

***What I Want to Want, Next Steps 6***  
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**October 16, 2016**

**Job 42:1-7**  
**Philippians 3:7-11**  
**Luke 22:39-42**

Sometimes at the gym I happen to catch a game show called, “Who wants to be a millionaire?” It’s one of those shows where you have to give the right answer right up through the million dollar question. I kind of enjoy it and think, “Yeah, who wouldn’t want to be a millionaire?” Not a bad thing.

Of course, the contestants really want to win. It must take a fair amount of effort just to get on the show, and then to prep for the questions. Clearly, they take the questions very seriously and sometimes sweat blood and tears over them. Very few actually make it to the million dollar mark. This last week as I watched, I wondered, “What if there were a show called, “Who wants to do God’s will?” I wonder what that would look like. (Maybe not so many contestants.)

Over the past few weeks we’ve been considering your next steps in following Jesus. We’ve covered a fair bit of ground in these past 5 weeks. Everyone, of course, is at a different place on their discipleship path, and so the question each week is, “What is your next step of faith? Where is God leading you today, as you follow Jesus?” It’s a process.

Today we will look at the question of wanting to do God’s will. It’s not an easy place to get to. So we’ll take a look at several biblical figures, the 12 disciples in particular, as they move towards this goal – which is ultimately transforming. It’s the same process that moves you and me forward to that goal as well.

Wanting what God wants is a great goal. But it’s not where most of us begin our Christian walk. Most of us begin at the point of need – a problem we can’t fix; some trouble in our lives, for which we need God’s power. Is that a bad thing? No; not at all. God is your heavenly Father; he cares about you. It is right to bring him our needs and concerns, asking for his help and protection. Scripture witnesses abundantly to God’s care and provision; I’ve seen it in my own life, and I bet you have as well. But we can’t stay there. God’s purposes are greater than our needs, dreams and hopes. Eventually our goals will not match up with God’s goals. That conflict can become a crisis in faith. It can also provide a turning point in your life when you start wanting what he wants... more than what you want.

Jesus' disciples started out that way. When Jesus invited them to follow him, they joined up without a lot of thought as to what it meant, what it would cost. I mean, Jesus was a pretty cool dude. He worked miracles; he taught like no one else; he spoke truth and touched their hearts. Jesus had something they wanted. And so they followed him.

We get an insight into their motivation as time went on. When a rich young ruler came to Jesus, wanting to know how to get eternal life, Jesus counseled him to sell all his possessions. When the young man turned away in sorrow, his disciples pointed out: "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" Did you hear it? *What's in it for us?* Again, most people start out this way.

So, looking at the disciples' story as they went from being what we might call consumer Christians to more mature followers of Jesus, here's how the plot develops. First, they followed Jesus because of what he could do for them. Second, a conflict arises between their goals and Jesus' goal. So, for example, when Jesus started talking about going to the cross -- Peter said, "No way! This will never happen to you!" -- perhaps just looking out for Jesus' well-being. But that was Peter's agenda; not Jesus'. So Jesus rebuked Peter in the strongest possible terms: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Human concerns are not always the same as God's. They don't always match up. It can lead to a crisis in faith -- the third step. (First step, my desires, needs; second, a conflict of interest; third, a crisis in faith.)

When Jesus, their Lord, the Son of God, died on a cross, the disciples had a real crisis of faith. They were confused; they didn't know what was going on. *How could this happen? What was God thinking?* Their world fell apart. They went into hiding; they were afraid. But not for long. Three days later came their turning point. When Jesus rose again, their faith was reborn; they began to change; they began to want what he wanted. And at Pentecost, when they were filled with the power of the Spirit, their cowardice turned to courage, and they were completely changed. His goals were now their goals, and they began to follow Jesus with all their hearts. There was a transformation – the 4<sup>th</sup> step in this path we call discipleship.

