

Our Christian Ambition

by Jeremy Utley

This sermon delves into the concept of ambition, focusing on Jesus' ultimate ambition to please His Father. It contrasts worldly ambitions with Jesus' desire to fulfill God's will, even when it surprises those around Him. The message emphasizes finding peace and contentment in faithfully carrying out the tasks appointed by God, recognizing them as opportunities to please Him.

Scripture: Mark 3:20, John 8:29, 2 Corinthians 5:9, Psalms 55:22, John 18:11, John 14:1, John 20:19

Topics: "Divine Ambition", "Fulfilling God's Will"

Description

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Transcript

I wanted to mention today something that the Lord's been putting on my heart regarding ambition. We can have a lot of different things that we want to do in this life, and it's good to ask what is our ambition as Christians. I'm going to turn to Mark chapter three.

You can turn there with me. As you turn there, I'll just say I was reading an article. I feel you can learn a lot about someone by seeing what their family says about them.

As an example, I was reading an article about a business person. Some of us may know this business person has a rocket company. They're trying to go into outer space.

If you don't know anything about them, as I didn't, you can see that they're trying to go to outer space. You know what I think? I don't know about you, but what I think is midlife crisis or contest among billionaires or something like that. I don't know.

I don't know. What do billionaires spend money on? I guess they buy rockets. Yet, I was struck because as I was reading this article with this person's family, one of the things that they mentioned was that it's not a new development actually for this person.

It's a culmination of a lifelong dream. They actually told the story about how when this person was a valedictorian at their high school back when they're 18 years old, you know what their valedictorian

speech was about when they're 18 years old, meet me in outer space. That really surprised me because if you think about it, you ask his family, hey, you know, this guy's on the news.

He's just gone into outer space. Are you surprised? What does his family say? They go, wow, he's lost his mind. We have no idea where this came from.

No, they say, yeah, he's always wanted to go to space. Since he was 15, he's been talking about he wanted to go to space. Even though for us, we might look at his life and imagine some reason, the truth is he's always wanted to do it.

We can learn a lot about a person's dreams from what their families say. I've been thinking about Jesus. What was his dream? What did he long for? You could say, what was Jesus' ambition? I wanted to talk about ambition.

What was Jesus' ambition? I got a little bit of a glimpse of what it wasn't in Mark 3. If you turn with me to Mark 3, it says in verse 20, it says that he and a crowd gathered. What we know from before is that a crowd, sorry, actually, if you want, look with me at verse 9, Mark 3, 9. He told his disciples that a boat should stand ready for him because of the crowd so that they would not crowd him. He had healed many with the result that all who had afflictions pressed around him in order to touch him.

Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they would fall on the ground before him and shout, you're the son of God. He was earnestly warning them not to say who he was. Then in verse 20, it says he came home and again, a crowd gathered to such an extent, they couldn't even eat a meal.

Pause there for a second. You can think about Jesus. What is he thinking at this point? Is he going, finally, you know, finally, the crowds are acknowledging who I am.

I'm fulfilling my ministry. I'm fulfilling my purpose. I'm fulfilling my ambition.

Is that his attitude? I can think maybe so, but it says verse 21, when his own people or his family, it says in the margin, when his family heard this, they went out to take custody of him because they were saying he's lost his senses. He's out of his mind. So what does it mean that Jesus lost his senses? As far as his family can tell, this isn't the person that we've always known.

He was not fulfilling some lifelong dream. Unlike the billionaire whose family goes, yeah, that's exactly what he always wanted to do. When he does this thing that surprises us all.

When we see Jesus doing this thing that surprises everybody, his family goes, this was not in the plan. It appeared to be a departure from his ambition for those who knew him best. And it really struck me to see his family's response, what it told me about Jesus.

And it's something that we've, that we often talk about, but it's good to be aware when he was doing amazing things that caused crowds to gather, the people who knew him best basically said, this isn't what he's always wanted. What is he always wanted? If you turn with me, there's a verse, John chapter eight, verse 29, that, that the Lord put on my heart as I was thinking, if his family saw this wasn't what he had always wanted, what was it? And in John chapter eight, verse 29, Jesus says, he who sent me is with me and he hasn't left me alone because I always do the things that are pleasing to him. And I see here in John chapter eight, that Jesus's desire was always to make his father happy.

That's all he wanted to do. It wasn't to gather crowds. It wasn't to heal people.

It wasn't for demon eggs to fall on the ground and say, you're the son of God. He just wanted to make his father happy. And the amazing thing for us as disciples is we can have that same ambition too.

