

Seek Not Great Things for Yourself

by Joshua Daniel

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, putting God first, and avoiding self-centeredness in order to live a life that honors God.

Duration: 59:16

Scripture: Jeremiah 45:5

Topics: "Humility", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, selflessness, and seeking God's will above personal ambitions. It warns against the dangers of self-importance, seeking great things for oneself, and the negative impact of distractions and self-centeredness on spiritual growth. The speaker shares personal experiences and challenges listeners to prioritize exalting Jesus, honesty, and faith in God's provision.

Transcript

You know, folks, on President Reagan's desk, there was a little plaque which read roughly something like this, there is no limit to the blessing or fruit that come out when one is willing to give the credit to others. You know, it is a great thought. Somehow, you know, we like to occupy a place of importance.

Not everyone is like John the Baptist who said, he must increase. It's not me. Don't look at me.

Look at him. Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He must increase.

I must decrease. You know, folks, this has been one of the key things in my life, exalting Jesus. You know, I never pretended to be a talented person, nor was I by any means a brilliant person.

No, not at all. And on the contrary, I was an aimless person in a sense. Some of the young people of today have certain aims, a sports scholarship, which will take them through college, for instance.

And so they give themselves with that motivation to sport. Now, in my own case, there was nothing of the sort. It was a kind of aimless pursuit of pleasure.

I'm afraid that there are too many people today either seeking great things for themselves. If you turn to Jeremiah, 45th chapter, you will see this admonition. Jeremiah and the 45th chapter.

Seekest thou great things for thyself. Excuse me. Seekest thou great things for yourself.

You know, friends, these are the days when people appear to be so taken up with money. And they feel that once they get a lot of money, everything will be okay. No, I had no such goal.

You know, the fifth verse, 45th chapter of Jeremiah and the fifth verse. And seekest thou great things for yourself. Seek them not.

For behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, said the Lord. But your life will I give unto you for a prey in all places without thou growest. Seekest thou great things for yourself.

Let's look at the first verse. The word that Jeremiah, the prophet, spake unto Baruch, the son of Neriah. When he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah.

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah. Thus said the Lord, the God of Israel, unto you, O Baruch. See, the word of the Lord should come to us.

That's the purpose of a retreat. You know, some people see no sense in retreats or getting apart. The Lord Jesus saw much sense in that.

He wanted his disciples. They were getting far too busy. And he wanted them to go with him and recharge in a desert place.

Well, we choose some pleasure land instead, isn't it? We think we recuperate and receive all that is needful to recharge in just getting around the place. You know, in one retreat in Ireland. They said when the weather was inclement, that is rainy, dripping all the time.

They said it's good for the people. I said, how come? How is it? It's good for the people. Oh, otherwise they will get to getting around the place.

You see, Mr. Daniel, have you seen the sights? Was one of the words with which I used to be greeted. I would say plainly, I'm not here to see the sights. I'm far from interested in that.

But what I want is revival. I am here for that purpose. So I used to shut myself.

You know, as Jesus said, when thou prayest, go into your closet, shut the door and pray to your father in secret. You see, there the Lord Jesus Christ was also earlier referring to those who make just a public display of their prayers. You know, this publicity thing, this self-importance can become a great hindrance.

You know, at a time when churches are having great difficulty in this regard. And some pastors are afraid to leave their pulpits on a Sunday morning. They are afraid that they would be losing their popularity.

And the assistant pastor will take over. Now, my dear friends, I never had such fears. All that I needed was a word from the Lord.

That's what I used to seek. Now, go into your closet, shut the door and pray to your father in secret. There's nothing like a prayer closet today.

A place of absolute quiet from the clutter of the television. And you see, all the time you're interrupted. You know, folks, as a writer, I have to get some of my editorial or news items or prayer burdens into the magazines before they can go to the press.

And there is always a deadline. Every month, wherever I may be in the world, I have to communicate that to the press. And to one of my assistants who puts things in their proper order.

And mark you, what distractions. Modern life seems to be one of continual distraction. In the midst of that, to be able to say, I've set the Lord always before my face.

I shall not be moved. He is at my right hand. So, to keep the Lord and his business right at the forefront.

