



What God Wants From Us
5 October to 23 November

Sermon Based Curriculum

Prepared by: Londeka Mabaso

Introduction

A "What God wants from us" sermon series can explore various aspects of God's desires for humanity, including love, faith, obedience, and living a life that reflects His will. It can delve into themes of justice, kindness, humility, and the importance of trusting in God's plan. Ultimately, such a series aims to guide individuals toward a deeper understanding of God's purpose for their lives and how to align their actions with His desires.

Thomas A. Tarrants from the C.S. Institute wrote:

"Have you ever wondered what God wants from you? I don't mean wondering for a few minutes and then coming up with a quick list of do's and don'ts like go to church, give money, read the Bible, pray, do good works, help the needy, and don't commit any of the really bad sins like adultery or murder.

No, I mean seriously and prayerfully seeking God, and asking, "What do You want of me? How do I live the new life You have given me? How do I please and serve You?" This is one of the most important questions a believer can ask after coming to salvation"

<https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/what-god-wants-from-you/>

The What's your story sermon series surely triggered, inspired and provoked us to demonstrate love and perform good deeds. I hope the title 'What God wants from us' will help us move towards the goals God may have for us, namely: To be transformed into Jesus' image.

Sources used: THE INTERPRETER'S BIBLE- In Twelve Volumes
THE PULPIT COMMENTARY- St Luke Volume ii
The Light.Ed

Sunday 5th October

Taking God at his word

Worship: Psalm 137

Word: Luke 17:5-10

1. Notes on the theme

If you read the Bible with a sensitive heart, you will often be overwhelmed with the great difficulty of many of its commands. To walk uprightly so as not to cause a new believer to stumble and to forgive someone who has wronged us are not automatic behaviours. It is clear that if believers want to fulfil the kingdom demands, they would have to have God's strength and enabling to do it.

Disciples say to Jesus, Increase our faith. This can mean, Give us more faith so that we can carry out your commands. This request might also mean, Add faith to the other gifts you have given us. In any age those who follow Christ find the demands of life too great for their measure of faith, e.g. the demand that forgiveness should be instant and repeated.

What is faith? In this context faith is the thrust of the soul into a future always hidden. The good examples of faith is the faith the farmer has in the faithfulness of the soil and seasons. Christian faith itself is God's gift, centres in Christ, believing that God's word in Jesus can and will be fulfilled.

How is faith increased?

The quality is more important than the quantity. A tiny seed of faith is enough if the faith is real faith – Faith in God revealed in Christ. Colossians 2:6-7 says, So then, just as you received Christ as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

True faith exalts God, not man.

Jesus' point is that it is not a matter of how much faith you have, but rather, do you have faith in the living God?

Don't wait around for increased faith. Just a small amount of genuine faith can accomplish what is humanly impossible.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What were the main points of the sermon?
- b. What does the comparison of faith to a mustard seed reveal about the nature of faith?
- c. Before hearing the sermon on Sunday, were there any misconceptions you had about faith? If yes, what were they and how have they been changed?
- d. How important is what God says to you, compared to your own doubts?

3. Reflections questions

- Reflect on your faith journey and think of the times it has led to great results.
- What change do you wish your faith could effect?

4. Close in prayer

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Other Lectionary Readings

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|------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Lamentations 1:1-6 | • Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4 |
| • Lamentations 3:19-26 | • 2 Timothy 1:1-14 |

Sunday 12th October

Faith is about recognizing who God is

Worship Psalm 111 or Psalm 66:1-12

Word Luke 17:11-19

1. Notes on the theme

Our minds have been so occupied by the fulness of Jesus' teachings contained in the three last chapters, that we have almost lost sight of the progress of our Lord to the capital. Now the evangelist recalls our attention.

In this passage, Jesus is on a journey to Jerusalem. He comes across 10 lepers who are infected with leprosy. Leprosy, in the context of Bible times, is a highly contagious and isolating disease.

Luke 17:11-19 is probably a variant of Luke 5:12-14. But in this Lukan version the number of lepers has been increased from one to ten.

