

Hear the Conclusion

by Duane Troyer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of pursuing God and His commandments as the ultimate purpose of life.

Scripture: 2 Kings 4:1, Proverbs 21:21, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Luke 15:11, James 5:14

Topics: "Fear God", "Obedience To God"

Description

Duane Troyer preaches about the importance of seeking God's will, diligently pursuing righteousness, and being cautious of what we pursue, whether good or evil. He reflects on the story of the prodigal son as an example of pursuing self-interest and the consequences of such pursuits. Troyer emphasizes the need to fear God, keep His commandments, and simplify obedience to God's word, even when understanding may be lacking. He encourages believers to trust in God's provision and follow simple commands like anointing the sick and laying on of hands, highlighting the power of faith and obedience.

Transcript

Grace be with you and peace from God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ. I want to greet everyone in Jesus' name. It's a blessing to be here. Let's pray. Heavenly Father. We thank you for this beautiful day and this opportunity to live and to see a new day. And to see your mercies new again this morning. We thank you Lord, for gathering us together here. Give us a heart that seeks your will, and help us to be faithful to that calling which you've called us and we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and we ask now Lord that you would help us as we look into your word, that you could speak to us and give us words that can be a help to each one of us.

Let your kingdom come and your will be done. Pray this in Jesus' name, Amen. I've been blessed by what's been shared already this morning in the opening and by the brothers afterwards. I felt like it was a real good opening to some of the things I'd like to talk about, although I feel like I kind of have some scattered thoughts and ideas and I don't know if they all relate with each other, but it's just some thoughts I've had the last while. Seeking God and pursuing God is what brother Cody talked about.

His will, seeking His will, of which if we don't, if we don't have that heart, we won't see Him. The verses that he read (and there are other verses) about pursuing, seeking, being diligent, striving: that's what it takes. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. And sometimes I'm not sure if when we seek God, if we end up finding him, or if he ends up finding us, but somehow we come together, He sees that heart, and He meets us. There's a verse in Proverbs that says, As righteousness leads to life, so he who pursues evil, pursues it to his own death.

And so the pursuit of evil leads to something too. I had to think of the prodigal son this morning because I was thinking along these thoughts about the pursuit of something. We need to give diligent care to what we pursue because it's very likely going to end up catching us. I had to think of what the brothers were sharing here about work. Yes, we're not always thinking about a bible verse, you know. Most of us when we're ready to cut down a tree or something like that, we think about cutting down a tree.

It would be pretty dangerous not to give it some thought. But we can check ourselves on what are we pursuing? What are our goals? And I'll just read this passage on the prodigal son in Luke 15, starting in verse 11. Then he said, A certain man had two sons and the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me", so he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, traveled to a far country and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to the citizens of that country and he sent him into the fields to feed swine, and he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate and now one gave him anything. We see the prodigal son here was pursuing the interest of self. I think some translations, or maybe it's just a little later, it says he spent his money with riotous living and maybe some other things.

But anyway, he found these things. But then they didn't fill the void that only one thing can fill, and it got to the point where he came to the end of himself, and he started pursuing something else. But when he came to himself he said, 'how many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father and will say to him "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

Make me one of your hired servants." And he arose and came to his father, but when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.- Just another reason why I think that maybe God finds us when he sees that heart. The father here saw him from a long way off. - And the son said to him 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, and bring the fatted calf here and kill and let us eat and be merry for this my son was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found." And they began to be merry. Now the

older son was in the field, and he came and drew near to the house. He heard the sounds of music and dancing, and he called one of his servants to him and asked him what these things meant. And he said to him "your brother has come and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf." But he was angry and would not go in, therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. And he said, Lo, these many years I've been serving you. I've never transgressed your commandment at any time, yet you never gave me a young goat that I could make merry with my friends.

But as soon as this son of yours comes who has devoured your livelihood with harlots (I guess that was the word I was thinking was in here somewhere) you killed the fatted calf for him. And he said to him, "Son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad for your brother was dead and is alive, and was lost and is found. There's a lot of things we can get out of that story, it's a great story. But I just had to think about it this morning, about pursuing.

