

WELCOME 17th November 2019 – 21 Pentecost '19 C

1 John 2:15-17 and 1 Peter 1:15 & Galatians 5:22-25 and Psalm 37:4

H – He's going to do WHAT!?!?!?

W – Shhh...keep it down! He'll hear you. He's afraid of your reaction anyway.

H – He's going to hear from me soon enough...WHAT does he want to do with his Uni acceptance?!

W – He wants to defer it for a year.

H – And take that garage band on the road?!? Has he lost his mind? He worked his backside off to get those grades...and get into THAT Uni...Now he wants to put it all on hold to make noise with those slackers he calls his mates?

W – They are NOT slackers and they ARE his mates...and if you'd ever listened to them play you'd know...they're pretty good. They got rave reviews at the Bumper Bar BBQ last month.

H – Yep...playing before a half-sloshed crowd of rev heads is sure to be the 1st step to Australian Idol

W – X – Factor

H – What? W – They've been invited to try out for the X – Factor

H – You're joking W – No...someone uploaded video of them from the last 2 or 3 gigs...and someone from X-Factor rang & offered them a tryout next June. To do *that* he has to defer Uni...breathe!...just for a year. So they can practice & travel to gigs at other festivals & get themselves noticed a bit wider than the shire here.

H – What did you say? When he suggested this to you...What did you say?

W – Honey I told him what we've told him since he was a little boy. God made him who he is & God wants him to follow his heart...As long as no one gets hurt & he's happy making others happy...His heart will tell him what's right.

P3 – Umm...I hate to break up this family moment...But God never said that.

We are faced with dozens of choices, options & possibilities every day. Some of them effect only us...But many will have an impact or influence on others.

Too often, our choices are governed by what feels right, or seems easiest at the moment, or that promises something I really really want.

But what if our choices & our decisions were based on the wonderful truth of having been chosen...by God, for God, in witness & service to the world?

What if our choices were determined NOT by what we might get back, but by what we give & by who we become in the choosing/deciding?

For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, & pride in our achievements & possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. – 1 Jn 2:16-17

Our hearts will naturally pursue those things that have their end in this life, but when my heart is shaped by the Father's heart for me...my desires, my options, my possibilities, my choices lead to an eternal future & blessing for those around me.

We'll explore and experience that together today...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, in all things & in every season of life we know you never relax your embrace of our lives...Today again speak your promises into our hearts & draw us near to you. Let your life be made real in us in full abundance and give your Spirit free rein over our lives. We pray through Jesus Christ. Amen

21 PENTECOST '19 C

THINGS GOD NEVER SAID: LISTEN TO YOUR HEART – I JUST WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY

FAITH CHAT: Let's do Faith Chat a bit differently today...

Listen to your heart Be true to yourself Just so long no one gets hurt As long as that makes you happy
Let your conscience be your guide

When you hear (or say) those sorts of things what do you think is being said? What's the message behind those? Like I've said before... I am sure we say things like that with good intent. We might be terribly misguided at times, but I don't believe we say "God won't give you more than you can handle" or "Everything happens for a reason" or "Listen to your heart" etc...with malicious intent.

So...if we mean well when we say stuff God never said...what's the real danger behind some of this?

See...I think we're starting to get it...that as followers of Jesus our lives are intended for eternal impact. We're called to have harvest capabilities...to actually share the good news of Christ's life/death/rez with others such that they come to trust that the gospel is for them too...to actually live as folks who by the Spirit & the promises of God draw others into eternal life with the Father...who share the hope we have in Christ in such a way that folks around us want in...As followers of Jesus our lives are intended for eternal impact. We're called to have harvest capabilities...I don't think anyone would argue that point. We are meant to bear "*fruit that lasts*" (Jn 15:16) & being unclear in our witness gets in the way of that. We're all together on that...right?

BUT what happens when we offer something that sounds kind & nice & encouraging w/o being critical of someone else's choices that is not what God says...3 things: 1st – we miscommunicate/get wrong the nature of the human heart – Jer 17:9 - *The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, & desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?* I note the objections...John...desperately wicked? You gotta be kidding! I'm not desperately wicked & deceitful above all things. Every. Human. Heart. Yours...mine...every pulse beat on earth is timed to its own rhythm against the rhythm of the Father...Sorry...that's what sin does. It makes me the center of my universe & encourages me to always think of my interests above yours even if I have to step on your neck to get what I want. That's what sin is...not just about doing something wrong but about my life being aimed wrong...only for me.

The minute I say something like, "Be true to yourself...trust your heart...whatever makes you happy" I'm telling you to let your heart & your feelings & your emotions & your best interests & all those things that are always in flux & completely unreliable be your rudder & GPS in life. I'd be telling you to let your life be run by the thing Jesus said: *For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, & slander.* – Mt 15:19 Back to Jeremiah: *Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans, who rely on human strength & turn their hearts away from the Lord. They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future.* Jer 17:5 When my heart is my guide...I don't know about you, but that is not where I want to live...all manner of mischief & disaster are possible.

