

A Willing Heart

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- [0 : 0 0] So last Sunday, we walked through all of the major movements that we've seen in John's account of the story of Jesus. We've been working through the Gospel of John for a while now, and we just kind of did a big recap of it last Sunday up until Chapter 7 here.
- We had a break for Christmas and some things. So if you missed that, you can find that online. It's the first few minutes of last Sunday's message. But one of the things that we saw was how the tension has been rising between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, and even between Jesus and the people that are in the crowd.
- On Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem, he had a big run-in with the Jewish leaders. Let's remember that from Chapter 5, Verse 16.
- So because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In his defense, Jesus said to them, My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.
- John tells us, So even before that moment, they were trying to kill him.
- [1 : 2 7] But then, after this run-in with the Jewish leaders, last time he was in Jerusalem, now they want to do it all the more. The tensions are high. And since then, Jesus has been hanging out in Galilee.
- He's been in that northern region up by the Sea of Galilee in Israel. And he's been keeping his distance. As we saw last Sunday, because he knows the Jewish leaders are looking for a way to kill him.
- And we heard last Sunday his unbelieving brothers urging him to go to Judea, to reconnect with some of his followers there, ahead of the festival.
- Jesus said to them he wasn't going, at least not yet, because his appointed time had not yet come. So he sent his brothers on ahead, and then later, we read last Sunday, that he went up to this big festival in Jerusalem, not publicly, but in secret.
- And last we heard, the Jewish leaders are watching for him. They're asking, where is he? And the people at the festival in Jerusalem, they're whispering about Jesus.
- [2 : 4 1] Some are saying, he's a good man. Others are saying, no, he deceives the people. But all of this is being said on the hush, because people are afraid of the religious leaders.
- Let's pick up the story in verse 14. Not until halfway through the festival, did Jesus go up to the temple courts, and begin to teach.
- The Jews there were amazed, and asked, how did this man get such learning, without having been taught? So halfway through this week-long festival, Jesus reveals himself publicly.
- He seems to have been able to sneak into the city, unnoticed, and then he goes into the temple courts, and he, in front of everyone, begins to teach the people.
- And the initial response seems favorable. John says, the Jews there were amazed, or astonished. How did this man get such learning, without having been taught?

[3 : 47] Like, man, does this guy know his stuff, or what? How did he get to be so well-read, without any formal training, from any rabbi that we know of?

Maybe you know that feeling that you get, when you pick up a book, written by someone, on a subject that you're interested in, and you just get that feeling, as you start to dig into it.

Man, this guy really knows his stuff. Like, how does he have all this, these amazing quotes, and references, to what's been said, or written on this subject, through the centuries?

Has he read, all these people's writings himself? Take that feeling, and times it by at least 10. I mean, Jesus just, starts speaking. He opens his mouth, and the crowds, are amazed.

They're blown away. They're astonished, by just how well he knows his stuff. Like, how is this possible? You know, the big question here is, where did you get this teaching from?

[4 : 51] This wisdom, this understanding. I mean, surely you couldn't have come to, to this kind of wisdom, and understanding, all on your own. And Jesus gives them his answer.

Verse 16, Jesus answered, my teaching, is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. You're right, says Jesus.

My teaching is not mine. It does have another source. It comes from the one who sent me. Now, we don't know exactly who's in this crowd.

Whether these people have seen, or heard Jesus before, we don't know. But all of us who have been following along with John, so far, in his gospel, we know what Jesus means, when he says, the one who sent me.

We know who that is. John 4, 34, Jesus said there, my food is to do the will, of him who sent me, and to finish his work. John 5, 24, very truly I tell you, says Jesus, whoever hears my word, and believes, him who sent me, has eternal life.

[6 : 03] John 5, verse 30, by myself I can do nothing, said Jesus, I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself, but him who sent me.

John 5, 37, and the father who sent me, has himself testified concerning me. You've never heard his voice, nor seen his form.

John 6, 38, for I have come down from heaven, said Jesus, not to do my will, but to do the will, of him who sent me. John 6, 44, no one can come to me, said Jesus, unless the father, who sent me, draws them.

So when Jesus says, him who sent me, he's talking about God. He's talking about his father. My teaching, is not my own. The things I am teaching you today, are from God.

He has sent me. Now that's quite a claim to make, isn't it? I mean, imagine what the people are thinking, as Jesus says this, as they're all there in the temple courts, claiming to be sent by God himself, to be speaking the teaching, which comes from God himself.

[7 : 27] You can probably imagine, what people are thinking, as Jesus makes this claim. I mean, imagine that Jesus had come, in our day, instead, and said this in public, and somebody got this on video, and then uploaded it to YouTube, and the comments are then flying in, from all over the world, on Twitter, and Facebook, and the journalists on CBC, are giving their two cents, about this Jesus guy.