And that's actually the word that the apostle Paul uses. If you turn to second Corinthians chapter five, Jesus said, I always want to do the things that are pleasing to my father. That's the one thing that I want more than anything.

And Paul in second Corinthians chapter five and verse nine, he says the same thing. We also have as our ambition, whether we're at home or absent, to be pleasing to him. So just like Jesus's desire and ambition was to please his father, so also was the apostle Paul's.

I just want to do what makes the Lord happy. And it's such an important question to know, how do we please God? If our ambition is not to do some great outward thing necessarily, like Jesus's wasn't, but is simply to please God, then the question is, how do we do it? Because we can have all sorts of ideas. Just like we have wrong ideas about Jesus.

When we see the crowds gather, we think, oh, that must have been what he really wanted. And that's not true. We can, in our lives, we can have all sorts of wrong ideas.

I've noticed, you know, we know we have a rotation among myself and Bobby and Sandeep. So you can kind of, you can kind of look in the calendar and you can know, okay, when am I going to be next? And you can think, okay, in the, you know, in the time before I'm up to show, I need more time to prepare. And I can begin to think, you know, what would please God is if I had a really good message on Sunday, that would be pleasing to God.

And then I can get fixated on that. And the problem I've seen, and that seems like a good thing. It's like the crowds gathering and nothing wrong with Jesus healing people.

Definitely. That was great. And I can see a good message.

I can, I can get fixated on it wrongly as Jesus wasn't on healing. I can get wrongly fixated on, I want to have a good message. And one of the things I've noticed is I start to see everything else in my life as in the way.

And looking at Jesus, life makes it so much more clear to see how do I please my father? If his ambition was to please his father, if Paul's ambition was to please the father, if our ambition is to please the father, is it having a good message? And if it's having a good message, then the barking dog and the interrupting kids and the late night phone call from my boss. And all of these things are in the way. And the reasons that I can't fulfill my mission, the reasons I can't fulfill my purpose.

This is, this is my own. This is how those things can appear to me at times. But look with me at Mark chapter one.

It's so helpful to look. We've, we've often heard Jesus is our dictionary. And what's amazing to see is in Mark chapter one, in verse, in verse nine, it says that Jesus came from Nazareth and Galilee, and he was baptized by John and immediately coming out of the water.

Remember what chapter are we in in Mark children right now? If you're reading with me, we're in Mark chapter one. Is this after Jesus's miracles or before? It's before. Is it after his sermons or before? It's before.

It's before any miracle, before any sermon, before anything that we think is worth noting. Yet what, listen to what the father in heaven said. It says in verse 10, that immediately coming up out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens opening in the spirit, like a dove descending upon him.

And a voice, the voice of God came out of heaven saying to him, you are my beloved son. In you, I am well pleased. Think of what that means.

How had Jesus pleased his father? It wasn't a Sunday message. It wasn't casting out demons or healing the sick or making sure he's in a boat so that he wasn't crowded. That's not how Jesus pleased his father.

It was what? How did he do it? Does your heart long to know? My heart longs to know. And it's such an encouragement. Think about where Jesus had come from.

Where had he been? I think of two places where Jesus had been. He had been at work and at home. Not in the ministry.

And what was the testimony of his father in heaven after having spent 30 years at work and at home? You are my beloved son. With you, I am well pleased. He pleased his father at work.

He pleased his father at home. Not in doing some things that we tend to fixate on as the really great thing. And I was just thinking about Jesus.

I just kind of allowed my imagination. Brother Zac has said we've used our imagination for lots of bad things in the past. It's good to use our imagination for good things now if we're Christians.

And I use my imagination to think about, you know, I said that a barking dog or, you know, a late night phone call at work or something like that can be in the way. Think about what Jesus had dealt with. Maybe people had to return things that he made at the carpentry shop.

Maybe he had to go to the market for supplies to buy wood and buy lumber and buy nails and things like that. Maybe he had to deal with vendors or supply shortages like we're dealing with now. Maybe people canceled orders.

Maybe he put things together and then someone canceled an order. Maybe he had to train apprentices who fumbled around and who made mistakes. He had little brothers we know.

You think his little brothers were perfect? Maybe he had his thumb with a hand. You think Jesus ever hit his thumb with a hammer while he was working on wood? Yeah, people are saying, yeah, children know. Children or adults go, whoa, hang on.

But children go, yeah, because they've hit thumbs too, of course. Maybe people were haggling with him over prices at his carpentry shop. Maybe he just had to sweat and work in the sun and he was sweating and exhausted.