It's a process. It takes time. And not everyone makes it. You remember that one of the twelve did not get to the fourth step. His name was Judas, and I think you know his story. Judas, like the others, seemed to think that following Jesus would fit in well with his own agenda. Maybe he thought Jesus would defeat the Romans. We know that a part of it was money; Scripture tells us he was a thief. His crisis seemed to come to a head at Bethany, when a woman anointed Jesus' feet with an expensive perfume. All four Gospels mention the incident, but only in John is Judas singled out. John writes,

Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"

He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.

Jesus, of course, affirmed Mary's act of love, and Judas was denied. It was after this incident that Judas went to the Jewish leaders with a plan to betray Jesus. At the point of conflict, Judas went his own way.

But then things spun out of control. Judas apparently didn't bank on the Romans getting involved; he didn't intend for Jesus to die. When Judas saw that Jesus was to be crucified, he tried to return the money and undo his action. But he couldn't undo it; and later, in his remorse, he went and hanged himself.

It's a tragic ending to his story. There are times when you just want to interrupt the narrative to say, "Judas, wait! Are you not paying attention? This Jesus, whom you are about to betray, has

stilled the storm with only a word; he has given sight to the blind with just a touch; he has forgiven sinners, seeing what is in their hearts. Do you not see that Jesus is the Son of God?" And after Jesus' betrayal, you want again to say, "Judas, wait! Don't do it! Don't take your own life. Because God forgives! He forgave Peter; he'll forgive you, too." In fact, the other eleven disciples had all abandoned Jesus at his time of greatest need – and Jesus forgave them all, welcoming them back into the fold. Judas' story had a tragic and unnecessary ending.

Judas tried to force God's hand, but my friends, here's the reality: God's hand cannot be forced. And his will cannot be thwarted. We read that in Job this morning. God is God; he will do what he will do. Despite Judas' selfish agenda, God still accomplished his plan of salvation in Christ. In his betrayal, Judas became an incidental force to *move God's plan forward*. God will accomplish his goals. And that is good news.

So where does this leave you and me? Like I said earlier, following Jesus is a process. You may start as a consumer Christian, joining up with the hopes that God will help you in your life, help you achieve your desires as you dream dreams and plan plans. And we know from his promises that God is fully aware of our needs; he delights in providing for us and protecting us. But hear this: God is no pawn in our personal chess games. God is God. Eventually a conflict will arise between your plans and God's. It will likely provoke a crisis in faith. *Lord, why don't you answer my prayers? Haven't I done all the right things; checked all the right boxes? Isn't that the way it's supposed to work?* But slowly, as you read his Word and the Holy Spirit works in you, you begin to realize that it's not all about you. It's about God's plan of salvation – for the whole world. It's about the extension of his Kingdom to all people. It's about *God's* will to love and forgive this sorry world, setting it to rights – and he invites you to be a part of it.

The tipping point, my friends, is when you begin to want what he wants, more than you want what you want. It's hard; it's a change that only the Holy Spirit can bring about. It was hard even for Jesus as he faced the cross. In the garden he prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." And that is the turning point. You finally let go of your own dreams as you trust that God's will is better than yours. *Trust that God's will is better than yours*. Finally, you begin to want what he wants more than you want what you want. And your life will be transformed.

Choosing to follow God's will is the way of the cross – it's a dying to self -- a daily death. It's the crossroads we heard about last week. It doesn't happen overnight. It's a process, and it takes time. Maybe the next step, for you, is to go whole hog and say (like Mary), "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you have said." Or maybe you aren't quite there yet – maybe, you are somewhere in between, like the father whose son desperately needed healing and cried out to Jesus: "I believe; help my unbelief!" Maybe you need to take baby steps before you can take the grand leap of faith.

My friends, God has gone the whole nine yards for you. In Jesus, he has walked the extra mile. So, what might that next step be for you today?

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Luke 22:39-42  
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I'm going to suggest a prayer – a simple, next-step prayer. We'll put it up on the screen. Let's pray it together. And as we do so, remember how much he loves you.

Let's pray, together:

"Lord I want to relinquish my will to you. I know that your aims and desires are much better and greater than mine, but honestly, it's hard for me to just let go. So Lord: make me want what you want. Give me the desire to follow you, even if I have to let go of my own goals and dreams. Lord, I just want to want what you want. Amen."