What would they be saying? Well, you can be sure, that many people would be saying, and thinking, this guy is nuts. He's claiming to be sent from God.

He's claiming to speak, not for himself, but for God. You've got to be kidding me. Like, who does this guy think he is? But let's put our Jewish mindset, back on here for a moment.

It says, we read already, that they were amazed. So, we respect you. We'll give you some credit. You know your stuff, but sent from the Lord?

Yahweh? To teach on his behalf? I don't think so. And in this moment, Jesus seems to know, what many of them are thinking.

[8 : 53] His next statement is revealing. Verse 17. It says, anyone who chooses to do the will of God, will find out, whether my teaching comes from God, or whether I speak, on my own.

Now, the New International Version, has Jesus saying, chooses. But the actual word, in the original Greek, that's behind this translation, means to will, or to want, to wish.

So, we'll go with the New American Standard Bible, on this one. If anyone is willing, to do his will, the will of him who sent me, he will know, of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak, from myself.

Now, I really want to pause, and linger over this. I actually want to spend, the rest of our time, on this verse, this morning. Because, as I read this, man, it sure feels like, Jesus is saying, something important here, doesn't it?

And yet, what is he saying? What does Jesus mean, by this? Let's read it carefully. Jesus is making, an if, then statement.

[10 : 15] If anyone is willing, to do his will, or if, fill in the blank, then, he will know, of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak, from myself.

So, it seems as though, Jesus is saying, that there is a way, to be sure, to know, with certainty, whether he speaks, the truth, or not.

Whether his teaching, is really from God, or whether he's just, saying the stuff, out of his own head. It's possible, to know for sure, says Jesus. So, how does this work?

What do we have to do, to know for sure? As we look at these words, if anyone is willing, to do his will, we notice a couple things.

We notice, that there are two things, involved, in, in knowing the truth, about Jesus teaching. One of those things, is doing the will, of him who sent me, doing the will of God.

[11 : 30] The other of those things, is willing, or, wanting, to do the will of God. And then there's a connection, between these two things. There's first, a willing, or a wanting.

And then, second, there's the thing, that is wanted. To do, the will of God. Being willing, or wanting, is an inward thing.

It's a thing of the heart. But, doing the will of God, is an action, kind of thing. And so, we kind of come to this question, as we chew on this.

is Jesus saying, is Jesus saying, that it's those, that will know the truth, about him? Or, is he saying, that it's, those who actually, desire, or, will, to do God's will, that will know the truth, about Jesus?

There's a difference there. Is it something, that we must do, to know for sure, about Jesus? Or, is it something, that we must be willing to do, to know for sure, about Jesus?

[12 : 45] Now, let's think, for a moment, about it, what it means, to will, or to want, to do, the will of God. it's a simple phrase, but the more, I was thinking about it, this week, it's not a simple thing.

Let's think about this. Is being willing, to do something, just a feeling? Or is it a little bit more?

Let's think in terms, that we're all more familiar with. I will, I desire, I want to lose, 10 pounds, by the end of 2021.

It is partly a feeling, and a longing. But I'll confess to you, I also have another will, a competing will, something else that I want, and that's to eat as much, pizza, poutine, french fries, greasy hamburgers, and potato chips, as I can this year.

And do as little exercise, as possible. Now I can feel the desire, to have both, at the same time. There's a sense in which, I will to do both.

[14 : 03] But at the end of the day, these two things, are mutually exclusive. If I choose one, I will not have the other. So each day of this year, I'm going to have to choose, which one I will, which one I want, to have more.

Which one, we might say, I really want, I really will, to do. And at the end of 2021, there will be a way to measure, which one I willed, or wanted more.

Just step on the scale. The number on the scale, will tell you, which one I wanted more. It will tell you, what I truly, willed to do this year.

And I think it kind of, works the same way here, with what Jesus is saying. He's talking about, doing the will, of the one who sent him. That's God.

If you want to know, the truth about me, you must, first be willing, or wanting, to do what God wants you to do. And it's kind of, an exclusive thing.

[15 : 10] You either do, what God wants you to do, or you don't do, what God wants you to do. You obey the commands, that God has given, or you don't obey, the commands God has given.

You do what is right and good, or you do what is wrong, and evil. And we might, want to do both, at the same time. But at the end of the day, there is a way to see, which one we truly, really, wanted, to do.

And that's the one, that we actually did. So the first thing, that I think we need, to get straight in our minds, is what Jesus means, when he says, willing, to do. If anyone is, willing to do, God's will, being willing, is more than just a feeling.

It's more than just, a desire. The kind of willing, that Jesus is talking about here, is the kind that has some resolve, some commitment, in it.

The kind that results, in action. The kind that is proved, genuine by what you did, by what you do. May turn out, after all, that the NIV's, choosing, is not a bad interpretation, of what Jesus means.

