raise it up in three days?

But he was speaking of the temple of his body. Therefore, when he had risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this to them and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

Just sort of pause here because there's sort of two important principles here in this odd question which they ask. Two warnings to us. But just before I get to that, the question which they ask, it's so neat to see that right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he knew he was going to die.

And he knew he was going to die for you and for me. And all the way through Jesus' ministry, when you're reading the Gospels, always read them knowing that Jesus came to die upon the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[16 : 32] And every single word, whether it's Jesus talking about money, whether he's talking about sex, whether he's talking about religious rules, whether he's talking about anything, we have to always read it conscious that Jesus has his mind set upon the cross.

But here we have now this question, and it's a very odd question which they ask. So Jesus has just scattered these sacred merchants, driven them out, and the Jews answered.

And actually in the Greek, it's not so much answered, but it's really, answered is the literal word, but it's like a Semitic slang expression. It really, they're demanding. So the Jews demand and say to him, what sign do you show us to us since you are doing these things?

In other words, what authority do you have? Give us a sign to show us by what authority you are doing these things. Now, you know why that's really an odd question?

Think about it for a second. They're speaking like bureaucrats. I don't want to put down, I mean, some of us have to work as bureaucrats, and there's a place for that, okay?

[17 : 43] But they're saying, show us your license, okay? Like, where's your license? Like, okay, do you have something from the chief priest that signed up that he can show you? Like, rather than saying to themselves, Jesus, are we doing something wrong here?

Like, do you really think it's wrong that we've just filled the court of the Gentiles? Like, maybe it is wrong. Like, rather than asking the fundamental moral question, rather than saying, you know, what biblical passages would there be that would sort of, you know, lead you to think that this is the case?

You know, what things is it that we know about God that would lead you to do this? Instead of asking any of these fundamental biblical questions or fundamental theological or spiritual or truth questions, they ask a bureaucratic question about licensing.

The letter to the citizen today, bureaucratic. You know, you read the one in the citizen today. Comes right down to the different rules have been followed appropriately by synods and on and on and on and on and he rings up the question of my license being withdrawn or whatever.

And, you know, but it's a bureaucratic mindset. And here's the important thing for us to learn. And, you see, rules never bring anyone to heaven.

[19 : 10] Rubrics never bring anyone to heaven. And, you know, nitpicking about processes don't bring anybody to heaven. And what we see here is that what we should be always thinking is what does Jesus say?

What does the scripture say? That we are to, in fact, not seek what rules and processes, but we are to seek God's mind and heart through scripture in all things.

And the rules will look after themselves. You know, I'm not saying anything against rules. You know, you need to have some type of rules. You know, you have to have rules for how the money is counted and you have to have groups and you have to have, you know, sometimes things about how different people relate to each other.

But these things are relative. They are temporary. They are passing. They will come and go. So they always should exist to serve the fundamental purpose of this church, which is to bring glory and honor to God, to seek his will, to do his will, his way, to abide in the word of God, to be in tune and in harmony with the Holy Spirit of God.

These are our fundamental tasks and it will mean that constantly, while we need rules, we are constantly having to adapt the rules, to remove the rules, to change things because these things will come and go.

[20 : 35] They are very, very temporary. They are on one level completely and utterly unimportant. They are at best third level things. And so we should not be asking a bureaucratic question, but always asking, what does God's word say?

You see, to ask the question, what does the Bible say, is not the sign of a narrow-minded fundamentalist or somebody who has an odd personality.

To ask that question is to ask the apostolic question and is in fact to ask the question of Jesus. Notice at the end of the text, notice at the end of the text, just notice here, there's a little tiny bit of a side in verse 23, 22.

Therefore, when he had risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this to them, and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had said. Always comes back to the Bible.

Now, the second thing about this odd question which they asked, remember the question really is, what sign do you show to show that you have authority to do what you have just done?

[21 : 45] So the first thing which is odd is asking this bureaucratic question rather than the biblical question. But the second thing is this, what sign do you show? Do you know that every single time in the Bible that there is a question about showing us a sign, it's always connected with unbelief.

Every single time in the Bible where there is a demand of somebody to show us a sign, it is connected to unbelief. And part of the reason is this, that demand means that the person does not seek the living God because the living God is wildly untamed.

The living God is the wildest, most untamed being in the entire universe that has ever existed.

Completely and utterly untamed. Praise God, he's good or we would be in trouble. But God is unfailingly good, unfailingly gentle, unfailingly kind, and he is unfailingly untamed.

And the question, what sign will you show, give me a miracle, is a request for a domesticated and needy God.

[23 : 09] It is a request that if God is to really be the type of God that I will have anything to do with, he must be tamed, he must be housebroken, and he must be needy because he has to do things, otherwise I will stamp my little feet and walk away and be mad at him and have nothing to do with him.

And he needs to be the type of God who will burst into tears at that idea and come running after me. And so the request for a sign is the question ultimately for a needy, domesticated God, and God is wild.

God is wild, untamed, and praise God, he is completely and utterly good. And so, you know, folks, to give our lives to Christ is to be brought to God.

And when we come to God, we're in for the time of our lives because who knows what God will do. I have a friend, I think I've told you this before, he used to jokingly say that, you know, he loved evangelism and he loved telling people that God had a wonderful plan for their lives and come to them and he said what he doesn't want to tell them, at least the first time, is that that wonderful plan for their lives might mean that they're dying as a missionary in some God-forsaken corner of the world five years down the road.

Or that they've given up every single penny of their money to live completely and utterly dependent upon God. Or that they're going to be completely and utterly... He doesn't want to tell them that, that that's part of God's good plan.

[24 : 45] And God doesn't call most of us to do that, but God is wild, he is untamed, and he is deeply, thoroughly good, deeply, thoroughly kind.

And he wants us to come to him. Praise God. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, as we continue in your presence to worship you, we ask once again that your Holy Spirit would come upon us.

Father, fan into flame within us a desire, not for the glory of this building or the glory of this institution, but fan into flame within us a desire to bring you glory, to know you through your Son, Jesus Christ, to know your will and to abide in your will, to be drawn closer to Jesus, to be more and more filled with your Holy Spirit, to know you and your untamedness and wildness, and to reflect, Father, your goodness and your creative energy and just the way that you move and work to bring outsiders into your heart.

Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us that we might truly be your people, a people that bring you praise. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.