This is one of the parables called, 'Living parables, Jesus uses real-life situations to convey a lesson. A group of ten miserable men clamours to Jesus as he nears a certain village located on the border between Samaria and Galilee. There is a powerful thing which we all need to recognize in these miserable men, their usual song had been a wild and tame tune of: Unclean, unclean! When they saw Jesus, suddenly their cry was exchanged for "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! It's important to note that these men are brought together by their circumstance, a common woe.

Isn't it interesting that Jesus hears every cry and answers in his own way! In the gospels there is a striking variety in the dealings of the Lord with those who call on him.

Compare Jesus' way of responding between Luke 17:11-19 and Luke 5:12-14, You will see that here Jesus gives no direct answer, he bids them at once, Go and show yourselves to the priests. This was the trial of their faith. Priests in this context are not there for healing, but for the ritual and administrative aspects of dealing with leprosy, such as

declaring someone clean once they've been healed. For these ten men, to obey was equivalent to a trust that the power of the cure lay with Jesus the Master.

The interesting part of this story is the one leper who returns to Jesus to express his gratitude and to worship Jesus. He's not just happy that he's been healed, but he has a genuine appreciation for who Jesus is. The one seems to be normal to us, in the sense that he was moving toward life's true fulfilment. He demonstrates a healed heart. A heart that recognises the Master wasn't obligated to heal him, but he did. The nine seem abnormal, in the sense that the movement of true life in them was defeated, the seed of gratitude was not in them.

Verse 15: Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back praising God. – To praise in the original meaning means almost to shout for joy. The gift of God must win our response in worship.

2 Timothy 2:11-13 says:

Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him, we will also live with him;

if we endure, we will also reign with him.

If we disown him, he will also disown us;

If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

What God wants from us is to give thanks to him for the demonstration in Jesus the Christ; and the lake of life that is not stagnant but flows in joy to the sea.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What were the main points of the sermon?
- b. Why did the lepers cry out from a distance? How does this action reflect their condition and the Law of the time?
- c. Why was their healing "as they went" significant, and what does it reveal about their faith?
- d. Considering God's character, can you describe His attributes, such as love, justice, or mercy in the Luke 17:11-19 passage?

3. Reflections questions

- How does the story challenge you to consider your own responses to blessings and healing in your lives?

4. Close in prayer

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Other Lectionary Readings

- Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7
- 2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c
- 2 Timothy 2:8-15

Sunday 19th October

The need to not lose heart

Worship Psalm 121

Word Luke 18:1-8

1. Notes on the theme

Luke 18:1-8 is a parable which urges restless continued prayer hence it is sometimes also referred to as the Parable of Prayer and the Judge.

Context:** Jesus is teaching his disciples about the importance of perseverance and faith in prayer. It is only by means of intense concentration that faith will be preserved.

The contrast between the unjust judge and the Lord.

The petitioner was a widow who kept coming to the judge with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary. It is obvious that this widow had no-one to defend her case, she was a prey to the covetous. The Widow represents a vulnerable person, a widow in ancient times having little social standing and lacking a defender or advocate. Her persistence is not only a need for justice but also a metaphor for how disciples should pray with urgency.

The value of persistent prayer.

Persistent prayer demonstrates our commitment to seeking God's will and His justice. The whole life of the faithful, as Origen once grandly said, "should be one great connected." That is the real moral of the story.

Personal struggles and prayers

Hope and perseverance is found in seeking justice and answers from God in your own personal struggles. As a church, we can apply this principle to care for and advocate for the most vulnerable in our community.

God acts in accordance.

Divine providence comes at last as a thief in the night. It is often the case that God's action as a Deliverer is delayed until his people have

ceased to hope for deliverance . so it was with Israel in Egypt, so was it with her in Babylon again. This help us so far, but do not settle everything. It contains no philosophy parable, contains no philosophy of Divine delay, but simply a proclamation of the fact and an assurance that, in spite of a delay, all will go well at the last with those who trust the Lord.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What were the main points of the sermon?
- b. What does the passage teach us about the nature of God compared to the unjust judge?
- c. How is the widow's persistence in demanding justice a model for disciples, showing how we should not passively accept injustice but actively cry out to God?