Yes, to some people become an impossibility. Why? There are other intruding factors. You see, they have so many other stuff.

And if there is nothing else to do, they're just talking their heads off. You know, folks, to keep our conversations relevant, civil, gracious, and with some substance which we communicate. Otherwise, what are you doing? You're wasting your time and your money.

You see the profusion today of these latest telephones. Telephones that have a camera with them too. What a needless distraction.

Now, it's all right for people who have nothing else to do. Simply aimless people. They can plunge into conversations over all kinds of things.

I was living in one part of Ohio and laboring amongst the churches in that area. And my phone, my host, shared the same line with about 10 neighbors. Can you believe that? 10 neighbors.

And he would say, some of these women get to visiting on the phone. And the line is always occupied. The poor man, you know, he was an excellent character.

And did a little bit of business as a jeweler, repairer of watches and stuff from his own home. But that was his comment way back in the 60s. You see, and of course today with the wireless phones, you don't have that problem of being blocked or cut off because somebody else is on the line.

However, you see there are all these distractions. So that we don't get to the real purpose of our lives. What is God saying? I told a preacher, hey, you seem to be so much tied to your wonderful phone, which you carry in your pocket.

But what you need is, thus said the Lord, if that is not there. Now God was saying, seekest thou great things for yourself. Now there again, self comes into play.

You know, friends, and self is a very negative fact. Now just look at that. Somebody says something false or uncomplimentary about yourself.

Oh, how heat up you get. What's that? It's the uncrucified self. I say I'm a public person.

This is a free country. Anybody can say what he pleases. Let him go ahead and call me any variety of names.

It does not matter. I just brush those things aside. I can't get preoccupied with all this fly swatting all the time.

You know, self-preservation. I have seen that to be one of the great hindrances in revival. See, if there is one man seated in the congregation saying, or in the team saying, Oh, I should have been asked to do

this or do that.

I could have done it better. If there's one contradictory voice or opposite current, revival is hindered. And you know, especially the way things are going, everybody has found a voice.

Oh, you can't correct little children. They said to me when I wanted order in the churches where I preached. And oh, they said even the children here, we can't correct them.

Now this was many years ago. Today, this has become a worldwide problem. People are not able to correct their own children.

What a tragedy this is. And so I find the greatest hindrances to God's work are the children of my former helpers. How come? How can they become so ungrateful? You see, nobody's people who had no standing were raised by God in revival.

And they began to see great things. They began to heal the sick. And they were soon acknowledged by many around them as servants of God or at least children used of God, used by God.

Now, must not the children be grateful? Who lifted our dad? Who lifted our family? It's the good Lord. Well, I suppose I myself would have lived a pretty comfortable life, you know, with a hardworking dad and mother like I had. I could have sat back and said, Oh, fine, but I would have liked it better.

You know, selfishness. From whence has God lifted us? Seekest thou great things for yourself? You know, using all God's privileges to boost self and have big egos. What rubbish is that? I am nobody.

Get out from here. This is the king's court. Don't dare prophesy here.

I am not a prophet. Neither am I the son of a prophet. I am just a fruit gatherer.

But the Lord gave him a message. Now, what is it that cuts us out as people of God? Thus said the Lord. If we don't have that, my dear friends, there's another thing which I have seen.

Live with great sorrow. It's this imitation. Oh, I can do this too.

You know, imitation. I never imitated anybody. There was that tendency there, but I never imitated anybody.

God has made us unique as individuals. There are gifts and graces given to you which others don't have. But you're looking on some prominence instead of being grateful to God.

You know, this imitation and competition. Two things that just don't belong to the Christian life at all. All I care is this.

Alas, I am not like Jesus. And I tell you, it hurts me. I have preached Christ now for nearly 70 years.

And not to be like Jesus? Why is that streak of stubbornness? Why that streak of, okay, I'm all right, Jack, kind of self-confidence? How does that help? No, it does not help. You know, he's still working on me. We keep singing that, you know.

But I see the gospel today has become so watered down. Come to Jesus just as you are. And go out and live your life just as you are.

What? There is a relevance in that every one of us comes to Jesus just as we are. But do we remain just as we are? No. We put on Christ.