About pursuing both good things or evil things. And what happens. Again that verse in Proverbs says, As righteousness leads to life, so he that pursues evil, pursues it to his own death. I once read, I'm not sure where, about a way the Eskimos had to capture wolves, or to kill wolves. And it's kind of a grizzly way. I don't know if they do this today or not, but they took a blade of a knife that was sharp on both sides, razor sharp on both sides. And they dipped it into blood, and then froze it.

And they dipped it into blood again and froze it, and dipped it into blood...until there was this pretty nice thick coat of frozen blood around this blade. And then they stuck it out into the ice somewhere, with the point sticking upward. And these bloodthirsty wolves would come and start licking on that blade, and the more they licked on that blade, that blood, the more their appetite for blood rose, and the next thing that happens, the wolf is licking this sharp edge and his tongue bleeds, and this fresh blood makes him all the more hungry and just licks and licks until his tongue is completely slit and bleeds himself to death.

He dies, a victim of his own appetite. A victim of his own appetite. Sadly, animals aren't the only ones that become victims of their own appetites. Many an athlete, many a famous singer or actor has pursued fame until he tried harder to get rid of it than he tried to get it. He hated it! He wished he could just walk down the street and be a common man. But he couldn't. Everybody just wanted to follow him. He couldn't do anything in private anymore. He became a victim of what he had pursued.

I read a story one time about a man traveling through a really remote area in Alaska, and he came upon an OLD little cabin, and inside this cabin, he found two skeletons of men, and several big piles of gold. And he felt the story was self explanatory, that these men pursued gold back in the time when a lot of people went to Alaska to pursue gold; these men struck it rich, and they found a lot of gold, but they waited too long to get out, the winter set in on them, and they died with their gold.

Alexander the Great was considered a great man in his day. He had conquered the whole known world. He had great warriors and he went from one country to the other and took control of them. And by the age 33 he had conquered the whole known world, then he sat back and cried because there were no more worlds to conquer. And he died at 33 of fatigue and all the battles he fought. I thought about the children of Israel, they wanted so much to eat some meat, they were tired of manna.

"Just give us meat!" And when the quail came, they ate until it came out of their nostrils. They died with flesh in their teeth. Victims of their own appetites. We could go on, Pharaoh, and Herod, and Korah, and Absalom, and Nebuchadnezzar all in one way or the other were victims of their own appetite. The thing that they pursued ended up catching them and getting the best of them. These were all wicked men for the most part, pursuing things that we just all know that is wicked pursuit; pride, power and all those things.

I had to think about Solomon and I was reading through the Ecclesiastes and he pursued a lot of things too, and he gave his heart to these things. He was given this great wisdom, and in Ecclesiastes he says, he gave his heart to seek out all the works done under the sun, and he sought

out knowledge, and understanding; he learned Proverbs and parables. He built houses, and vineyards, and gardens and parks, and fruit trees and pools of water to water his fruit trees and orchards. He had men servants and maid servants, he had singers. There was nothing that he desired that he didn't acquire, didn't achieve. As an old man (I think he was older when he wrote Ecclesiastes) and he says, it's vanity of vanities. All is vanity. At the very best, it's vanity. At the worst you'll become completely enslaved by the pursuit of anything other than God and his kingdom.

He said, I looked at all my labor and all is vanity. And then I just really like the way he ends this book. He spoke of many other things, and then he said, Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep his commandments. This is the whole duty of man. That conclusion is timeless, it applies to everywhere on the face of the earth, for every nation, for every kindred and tongue. The conclusion of the whole matter is, Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

It matters little whether we live in a hut or a palace. Whether we're a master or a servant. In prison or free. At home or abroad. Wealthy or poor. Healthy or sick. Young or old. A man or a woman. In company or all alone. Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man. We like to figure things out. I've been a bit of a dreamer my whole life, maybe, and I like looking at history and I've read a fair bit of church history. It's fascinating. But whether we look at church history today, or the churches around us today or in the past, we see a lot of flavors, if you might call it that.