3. Reflections questions

- When do you struggle with persistent prayer?
- How important to you is continuous, persevering prayer and avoiding losing heart when answers are delayed?

4. Close in prayer

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Other Lectionary Readings

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|---------------------|-----------------------|
| • Jeremiah 37:22-34 | • Genesis 32:22-31; |
| • Psalm 119:97-104 | • 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5. |

*True righteousness comes from
acknowledging one's need for God's grace*

Worship Psalm 84:1-7

Word Luke 18:9-14

1. Notes on the theme

When a person prays alone, he or she is revealed, or would be if we could get inside their mind. In prayer, we do not pose or pretend, or at least not so easily as in our life among other people. The fact that makes this story quiver is that Jesus, who knew the secret heart, allows us to overhear the secret prayers of two men. The two men are the haughty Pharisees and the humble minded publican.

Both of these men have appreciated the privilege of prayer, both came to the same building and both uttered the uppermost thoughts in their minds, but the terms of their respective prayers are not decisive of their acceptability in the sight of God.

The Pharisee thought he was everything God wished him to be, and was miserably wrong in his estimate. He was reckoning that God cared chiefly if not exclusively for the outside in religion, that his favour was secured by ceremonies and utterances of prescribed forms. The publican on the other hand believed that he was very far from right with God, that he had been living a guilty life, and was condemned of God for so doing, and his thought was true. The Pharisee's false estimate led him into self-flattery; the publican's true estimate led him into frank, penitential acknowledgment.

God hates the proud and honours the humble-hearted. Old and New Testaments are full of this truth. God has said and has repeated and emphatically declared that pride is odious and unpardonable in his sight, but that humility shall live before him – Psalm 138:6. Psalm 84, which is also one of the readings for Sunday, describes a deep longing for God's dwelling place and the blessings for those who trust in Him – this is not what the Pharisee is doing, but shows arrogance.

The way of mercy is open to every penitent soul and his grace far more than suffices for every guilty heart. In God we have forgiveness of sins; in him we have peace and hope and joy, even eternal life. True righteousness comes from acknowledging one's need for God's grace.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What were the main points of the sermon?
- b. What was the public perception of tax collectors? What made the tax collector a despised figure?
- c. What was the Pharisee's prayer about? Was it an actual prayer or a boastful declaration?
- d. What did the tax collector do to show his heart's attitude? What does his inability to look up to heaven signify?

3. Reflection questions

Take five minutes to reflect on your faith journey. What does God want from you? What is your simple prayer to God? Do you pray that God be merciful to you?

4. Close in prayer

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Other Lectionary Readings

- Joel 2:23-32
- Psalm 65
- Jeremiah 14:7-10, 19-22
- 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Seeing the lost with an eternal perspective

Worship Psalm 119:137-144

Word Luke 19:1-10

1. Notes on the theme

During Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem, Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. The passage is probably the variant of the story of Jesus and Levi in Luke 5:27-32. Both Levi and Zacchaeus belonged to the despised class of tax collectors. In both cases Jesus scandalized pious Jews by accepting the hospitality of one whom they regarded as an outcast. The implication is that both men became Jesus' disciples.

Zacchaeus**

The name Zacchaeus is derived from the Hebrew name "Zekharyah," meaning "God remembers." This name is significant, as Zacchaeus, a tax collector, is remembered by God. In the ancient world, tax collectors were often viewed as corrupt and oppressive. However, Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus challenges this stereotype, highlighting the possibility of redemption and transformation.

Sought to see**

The verb "sought to see" emphasizes Zacchaeus' desire to gaze upon Jesus, indicating a deep sense of curiosity and longing. Zacchaeus is a man in search for God. Surely there were stories enough going the rounds to stir anybody's curiosity, but Jesus knew how to deal with curiosity.

The encounter with Zacchaeus is a pivotal moment in this narrative, as it showcases Jesus' ability to reach out to marginalized individuals and bring them into his community. By eating with Zacchaeus, Jesus demonstrates his commitment to inclusivity and hospitality, welcoming individuals from all walks of life into his community.