You know what you have put on this morning. You carefully selected your clothing for this week at the retreat. And you know what you have put on.

Are you conscious that you have put on Christ? I have put on Christ. And so I am not to be seen. No, we don't even preach it nor expect it.

But that's the scripture, you see. And so the competitive spirit which decries others, runs down others, is there. And the imitation of the rich or the powerful.

Why do I want to be rich? It is an awful thing. I don't want to be rich. You know, my dear friends, when I have to pray for figures in seven-figure amounts, do you know what I say to myself? Okay, what are the bills that are being paid by the big corporations? Or what are the bills that are being paid by the government for this relief, for that relief, or whatever? Huge sums.

But you know, when we come to the Christian church, it's all creatures, which is not at all a limited number or a selective group. It is all creatures. Now what does that demand? That demands a tremendous faith.

You know, Alfred the Great, who gave the first code or documented the first code of laws for England, particularly based on the Ten Commandments, he was an extraordinary monarch. Half his time he devoted to God. Can you imagine? Half his time he devoted to the Lord.

Carefully. And half his wealth he devoted to the Lord. You know, my dear friends, those were the men that gave us our freedoms.

Those were the men that brought the church and its governance, the blessings that come from the gospel into administering justice. Justice for all. My dear friends, there is no justice for all.

It's so unfortunate. If there is a talented person, must you crush him and squash him under your feet? No. Those talents should be used for God.

Come on, brother. Come on, sister. Put your talents in the hands of God and seek not great things for yourself.

You know, that's become a plague today. Seeking great things for ourselves. See, if I don't please my boss, he may just relegate me to some little spot of no importance and therefore I must please him.

Do you know that in every office there are these men pleasers and some of these fellows are stacked up with work. What for? You know, they're not paid for those extraordinary hours, those excess time which they spend. All right, do your duty well.

Excel, but don't take that away from God. God is the giver of time. So, pleasure.

Seekest thou great things for thyself. On a Sunday morning, really, the church should move to the games grounds. You know, there were preachers who went and preached at the races.

And what was the record? The horses had little attention paid to them. They had a message. You know, the need is so great today this entertainment stuff has no relevance for them.

You know, you heard just now how much the audio of medical treatment can put a man through and notwithstanding how patiently one undergoes treatment, putting aside a lot of other things. All right, for your physical well-being, you're prepared to do that or you're forced to do that or whatever. But for your spiritual well-being, what are you willing to forego? The coach is not God.

Today the coach is God. Sunday morning doesn't belong to our boys. It belongs to the coach.

When has Sunday become the coach's? That only shows how incapable we preachers are. All right, we have given way to entertainment, entertainment, more entertainment, and after all, games are a kind of entertainment. And of course today with the drugs in full play in games, it's sheer nonsense.

You see, it absolutely doesn't make sense. Performance enhancement drugs. And if I am on one of those drugs and display my skills better than the opponent, what sense does it make? We have made life pretty much senseless.

We have put, you know, when I turned the car three times over, rolled it, fortunately it landed on the four wheels eventually. Now, I could not stand around and see what the condition of the car was or anything of the kind, but after an accident, if you find that you are in a car with all four wheels on top and completely upside down, well, what would you do? Press the accelerator? What would you do? Today, we say, well, I am not getting what I should out of this. My car is not moving.

Why? Your car is not on its wheels. It's resting on its top. And there it will remain as long as you don't get the wheels onto the road.

My dear friends, these are very subtle and obvious. However, they are so obvious today. It shows spiritual blindness if you don't sense these dangers.

You want to be blind? Fine. I don't want to be blind. I want the truth.

And, you know, I have always found it hard when the Lord Jesus Christ came down from the mountain in Mark 9th chapter, he found this complaint about his disciples. 17th verse, And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto you my son, which has a dumb spirit, and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him. But, you know, I spoke to your disciples that they should cast him out, and they could not.

Now, this was the complaint of this poor man that brought his son. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ asked his disciples in the 33rd verse, And he came to Capernaum, and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that you disputed among yourselves, by the way? You know, they should have felt so miserable. We did not come up to our master's expectations, so that our master had to say, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? 19th verse, How long shall I suffer you? Now, we gave such a shock and disappointment to our master.