2nd thing that happens when we dip into that well of things God never said, we miscommunicate/get wrong the nature of God. It's simple really...when we say to someone (or whisper in our own ear) "Be true to yourself...trust your heart...whatever makes you happy" we deliver the message that God is all about me...he wants me to be happy he wants me to be prosperous he wants me to be successful & that turns God into my servant – giant Aldi's in the sky get what I want at a reduced rate. A few prayers a few hours on the plastic chairs a few \$\$ in the bag a few instances of self-restraint & hey presto I should have the winning ticket! Until I don't. Dog still chews my slippers. My kids still don't talk to me. Boss still won't give me a raise. All that chemo accomplished squat. What went wrong?

But the real nature of God this: *For everything comes from him & exists by his power & is intended for his glory.* – Rom 11:36 The ultimate goal of the universe is to demonstrate the glory of God. That's why everything exists, including you & me, for God's delight & to reveal his goodness glory majesty. God is not my butler my go-fer. I am His. Created in his image to reveal him to the world – to live his presence for the world to see & to carry out his purposes in caring for nurturing tending everything he places at my disposal...so that the whole world might praise Him...not me.

So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." – 1 Pet 1:14-16 Max Lucado...pastor/author gives a great example... If you take a fish & set it up on the shore will it be happy? Of course not. So you decide to shower it with \$\$...Happy yet? No. Throw it a party...get all the best looking fish you can find & plop them up there on the shore with the fish, hire a band & bust open a few Crown Lagers...Happy yet? No...Why? It has all this cool stuff & lots of fish friends to hang with...Because the

fish was not created for the shore, & too often we chase all manner of stuff trying to find happy – trying to nail down our heart's desires...& we walk away from the 1 thing we were made for...the Father.

We were made for His purposes for his love for his presence for his glory & when we live outside of that as if he exists to make my life work smoothly...it's a mess. *You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence & the pleasures of living with you forever. – Ps 16:11*

3rd thing that happens when we try to build our lives on things God never said, we miscommunicate/get wrong the nature of God's desire for us. Too many folks in our world genuinely believe Christians are "people of the No" that God's big word about anything good/fun/fattening is "No." They don't understand "*I came that you might have life & have it abundantly,*" all they know about Christian faith is "*thou shalt not.*"

But God has no interest in our lives becoming some barren empty dry wasteland... Look what God wants for us: "*The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, & self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions & desires of their sinful nature to his cross & crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.*" – Gal 5:22-25 You see God's highest calling for you is that he so fills you with every blessing of heaven that it pours out of you into the lives of everyone you see every day of your life...there is no law against how loving kind or patient you can be & if God is multiplying your capacity for those things like he wants to what's going to happen...?

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, & pride in our achievements & possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever. – 1 Jn 2:15-17 We can never say this enough...as follower of Jesus...as people for whom Christ lived died rose rules & prays...we exist in this world but our real home our true destination our intended destiny is forever. God does not want us wasting our lives on anything that wastes away.

Our hearts will naturally pursue those things that have their end in this life, but when my heart is shaped by the Father's heart for me...my desires, my options, my possibilities, my choices lead to an eternal future & blessing for those around me. Here's what that looks like: ***Trust in the Lord & do what is good; dwell in the land & live securely. Take delight in the Lord, & He will give you your heart's desires. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, & He will act, making your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like the noonday sun. – Ps 37:3-6*** The sense of what David is saying is that as God claims more & more of my life my trust my confidence my reliance, my life becomes more & more responsive to him...I become more pliable to his moulding & shaping...the more I yield to the Father the more he is able to shape me into his renewed image...The more I seek to release more of my life to him the more I simply pursue his presence his wisdom for my life his Spirit in my everyday existence his word to fill my thoughts...he will give me my heart's desires which have by his power at work in me become his desires. That should come as no surprise: *My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me & gave himself for me. – Gal 2:20*

God's highest calling for you/me is that he so fills us with his presence with every blessing of heaven with life & joy unsurpassed abundantly overflowing in every circumstance & situation of this life that he become visible in you/me & his love multiplies in the lives of those around us... Our hearts will naturally pursue those things that have their end in this life, but when my heart is shaped by the Father's heart for me...my desires, my options, my possibilities, my choices lead to an eternal future & blessing for those around me.

Let's pray with that in mind... Father in all things you are with us and at all times are moving us toward your glorious triumph at the end of all things here on earth. You have created us to be with you always, to reveal you to those around us and to delight in the abundance of your blessings. Lead us away from our own hearts and more deeply into yours. Be our strength and our hope so we can offer your loving embrace to others...Jesus in your Name we pray...Amen.