[16 : 30] However, I think we need, to be careful, that we don't put, all the emphasis, on the doing. Think about this, for a moment. Jesus, could have easily, said this differently.

He could have easily said, if anyone, does the will of him, who sent me, then he'll know, the truth about me. But no, he didn't say it that way. He said, if anyone is, willing, to do, his will, he'll know the truth about me.

Why does he say it, like that instead? I think it's because, Jesus wants to bring this, all back to the real issue. Which is not, first and foremost, about behavior.

But about an attitude, of the heart. Which leads to, behavior. What Jesus is saying, is this. If you guys, in the crowd, want to know for sure, whether I'm speaking, from God, sent from God, there is a way, to know.

There is a way, to be certain. And it starts, with the change of heart. You need to come, to a place in your hearts, where you are really, truly, willing, and wanting, to do, what God wants you to do.

[17 : 51] Really, truly, wanting, to be obedient, to God. To submit, to him. That's what's missing here. Anyone, who has that heart, towards my father, will know, that I have been sent, from him.

And that I speak, on his behalf. You see, there's a problem here. And it's that, the religious leaders, and many of the people, do not have, such a heart, towards God.

Towards the father. And so, it kind of makes sense then, why they will not, receive the words, that he has said, he is saying right now, through his son.

If they're not really, truly, wanting to obey, the words, that God has spoken, in the past, if their hearts, are opposed to it, then why would they, listen to the words, that God now speaks, through his son, in the present?

Let's talk about, the will of God, for a moment here. Jesus said, my teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.

[19 : 05] If anyone is willing, to do his will, the will, of him who sent me. What is Jesus talking about, when he refers to, the will of him, who sent me?

What is it, that God wants them to do, that they're unwilling to do? I think to get at this, we kind of have to put ourself, in the context, of this discussion, and as best we can, try to think like, a first century, Jewish person would think.

What is God's will, for us to do? How do we know that? Well hasn't he told us, in the past, in the law, through the prophets, the ten commandments, what he wants us to do, how he wants us to live?

In fact, you look back, through the scriptures, of the Old Testament, and they're full, of God's will, for his people. All over the place. We shouldn't think, that Jesus is talking, in terms of, you know, kind of the, the popular Christian notion, of God's will.

Jesus is not saying, that their problem, is that they, they haven't taken time, to pray, and ask God, to reveal, his will, for each particular situation. You know, like whether they should be, a fisherman, or start their own business, or move to another town.

[20 : 33] And deep down in their hearts, they know, that it's God's will, but, they haven't been doing, those things. That's not what Jesus, has in mind here. That's not the kind of, God's will, that he's talking about.

He's, he's talking about, the very clear, and obvious, will of God, that's already been revealed, through the law. Through the prophets. And he's insinuating, that they are not, even willing to obey that.

And we can see this, by how Jesus, takes this conversation, in that direction, down in verse 19. Just a couple verses down. He says, has not Moses, given you the law?

Yet not one of you, keeps the law. God has, told you, how he wants you to live. And yet, you're not listening. You're not doing that.

You don't, you aren't willing, to live, in submission to that. Why are you trying, to kill me? Thou shall not, murder. Why are you trying, to kill me?

[21 : 43] He's exposing, the unwillingness, of their hearts, to do the will of God. And Jesus will have, much more to say, about their unwillingness, to keep the law.

Some of the hypocrisy, and the unbelief, in their hearts, in the days ahead. Just this week, I read Matthew 23, where it says, woe to you, woe to you, woe to you.

You guys are not, keeping the law. You're not willing, to do the will of God. So the will of God, is not some nebulous thing, that we need to try, to lay hold of, as we sift through, our own feelings.

The will of God, what God wants, his people to do, how he wants them to live, has already been revealed, in the pages, of the scriptures, with great clarity.

We've been given, clear commands, to obey. Clear wisdom principles, to live by. Clear examples, to follow. Along with a whole lot, of explanation, and even motivation, right here, in the pages of our Bibles.

[22 : 50] The question is, whether or not, we are willing, to listen, to God. And whether we are truly, willing, to do, what he has said, he wants us to do.

So the people, are challenging, Jesus claim, to have come from God. And to speak, for God. Many don't believe him. But it's not the fault, of Jesus.

It's not for lack, of obvious signs, and miracles. The problem, Jesus is saying, is in your heart. You have an unwillingness, to submit to God, my Father.

I'm reminded of the parable, of the sower, that Jesus taught, to his disciples. If you recall the parable, the seed was good.

And it's the same seed, that Jesus is sowing, everywhere he goes. The same teaching, the same good news. He does indeed, speak from God.

[23 : 57] But the soil, of the hearts, that are hearing, in many places, and for many people, is not good soil. Jesus says, there's a way, to know for sure, that I have come from God, and speak, on his behalf.