God is in search of humans.

“When first I knew Thee” wrote Augustine, “Thou didst raise me up, that I might see there was somewhat for me to see, though as yet I was not fit to see it.” Only by God’s finding could the human soul even begin its search. Isaiah 10:18 echoes this “Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord.

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” God sees the lost with an eternal perspective, God wants us to do the same.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What were the main points of the sermon?
- b. For group discussion or personal reflection, focus on understanding Zacchaeus's character and motivations, Jesus's actions and purpose, the crowds' reaction, and the meaning of repentance and salvation within the context of Jesus's mission to "seek and save the lost". What does God want from us?
- c. What does Jesus mean by saying he "must" stay at Zacchaeus's house?
- d. How does Jesus's interaction with Zacchaeus show his love and acceptance?

3. Reflection questions

Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus shows that the gospel is for everyone, including the marginalized and disliked. What does God want you to do?

4. Close in prayer

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Other Lectionary Readings

- Habakkuk 1:1-7; 2:1-4
- Psalm 32:1-7
- Isaiah 1:10-18
- 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12

Take part in the age to come

Worship Psalm 17:1-9

Word Luke 20:27-38

1. Notes on the theme

The passage in Luke 20:27-38 occurs in the context of Jesus' final week in Jerusalem, during the days leading up to his crucifixion. The Sadducees, a Jewish sect that rejected the idea of resurrection, have been trying to trap Jesus with their questions. In this passage, they pose a hypothetical scenario to test Jesus' understanding of the resurrection and marriage.

Resurrection**

This Greek word refers to the act of rising from the dead, often in a spiritual or eschatological sense: the Sadducees are questioning the possibility of resurrection, while Jesus affirms its reality.

Marriage**

The Greek word for marriage emphasizes the union between two people, often in a covenantal or contractual sense. In Luke 20:27-38, the Sadducees are using marriage as a hypothetical scenario to test Jesus' understanding of the resurrection.

In the resurrection**

This phrase emphasizes the future state of existence, where the resurrected will live in a new, transformed reality. The Sadducees are trying to undermine Jesus' authority and credibility, but Jesus responds by affirming the reality of resurrection and the continuity of marriage in the next life.

Resurrection is a reality**: Jesus affirms the possibility of resurrection, which is a central tenet of Christian theology.

Marriage is a union that transcends death**: Jesus' response suggests that marriage is a union that is not limited to this life, but continues into the next life.

On what foundation do we build our hope for the future?

The reality of resurrection and the transformed nature of human existence in the next life can give us hope and confidence in the face of death and uncertainty. The foundation of our hope is on the Word that cannot be broken – on the promise of Jesus Christ – that’s what God wants of us. God wants us to know that our future depends on the will of our Divine Creator, on the purpose of our God, and only he who came from God can tell us what that purpose is.

What will it be to live a life that becomes ever brighter and fuller as the periods of celestial service pass away? It will be of highest honour and elevation.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What were the main points of the sermon?
- b. What are the key differences between the Sadducees' view of the resurrection and Jesus' teaching on the topic?
- c. How does this passage encourage us to re-evaluate our own beliefs and priorities for both the present and the future

3. Reflections questions

- Jesus states that in the resurrection, "they neither marry nor are given in marriage" How is this A Different Kind of Life for you?
- Jesus also says that those who are resurrected are "like angels and are children of God". What does this suggest about the nature of our relationship with God and with one another now and in the resurrection?

4. Close in prayer

Notes _____

Other Lectionary Readings

- Haggai 1;15b-2:9
- Job 19:23-27a
- Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Do Not Be Deceived

Worship Psalm 98

Word Luke 21:5-19

1. Notes on the theme

Historical Context

Luke 21:5-19 is part of Jesus' Olivet Discourse, which takes place in the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 21:1). This event occurs during Jesus' final week before his crucifixion, likely during the Passover celebration (Luke 22:1). The disciples are witnessing the grandeur of the Temple, but Jesus is about to reveal its impending destruction (Luke 21:6).

