

Wanting What You Shouldn't

1 Samuel 8:1-22; Mark 3:20-35

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There's this website I can't seem to avoid. No matter what I do, it's just there. Always popping up onto my screen.

Well, actually, to the own the truth, I don't think I'm really trying to avoid it at all. After all, every time I think I should click that little red X up in the top-right corner to close it, I stop myself and say, "ah, tomorrow." So instead, I've resorted to leaving the page up, in the background, convincing myself that a wee click and look every now and then isn't really too harmful.

You know what I'm talking about, right? I mean, it's hard to stop yourself. No one else is around, it's late at night. It calls to you.

Small. Black. Light.

That thin gold ring. Oh, that large aperture!

Mmmm...

That Nikon 58mm f/1.4G camera lens from B&H Photo Video.com... ooh boy. Wait, what did you think I was going to say? *Wanting what you shouldn't*

Anyway...It— it just sits there, all day, and stares right back at me. And I so desperately want to click that add-to-cart button. But there's just this one teensy little problem. The cost. \$1,600.

Now, maybe \$1,600 is just a drop in your bucket. But, not to me. Not to my wife... And get this... I presently own two good lenses that already cover this focal length, thus making this new one bigly unnecessary and stupidly redundant. Even worse, I actually owned this lens once before some years ago, and I sold it after a lengthy period of dust-collection and non-use. ...And yet...for whatever reason, well, I just want it back! That gold ring. That huge aperture! I want it again, even though I'm still not convinced I would have any good use for it at all.

But that's how wants and desires and lusts usually go, right? They are so often beyond the horizon of rational thought. Or what's in our best interests. Especially long-term. And we hardly ever consider the cost. And it's not just material want that we're talking about here (like, that new kitchen because the Jones' down the street just put in white cabinets and that beautiful range hood; or that new iPhone because, you know, your last generation model is perfectly functional and excellent but lacks that edgy Roman numeral); no, it's also the frats and sororities we embarrass ourselves rushing for; the jobs and careers we chase and lock ourselves into that slowly kill us; the boyfriends and girlfriends, wives and husbands we choose for all the wrong reasons. Because we're lonely. Because we just want to be touched, because we just want that change, that *lifestyle*, because we can't face another Friday night alone with Netflix. Because we can't face another year or term of the same. Because, we convince ourselves that nothing could be so depressing, and boring, and wrong, as another term of the same.

But sometimes, as difficult as it may be, it would be better for us to just hold the course. To wait and to trust. To continue, to appreciate what we already have. Now, I know. This shouldn't be generalized. Sometimes what's in our best interests is to escape and run as far away as possible. Obviously, I know that. And I also know that being patient and remaining anchored down is easier said than done, and made especially more difficult given our culture today where satisfaction is equated with immediacy, and presented to be always, everywhere, and right at our fingertips. But just because that appears to be so doesn't mean we should use it as a justification for gravitating away from what we already know, from what is right, for what is different, for what we shouldn't.

For the grass, the grass isn't always greener on that other side.

Take our text from Samuel for example. The people not only had Samuel leading them, but God at the helm. They had two entities (one being GOD!) giving them instruction and still it wasn't palatable to them. Much the same way I already had two lenses covering the same focal length, the people for some reason wanted another voice, and more, they wanted this other leader to push out the first two! Completely unnecessary. Undeniably stupid. But, it's what they wanted. Oh, they tried justifying it by whatabouting Samuel's sons and their sins, but in the end, it's just what they wanted. Because it was new. Because it was different. Because, as they said (like children often do), it was what everyone else around them had.

So, after unsuccessfully pushing their case forward with uncle Samuel, daddy God steps in and paints a vivid picture of just what their desires would get them into. What kind of harsh pastures they would soon find on the other side. God tells them:

*'These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take **your** sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take **your** daughters to be his perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of **your** fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. He will take one-tenth of **your** grain and of **your** vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. He will take the best of **your** cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take one-tenth of **your** flocks, and **you** shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day.'*

And the people hear that warning and are like, yeah, nah, give us our king anyway. Incredible.

Man, they really wanted that warrior king, didn't they? That fighting king, that brash, tell-it-like-it-is king. They saw an opportunity to disrupt the apple cart, to upend what had always been, to bring in someone like an outsider. A strong man. A confidence man. A man who didn't talk in any of these prophetic messages or intelligent parables. A simpler, but more provocative man who could *get things done*. No matter the cost. Even if it meant his governing by bullying and taking what is yours. Even if it meant his engaging in needless battles and petty wars. Even if it meant that their very own freedoms, reputations, occupations, and lifestyles would be put at great and terrible risk.

Hmmm.

Wanting what you shouldn't.

Now, make no mistake this wasn't just an Old Testament problem, for those people way back then in Samuel's time. For it was also a New Testament problem, for the people in Christ's time. You see, they had their own vision of what the messiah should be like. They thought he should come sweeping in on a war-horse, calling armies to himself, vanquishing the enemy, condemning the demonic to Gehenna/to Hell. But instead, they encounter this humble dude, riding in on a donkey, healing sinners and communicating with demons. This was not what they had expected, and certainly not what they wanted.

Hell, even Jesus' own family apparently didn't want this version of the Christ. In Mark 3:21, it is said that they think he's "gone out of his mind," for behaving in such a way, exorcising these demons. It is said in our English translation that they attempted to "restrain" him, but the Greek leaves one to wonder if they, his family, actually tried to seize or arrest him! *Come on Jesus, you're not supposed to help or congregate with these people, these entities, you're supposed to leave them bloodied down in the ditch! Just what are you doing!?*

Blinded then by what they wanted instead, what they expected instead, they couldn't see what they had right there before them, in him. In him, the very personification of Isaiah's prophetic message foretold. In him, the one true

king to lead. In him, the one true King of kings. Who doesn't rule with an incoherent liquid sword. Who doesn't need to spread lies or malice. Who doesn't separate children from their parents, and keep them kenneled in like dogs. Who doesn't suffer the world for his own narcissistic vain-glory. No. But in him, a King who himself suffers on behalf of the innocent, and the guilty. A King who releases captives of all ilk and variety. A King, who calls all, stranger and citizen alike, into his family.

But wanting what they shouldn't, they didn't recognize what they already had in this King. And so they further blasphemed against him, and ran a disinformation campaign against the righteous work of the Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. Attempting, of all things, to align it with the false, the Satanic.

My friends, today's message is a siren. For these are not just Old and New Testament problems, but it is our very problem that we find ourselves in. We want and we want and we want what we shouldn't. And we do it again, and again, and again. In faith and in life. We vote against our own interests, our own well-being, our families well-being, our communities well-being, and will do so again and again until we learn. And it gets us into such a mess, such a damn mess, that boy, wouldn't it be nice if we could just go back and see that things were already pretty darn great as they were. Sure, change is always important and necessary, especially those changes underwritten for our refinement. But not this change. Not a complete annihilation of everything we once were and believed in, all for the ego of a "alpha," man-child, traitorous king who would first see us ravaged and pillaged than ever truly liberated, great, and prosperous.

"For in that day we will cry out because of our king, whom we have chosen for ourselves; but the Lord will not answer us in that day."

I pray, let us return and soon to putting the Word of the Lord first and measure all other mortal words by it. So where they don't add up, may we ignore them. So where they don't speak truth, let us speak out against it. For the truth is, we don't need any other voice, any other king, any other desire to embolden us than that which we already have found in Him.

O Lord, take our will, and make it Thine. Amen.