Some churches were persecuted, and this kind of sparks my interests, it's like "this is really, really noble." But I've seen people die a martyr for what they believe, but they believe the wrong thing, and I'm just don't know so sure anymore how noble it really is. It is a noble thing to be able to do that, but it's not a sure mark that they're faithful. The conclusion of the whole matter is to fear God and keep his commandments, this is the whole duty of man. Some seems very sober, some seem very excited, some seem very plain, and some seem very "shelly", but the conclusion is, if we don't fear God and keep his commandments, we have not done the whole duty of man.

I might be getting on somewhat a different kind of subject here, but still it ties in with the conclusion of the matter. I think we're all here/ (most of us moved here, some of us have been residents around here all our lives) we come together because we desire fellowship with each other, and we found people who are of like precious faith. I hope I can say all of us desire anew testament church, but then sometimes I sit down and I think, How does that look? And you can read the new testament, and still, how does it look?

Because not all the new testament churches look alike. How should the order of it look? Then I come to the conclusion of the whole matter. It's: fear God and keep his commandments, for this is our whole duty. And that's usually what I end up with, with the same conclusion that Solomon came up with and he wasn't just talking about the things he pursued, he covers a lot of things in Ecclesiastes . Just about everything that pertains to life , he covers, then he concludes it with that.

And some of these commandments that we read in the new testament, we can apply to our lives. Probably the majority of what we read in the sermon on the mount, we can apply as an individual to our own lives and we better would. There's other commands and examples that we really can't apply to ourselves unless we have some brothers to obey it with. You can't greet yourself with a holy kiss and many others. And I'm just going to talk about a few of these that came to my mind. Just some of the things that I've been thinking of, and there's one here especially that I felt like I never have heard much teaching about it and maybe we just need a little more teaching about it.

It's something that I think we should do, probably should be done more often. I had to think of baptism, as one of the commands, as one of the things that we're commanded to do, to baptize those who believe. Then believers and professing Christians often times get caught up, like, Does baptism save you? Is a person a believer before he's baptized or does he become a true believer as he's baptized? Does that water really wash away their sins? And often times what ends up happening is disputes between this proof text and that proof text...Well, here it say in Peter that it makes it sound like baptism saves us, and... well,

no, I think a person is a believer before he's

baptized...Or, water, I think there is a significance to water maybe, yet not really. It's like brother Walter was saying the other day. Water makes some stuff grow and other stuff rot. There's nothing holy about the water, and yet there's something about the simple obedience of just doing it that I think is what God blesses, just doing it. Communion, or sometimes referred to as the Eucharist, or the Lord's supper, or whatever we want to call it. Well, how is it? Transubstantiation?

Consubstantiation? Or is it reception ism? Or memorial ism? These are all different words that people have for different views, like does it really turn into the Lord's body? His blood? Is his presence just right there, around it? and with it? and about it? or it all just spiritual? Or is it just a memorial? ...Or could we just do it? And let a mystery be a mystery. That's one thing I remember that I was talking with Olen one time, and I said, "Ok, I kind of understand what you guys are saying about this, but explain it to me so that I'm able to explain it to others" and he said, " Well, that's just it.

We don't have to explain it." And I was just blessed with it. We don't have to be able to lay this out for somebody to completely understand, to just do it. I mentioned greeting each other with the holy kiss. This is mentioned multiple times and Paul told his churches to do it. And we could ask why. Well it's odd. It's strange. And it isn't for everybody, depending where you come from, but there's something nice about it. And I think it's just a simple obedience to it, especially if it's done for true love for the brother.

And I heard the question asked one time to someone about the head covering. Some caller called in and was concerned that the churches have lost the meaning of 1 Cor. 11. This was quite a while back, but sometimes you hear those people and you wish you could get a hold of them later, but Hank just explained it all away. Like, the principle stays, but the practice doesn't. And he even explained the same way about the holy kiss; the principle stays but the practice doesn't. And I wondered, how far will you take this then?