It is interesting that all this happened after the Lord's remark upon the almsgiving of the rich men and the poor widow to the treasury on the temple, after they left the temple. It is possible that the bystander's remark was suggested by the memory of the last bit of Jesus' teaching they had listened to where Jesus said, "All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

What the disciples saw – the temple – is not what Jesus saw. The temple was burned in AD 70 and later its walls were levelled in the course of a systematic demolition in the city. It is by no means clear that the words ascribed to Jesus 'As for these things which you see, the days will come when there shall be not here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down' (Luke 21:6) were originally a prediction after the event. This prediction may have been the basis of the charge brought by false witnesses against Jesus at the hearing before the Sanhedrin.

There are too many emergencies, often we seem to be governed by them. There is always an emergency whenever anybody wants to do anything. God's emergencies do not look like ours. God wants us to be aware of the false Messiahs. Some of these Messiahs are mentioned in Acts 5:36-37, those who relied on reason and not on faith. Isn't it Jesus who said in Matthew 7:16-20, 'By their fruits you will recognize them?'

Yes there are trials to be borne, word to be proclaimed, hazards to be taken in God's name, but the goal will be reached and the haven won. These, says Jesus, are hours of opportunity, time for you to bear testimony to the gospel.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What were the main points of the sermon?
- b. What is the specific warning Jesus gives about false prophets, spiritual deceivers, and tempting teachings?
- c. How can we, as modern-day believers, guard against being deceived by false messiahs or teachings?
- d. What is the primary purpose of persecution that believers will face, according to Jesus?

3. Reflection questions

- How does the promise that "not a hair of your head will perish" give you comfort and hope in times of trials?
- What are some specific ways you can apply Jesus' call to watchfulness and endurance in your daily life?

4. Close in prayer

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Other Lectionary Readings

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| • Isaiah 65:17-25 | • Malachi 4:1-2a |
| • Isaiah 12 | • 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 |

God's faithfulness in fulfilling ancient promises.

Worship Psalm 46

Word Luke 23:33-43

1. Notes on the theme

Christ the King Sunday is an interesting one in that it is observed on the final Sunday of the ecclesiastical year and is also the Sunday before the first Sunday of Advent. What's also interesting is that two Luke readings are prescribed for this Sunday. The first thing you notice when you read them is that they are a contradiction. Luke 1 is a praise song of Zacharia where he blesses God for remembering his promises to Israel, Luke 23 is about Jesus' crucifixion. But if you take a close look at both the Luke readings, they both speak about Jesus as a King, both at his birth and his death. His birth brought light to the people, his death brought salvation to creation. So although these passages read differently, they both proclaim Jesus as the King. Our focus will be on Luke 23:33-43.

There will always be a distinction between what the human lords want and what the Lord of all wants. God wants life for his people, leaders of this world put themselves first, many times at the expense of the people they lead. Pilate is putting himself and reputation first, at the expense of God's people.

The wants of humans and human kings lead to Jesus being interrogated and asked, Are you not the Christ?

Besides Pilate interrogating Jesus, soldiers also mocked him saying, Save yourself.

Advent, the season that's coming, is a season of preparation, where hearts are to be open to receive the coming King. He is not like other kings who enjoy prosperity and prestige, but the one who dies for his people. He is not a king who is celebrated by earthly leaders, but the one despised and rejected by mankind. God wants us to worship the king, to grow his kingdom.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What were the main points of the sermon?
- b. What does Jesus mean when He says, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (v. 34)? How does this demonstrate God's nature, especially in the face of extreme suffering?
- c. What is the significance of Jesus' response to the penitent thief: "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (v. 43)? How does this offer hope and reassurance?
- d. What does this passage teach us about the nature of salvation? Is it about changing circumstances, or is it about trusting God's love through anything?

3. Reflections questions

- How might the coming season of Advent change your feelings toward the Savior and the depth of love for you?

4. Close in prayer

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Other Lectionary Readings

- Luke 1:68-79
- Jeremiah 23:1-6
- Colossians 1:11-20