That should have been their pain. That should have been their cry. Instead of that, what were they disputing? You see? Who would be the greatest among them? 34th verse, You see, they didn't answer it.

For by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest? Look at that. Self in display. You know, self makes you dishonest also.

Quite dishonest. You can't be trusted, because the appointed cure, the cross, was never in action, or never utilized. It's no more I that live, but Christ who liveth in me.

See, my dear friends, as long as there is that self angle, you don't, you cannot be trusted. There's the self. All the time it's intruding and completely changes your perspective.

The balance of things. What is the balance of things here? Hey, we failed to help that poor man with his son. All of us together.

See, they should have said, Hey, I didn't have the faith, brother. I failed. I was too sleepy on the mountain and did not receive enough power.

You know, my dear friends, when self is not there, you are honest. When self is there, oh, you can never be trusted. Don't trust yourself either.

Self is a dangerous thing. Seekest thou great things for yourself? Seek them not. You know, I am able to tell to a lot of people, now you have seen how the prayer halls of the fellowship have been going up in various places and there is no room and at the same time so many difficult assignments have to be taken up.

In the midst of that, did I ever say, Hey, let me build myself a nice little place. No, I didn't care to do that. I am here to build the work of God and when God calls me, I'll go.

But that selfish bent was taken away and what a relief, you know. Self doesn't intrude. Oh, there is a seven-figure bill to be paid.

You know, it's a massive sum. When it comes to seven figures in dollars, that's got to be paid in the next two months. Another sum has to be paid.

Similar sum. But who is doing the work? Who has undertaken to supply every need? It's the Lord. It's not me.

Faith. You know, my dear friends, it's a sad thing that we are not growing adequately for such an hour as this. There are enough resources with the Lord to meet all the requirements.

America hasn't got resources. What? They are trying to make China one of their resources. And more blind action could never have been taken.

Historically blind action. You know, friends, and here we are at a time of when the country is in deep debt with hardly any knowledge of how it will service the interest also. At such a time, when people are suffering for lack of jobs, you know, it must be terrible when children are hungry and the newspaper says it's good that the schools are going to open soon.

Why? They will get some food. Children will get some food. My dear friends, seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.

Such words from even a newspaper should never have appeared in this country or in this continent. That's including Canada. But, you know, when I see the newspaper say it is far more economical to have your surgery or your transplant in Belgium or France.

What? Far more economical. And many are taking up this opportunity to go away to get themselves medical treatment. My dear friends, that godly doctors are put to such difficulties.

You know, a big plaque reads Stand up for religious freedom. Where? In the doctor's office. Stand up for religious freedom.

See, friends, when self grows, we don't care about anything else. It's... The load is too much for you to bear. You feel you are just at the end of your tether and you have simply no more resources.

What nonsense is that? Where is the spring of living water welling up into eternal life in you? See, we tend to be a very tired people today with very short fuses. I want to tell you that's no pleasant thing at all. It just does not fit in to the Christian life.

I have many battles on the anvil and I've had to face this spell of ill health too. But what does my savior say? My grace is sufficient for you. Come on, friends.

We must fly to the cross. There should be an end to self-life. Let's pray.

Loving Father, we thank you for the battles which you have selected carefully for us. These battles are good for us. They are good for our spiritual health.

Oh, my father, enable that wherever thy word is preached today, instead of accommodating the world, Lord, instead of making the church, eglise, into a church which is sunk into the world, instead of being a called-out body, a peculiar people, a mighty people through God. Oh, my father, let us not succumb to these awful dangers which are around us and within us. Lord, the least place in heaven is too good for me.

Oh, my dear Lord, I don't wish to be rewarded in any way. I have not shown forth Jesus. Oh, my father, if I am admitted into heaven, it is your mercy alone.

No worth of mine nor desserts of mine. Calvary has provided the complete freedom and deliverance from all our human fates. Lord, we fly to the cross.

We cling to the cross. We are a bunch of nobodies. Lord, but take us up.

Even as you took up the five loaves of that boy and multiply them to serve the needs of the multitude. Hear our prayer. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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