Why couldn't that apply to baptism? Communion? And many, many other things. If the practice doesn't matter. We can have the principle. We could have the principle of fellowshiping with each other and calling it communion. In fact, that's exactly what Quakers, Salvation Army and some groups like that do. They think it's all just a spiritual thing. I don't think they even baptize with water. And here's the one I wanted to talk about: Anointing the sick. Let's turn to James chapter 5, I'll start in verse 13.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses one to another, and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain upon the land for 3 years and 6 months. And he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produces its fruit. Brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns him from the error of his way, will save his soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins. I have seldom heard much of a teaching on this passage.

I've been present once or twice when this has happened, and I think it's one of those things we can just do. Do we think that the oil has healing properties? Not really. Say we'd use olive oil to anoint someone,

we'd use the same oil in our cooking, and it's not that. And we could just say, "well we believe that God could heal a sick person just because we pray" and he can. But here's a simple little commandment. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

It's nothing that hard to do, if we just do it. How many times do we think of that first when we're sick? It may not be for when you have a little cold or something, but it doesn't define that all either. One thing I'm pretty sure of, is that it is not the way it is practiced in the Catholic church. One of the early Anabaptist was having a debate with someone, and he said, "Well, whatever this means, it can't be what you do, because

you never anoint someone with oil if you think he's going to survive, you only anoint them once you're pretty sure they're going to die." Which is precisely what the people do where I came from, for the most part. There's some variation, maybe. And I sure think that is not what this is talking about, because he talks about the person being healed, and I think it's something that we should consider more. Things we can just do, things we can just do and God blesses the simple obedience.

I think it's good and there's for sure place in the church or in the kingdom of God, or in Christianity for seeking like the understanding of things. I don't even advocate someone just doing a bunch of rituals without knowing why he does it, I don't advocate that at all. But I think we can just do things that we read, with a simple, childlike obedience, the commandments that we have, whether we fully understand it or not. I think sometimes about the laying on of hands. Something the apostles did much, and not just the apostles, laid hands on the people and sent them out.

I don't know why. I don't really believe that there was some power that went out through their arms and hands and into the person they laid their hands on, but it's an example that we have of what they did. Just those things that we're allowed to obey without fully understanding it, with leaving it a mystery. We can just do it. Maybe I didn't finish what I was saying, there is room for people to dig deep, to get an understanding, and if you can understand and read Hebrew and Greek, go for it.

Find out what these original meanings mean. I don't have a problem with it. But let's just be careful lest we don't do it. In our search to be sure that we understand every little detail about it. It's not the hearers of the word but the doers, that shall be saved. Those were some of the thoughts I'd been having, that may no so much be related with what I was sharing first, and yet I think if we hear the conclusion of the whole matter, we can fear God, keep his commandments, this is the whole duty of man.

I'm going to close by reading a passage in 2 Kings 4. A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord, and the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves. So Elisha said to her, What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house? And she said, your maid servant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil. Then he said, Go borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors, empty vessels, and do not gather just a few, and when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you, and your sons, then pour it into those vessels and set aside the full ones.

So she went from him, and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her, and she poured it out. Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, bring me another vessel, and he said to her, there is not another vessel. So the oil ceased. Then she came and told the man of God and he said, Go and sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons live on the rest.

So what happens here, is this woman whose husband dies, and leaves a debt.

Now the creditor, in order to get his sum, is about to take her two sons and either sell them as slaves or have them as slaves, because this woman owes him something. And Elisha, asked her what she had, and all she had was this little jar oil, and he tells her to do a ridiculous thing, to go get empty vessels and fill them with that oil. You know, she had to do something, and I think this is one of the things, without faith it is impossible to please God. If we can just believe some of these things, just do it.

The woman had to somewhat look foolish if she went throughout the whole neighborhood, borrowing empty vessels, and probably people asking why, and I don't know if there was an explanation given, but it would've looked and seemed a little foolish. But she just did it. And God provided for as much as she gathered. She poured oil from her one jar, until every jar she gathered was full, and then there was no more oil. If she would've had the idea that this just sounds a little weird, maybe I'll just get one.

That wouldn't look too suspicious, and I'll see if it works. Guess what? She would've filled one jar, but that's it. It doesn't say how many she gathered, but whatever she gathered was filled. According to her faith it was provided. She just did it. I'll leave it at that and open it up for anyone. Feel free to share.

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