

I'd Wish for World Peace!
Text: Matt 11:1-6, John 14:5-11

Friends, what does your heart desire? What do you long for? What are you passionate about? Some of us could answer that question right away...while others of us might have to think a bit.

Sometimes when you ask a group of people this question you'll get answers like – I want to travel to Europe, I'd like to meet Mr. or Mrs. Right, I'd like to pay off my debts, I wish my kids would behave, or if you're more like me – I want a bigger, meaner, muscle car – that still gets good mileage, or if you're doing the mid-life thing perhaps you want to get a Harley and get out on the open road. (at my last church the minister had a men's motorcycle group)...

But...inevitably someone will put forward an answer like – my heart desires...world peace, or that I could be a better person and leave this world a better place for having been here.

And that leaves the rest of us feeling rather selfish, shallow, and bit guilty for not being more altruistic and selfless. Maybe

even a bit suspicious of the genuineness of this person's desires – are they really that self-less? And suddenly we're aware of how self-focused we can be most of the time, and we're probably thinking we'd like to change our answer to the question.

Because when we're reminded about it, when we take some time to think about it - who wouldn't want world peace, who wouldn't want to become a better person, and who wouldn't want to leave the world a better place for their having been here?

Friends, even if its not their first answer I think most people really do desire these things, and in fact many people I know are trying to do something to make these desires a reality.

I know people who volunteer in Rotary Clubs to try to bring about world peace – maybe you've seen their TV commercials about how they are trying to teach peace and understanding through their organization in different countries.

I know people who run programs like Body, Brain Yoga where you try to become a better person through relaxation and stress release, and if you walk into a Chapters bookstore you quickly notice that the self-help section isn't growing any smaller.

And I know people who give to charity, volunteer as a Big Brother or Sister, help out with Inn from the Cold, or take up an environmental cause to save an endangered species so that they can try to leave this world a better place for their having lived here.

Friends, these things are very much the desires of our hearts – we long for them! We pursue them! But as Dr. Phil says – how's that workin out for you? Are you achieving the desires of your heart? Is your heart satisfied?

Well friends - the good news I want to share with you this morning is that Jesus can meet the desires of our hearts. He can satisfy our deepest needs.

You see Jesus will bring world peace, Jesus will make you a new person, and Jesus will make this world a better place, not

because we've been here but in spite of the fact that we've lived here!

You see friends, my goal is to help you come to know Jesus as the one who will do this. So that you will believe in him, trust in him; put your faith in him – so that you will love him, passionately – because He meets the desires of our hearts.

But I understand if you're a bit skeptical about that at first. Many people are – after all how can this Jesus who lived two thousand years ago possibly relate to me now in a world filled with cell phones, microwaves, space travel and medical technology.

Well friends, I think it's safe to say that in spite of our technological advances, the desires of our hearts haven't changed all that much in two thousand or even a few thousand years.

Because as far back as we can tell – there's always been war, murder, anger, jealousy, selfishness, destruction and sickness - death! And we humans have always desired to find a way to

overcome these things. And today even with all our technology and insight into human behavior and what we've learned from the past we are still plagued by these same things.

But...God has always made promises that one day he would act decisively and overcome these things – get rid of war, anger, murder, all the terrible things which prevent peace, and the people who cause them, and that He would make this world into a brand new place once again. This is what He said through the prophets and here are just a couple examples from the prophet Isaiah:

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4)

I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. (Isaiah 13:11)

The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food.

They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:25)

And so those who knew about these promises looked forward to this day which God had promised – this Day of the Lord, and the arrival of the one who would be sent to accomplish this.

And to help them anticipate it and to be alert for it, the prophets were also given visions about it – here's what the prophet Daniel saw

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Daniel 7)

And the prophet Malachi saw this...

Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. (Mal 4:1)

Now from these descriptions and visions you get the impression that this Day of the Lord is going to be a pretty intense, majestic, and impressive day – and you don't want to be on the wrong side of the one who's coming to make it happen.

And that's what John the Baptist figured too – and he knew God had sent him to prepare the way for this day so he had been warning people to repent of their sins because Jesus Christ was coming...soon! So he says;

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt 3:11-12)

God's promises of a world without evil would finally come to pass. Evil would be destroyed as so many have desired.

But, what did Jesus do? Well in our passage today it says that Jesus had been preaching and teaching – not threshing and burning.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. (Matt 4:23-24)

This doesn't look like the visions the prophets had about the Day of the Lord. Jesus is healing, forgiving, freeing...not avenging and destroying.

It's such a contrast that John the Baptist starts to wonder if Jesus really is the one who was expected, and all the more so because John has been put into prison for rebuking the King for his sinful behavior.

And so he asks Jesus – are you really the one? The one who would come to get rid of the evil that plagues this world? When can I expect the fire, the judgment? Are you really the one to meet the desire of my heart? – A world without evil! We might wonder that too, because it’s been two thousand years since Jesus arrived and it seems evil has only increased since then. We may ask as well – Jesus are you the one who can get rid of the evil that plagues our world, can you do something about the innocent that suffer? Can you make me a better person? Can you really meet the desires of our heart?

Listen to the answer Jesus gives - the blind receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear and the good news is preached to the poor, don’t be offended because I’m not judging and burning things.

Because friends the truth is that for as much as our hearts desire world peace, to be a better person and to leave this world a better place...our hearts also desire what is evil.

Jesus knows that all the war, murder, anger, jealousy, selfishness, destruction, sickness, and death in this world – all

that we desire to be rid of, is in fact caused by our desire to be independent and autonomous from God the Father.

The bible tells us *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jer 17:9)*

This is why when we answer the question “What does our heart desire? – our first impulse is to give a selfish answer, but then also realize...we want world peace as well”

So friends - Jesus comes not only to give us the desires of our heart - but to change the desire of our heart!

He starts by teaching and preaching and healing – touching us where evil has marred our lives on the outside so that we can be changed on the inside.

Jesus overcomes the consequences of evil in our lives and in our world so that it will change our heart to desire to know God the Father, to love Him and accept His rule over our lives.

This is why Jesus says “I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me”

Friends if you know and love Jesus for what He has done, then you know and you love God the Father as well.

And if you don't know and love Jesus – well that's why I telling you about what he did for others, and what he still can do for you today! So you can know and love Him!

Jesus still gives sight, restores the lame, cures diseases, heals us and brings us to life today – all we need to do is ask Him through prayer... pray in Jesus name and friends – you can receive the desires of your heart. Amen