

Greetings to each of you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Autumn is gradually giving way to winter weather and in the Church worship cycle, we are about to leave the Season of Pentecost and travel through Advent in preparation for Christmas. The Search Committee has been labouring faithfully. The Congregation Profile is in the final stages of preparation. When it is approved and ready for circulation, the next big change for St. John's will be the preparation to extend a Call to the new minister and then making the arrangements to receive the candidate as your new pastor. The lesson: changes are very much part of our lives.

One of the constants is an aspect of our humanity that affects every area of our lives, our character, accomplishments, priorities, thoughts, motivations, choices, direction, and relationships. This is our desires. Think what would happen if you didn't need anything. What would you accomplish? How would you spend your time? What would you think about? Our desires prompt us into action, cause us to seek out companions and mates, and guide us to make decisions that will lead us to whatever we long to have.

This is part of being made in God's image because He Himself has desires. However, what we want is not always good, whereas the Lord's desires are always good. We have limited perspective, but He is omniscient and knows when a particular path, person, or object we want will lead us to ruin. Sometimes our desires are sinful, selfish, greedy, and foolish, but God is motivated by divine love. He always seeks what is best for us.

There is a Bible verse that is sometimes missed in our attempt to get what we want from God. Many people come to Him with their prayer requests claiming His promise in Psalm 37: *He will give you the desires of your heart (v. 4)*. However, the context of this passage reveals that there are conditions attached the promise. If we want God to give us the desires of our heart, we must abide by His requirements.

First of all, we are told, *delight yourself in the Lord; and he will give you the desires of your heart.* Psalm 37:4. To delight in someone means we enjoy being with that person and spending time together, talking and listening to each other. We make that relationship a priority and we seek to please him or her with our words and our actions. Think about this in terms of our relationship with God.

Do you love talking to God in prayer and listening to Him as you read and study His Word? Are you longing to know Him more fully? Do you think about Him often throughout the day and find pleasure in obeying Him and walking in his ways?

This is what it means to delight in the Lord. Psalm 37:4 is not a blanket promise that God will give us whatever we want but is a call to align our wants and desires with the Lord's. When we want what He wants, He will give us those desires because they are in accordance with His will.

Second, we read, Commit your way to the Lord. (v. 5). Every desire should be sifted through God's Word and His will for our lives. When we commit our way to the Lord, we are acknowledging His rightful authority to decide whether our desires fit into His plans or for our lives. Sometimes we are reluctant to turn everything over to God because we are afraid things will not turn out the way we want. And the stronger our desire, the more determined we become to maneuver and manipulate circumstances to get our own way. The reason we struggle to commit ourselves, and our desires to the Lord is because we lack trust.

The third requirement is: Trust also in him, and He will do it. (v. 5). Who has proved Himself more faithful than God? He has rescued us from sin by sending His Son to pay the penalty we deserved. He has given His Spirit as a pledge of our eternal security and promised us a home heaven. Why would we ever doubt that He has the best plan for our lives? We can trust Him to make the right decision regarding our desires because He always does what is best, and in the process, transforms us into people who reflect His own righteousness. (v. 6).

Fourth, we are to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. (v. 7). The opposite of resting is, fretting and David says three times in this Psalm, *Do not fret.* (v. 1, 7, 8). When we fret, we are essentially disagreeing with God because He is not co-operating with our plans. The solution is to place all our desires and expectations in His sovereign, loving hands, acknowledging that He is always right. Then we are to wait patiently, trusting in His love, wisdom, and power. If we what we desire fits His will, nothing will prevent Him from accomplishing it in His perfect time. But if it is not His will, no amount of pleading will make Him bow down to our wishes.

In order to adopt God's desires as our own, we must know what He wants. That is why it is important to discover what pleases Him through the reading of Scripture. We cannot simply pull a verse from its context and claim that we are standing on His Word. If we want the sure foundation, we must stand on the entire Word of God.

As the church concludes the Season of Pentecost each of us must ask, what do I desire most? I pray whatever it is, you will be willing to trust God and lay it before Him. I have learned from experience that His way is always the best and never results in regret. We'll just enjoy being in His presence with one another.

Please keep the work of the Search Committee in your daily prayers and pray also for the candidate who will be Called to this pulpit.

Blessings and Shalom
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PS: Next Holy communion – December 2, 2018 – the First Sunday of Advent