But it starts, with having a change, of heart, towards God, my Father. It starts, with coming to that place, in your heart, where you're truly willing, to do, what he wants you to do.

Without using the word, Jesus is telling them, that they need to repent. That they need to, acknowledge to God, the sinfulness, of their, behaviors, and even, their attitude.

That they need to, come to that place, where they are now, willing to submit. Willing to obey. Willing to surrender, to God, as their God.

And when you do that, then you will see it, clear as you see, the light of day. That I have been sent, from God. And speak, the very words of God.

[25 : 07] It's quite something. You know, if you really want to know, the truth about Jesus, you have to first, cross the threshold. You have to trust, that Jesus is right, about what's going on, in your own heart.

You have to be willing, to let go, of how you think it is. And trust, how he, says it is. And then it's only, on the other side of that, once you do that, that you can see, clearly, what's been true, all along about Jesus.

He really has, come from God. And is, speaking on God's behalf. Well, what do we take, from all this? I think we miss, the whole point, if we think this is, just about Jesus, and the crowd, that day.

I want you to, put yourself in the crowd, if you can. And apply these words, to yourself. There are some, big questions, that Jesus' words, bring up for us.

Questions like, do you believe, that he has been sent, from God? The one who created, our world, and everything in it. Do you believe, that the words, he speaks, the words that we have, written down in our Bibles, are not just his words, but that they're, God's words.

[26 : 33] Do you have, that deep knowledge, and assurance, that Jesus has been sent, from God, and speaks on his behalf.

Jesus says, you can have it. He says, that you can know, and not just, think you know, or hope you know, but know, with certainty.

How do you get that, if you don't have it? If you're unsure, about Jesus. Jesus says, you need to have, a change of heart, towards God. To wake up to the fact, that you've been, deceiving yourself, thinking that you're, okay with God, even though you've, been living in ways, that are the complete opposite, to what he has said, to what God has said, in the scriptures.

Are you truly, willing, to do, the will of God? To do what God, wants you to do? Or are you, are you only willing, so long as it doesn't, conflict, with what I want to do, in my life?

For most of you, here this morning, I know that you do believe, I know that you do, have assurance, but I hope and pray, that you'll, you'll still ask yourself, this question, question, are you, truly, truly, willing, to continue, to do, what God, wants you to do?

[28 : 05] Are you having, struggles in your heart, with being willing? Do you know, that you don't have to, wrestle with that, all by yourself? As brothers and sisters, in Christ, we can be here, for each other.

First Corinthians 10, 13 says, no temptation, has overtaken you, except that, which is common to man. We all, are tempted, in the same ways. In James 5, 16, we heard at, prayer meeting this week, we're encouraged, even to confess, our sins to one another, our failures, and pray for one another, about these kinds of things.

These words of Jesus, also force us to, to think again, about, just what is it, that God wants me to do?

What is it, that he wills for me? Do you know, what Moses wrote, in the law? Do you know, what God has said, through his prophets?

Do you know, what Jesus has commanded? Do you know, what Jesus apostles, have commanded the churches, to do? Are you keeping up, with that precious habit, of adding to your understanding, of God's will, by reading your Bible, every day, like we talked about, a few weeks ago?

[29 : 32] And finally, as we seek to share, the good news of Jesus, with other people, I think we should learn, I think we should learn, from how the people, responded to Jesus, here, how they treated him.

If people don't respond, positively, it's not always our fault. Let's not make the mistake, of assuming that, if we only had, the right facts, or the right evidence, or the right words, or even the ability, to perform miracles, that they would believe.

I think Jesus, wants us to see, that for people, to enter the kingdom of God, and know that they are in, the first thing, that needs to happen in them, is a change of heart.

So as we seek, to speak to people, let's ask God, for wisdom, about how to go, for their hearts. Let's pray, that God's spirit, would do the work, of convicting, in their hearts, even before the conversations, happen.

And let's not, let the rejection, or disapproval, of some discourage us, in this important work, that God has given us to do, of testifying, to the savior.

[30 : 47] Jesus said, all authority in heaven, and on earth, has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples, make more followers of me, by teaching them to obey, all that I have commanded you.

And it comes with a promise, a wonderful word of encouragement. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, thank you, thank you, for these words. Oh, I pray that they would not, just settle on the surface, of our hearts, but I pray that they would, sink deep inside.

I pray that you would, make it known, to each one of us, right now, in these moments, are we willing, are we willing, to do what you want us to do?

Bring to the, to our minds, those areas, where we have been, maybe resisting, or holding on, to something, that we shouldn't be. Help us to surrender, completely to you.

[31 : 59] Thank you, that we can have assurance, and we can know. In Jesus name, amen. Amen.