Imagine if Jesus saw all of these things as standing in the way to his purpose. We know that after all these things, the testimony of his father in heaven was, you are well pleasing to me. And I was just thinking,

what a pity if all the normal stuff that Jesus had been going through, he had said, this is it.

You know what my real purpose is, is to heal a bunch of sick people. I don't think it would have gone well with him. I think he was so concerned with being pleasing to his father in whatever the father appointed, whether it was a haggling customer or a clumsy apprentice or a supply shortage or a difficulty with a vendor at the marketplace.

Jesus saw all of it, not as in the way, but as the appointed way. And that's the thing that brings comfort to my heart. It was the means, all of the ordinary things were the means by which the Lord prepared him for his ministry.

But Jesus was pleasing to his father by being faithful in that preparation time. Not because he was faithful in his ministry, but because he was faithful in secret. What are the implications for all of us? If we say our ambition is to please the Lord, does that happen on Sunday morning when we're sharing a message, Sunday afternoon? No.

When does it happen? When we're in the marketplace, when somebody's haggling, when the dog's barking, when the boss is calling. Those are the times they aren't in the way of pleasing God. They're the way God has appointed to please him.

That is an incredible comfort and encouragement to me to see all of the stuff that I'm tempted to resent or be frustrated by. Because I go, if I could just get rid of it, then I can really do what God wants. And you know what God says? I want you to deal with the haggling customer in a way that honors me.

And I want you to deal with the interruption in a way that honors me. This is not in the way, it is my appointed way. They don't keep me from pleasing God.

That's the encouragement to my heart. None of the things that I think are in the way actually keep me from pleasing God. They are the way that God has appointed that I might please him.

Which brings us to our memory verse. I was really blessed by what the memory verse says. If you turn there, Psalm 55, as we heard a moment ago from Stanley, there's one, he emphasized the second part of the verse.

I just wanted to emphasize the first part. It says, cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you. And in my margin, your burden can also be translated what he's given you.

Cast what he has given you on the Lord and he will sustain you. I can see my burden as this thing that keeps me from what God wants for me. And I love seeing here in Psalm 55, my burden is also what he's given me.

The haggling customer, it's what he's given me. The barking dog, what he's given me. The late night phone call, what he's given me and what does he want me to do? He wants me to depend upon him, to lean upon him with what he has appointed.

Trusting that what he's appointed isn't standing in the way, it's the way he's appointed. Cast what he has given you upon the Lord and he will sustain you. And here's what Jesus said.

Jesus said, don't let your heart be troubled by these burdens that come. Don't let your heart be troubled. Jesus saw God's hand in everything that was in his life.

What's the worst thing that we know that happened in Jesus' life? Children, what's the worst thing that happened in Jesus' life? It's in John chapter 18, if you want to turn there. But children, think about it. What's the worst thing that happened in Jesus' life? It was when he was arrested, when he was going to the cross.

And in John chapter 18 in verse 11, when they come to arrest him, his friends want to defend him. Simon Peter, it says in verse 10, John 18 verse 10, Simon Peter took out a sword and he cut off someone's ear. But Jesus said, put the sword into the sheath.

This terrible thing, this worst thing that's ever happened to me. You know what he says? The cup which my father has given me, shall I not drink it? Cast your burden on the Lord. Cast what he has given you upon him.

And Jesus didn't see a betrayer. He didn't see a haggling customer. He didn't see an interruption.

He saw his father's hand. How did he see his father's hand in that moment, in that worst moment? Because he had been faithfully looking for his father's hand in all of the time of preparation. In the sweating in the sun, when he banged his thumb with a hammer, when he had a customer haggle over price, he saw his father's hand in everything.

And when the guards came to arrest him, he says, this is the cup my father has given me to drink. That's what we have to do. We have to see.

And what Jesus says in John chapter 14, when he was going to depart from his disciples, he says to them, don't let your heart be troubled. Don't let it. And I like that word let.

You know, I've got a lot of dog stories right now because we just got a new puppy. But when, when somebody says, don't let the dog in the house, as I say, find myself saying like 10 times a day right now, don't let the dog in the house. What are we saying about the dog? He wants in, right? Don't let it.

And what do you have to do? You have to fight. When Jesus says, don't let your heart be troubled. What is that telling us about our heart? It wants to be troubled.

Do we need any, do we, do we need anything else in the world for our hearts to be troubled with all the things that are already happening? Our hearts naturally gravitate towards being troubled. And Jesus said, don't let it fight it. Look for the father's hand in all these things and fight the temptation towards trouble.

And I found for myself that my heart has a tendency towards troubledness. And the Lord has just been saying to me, don't go there. Don't go there.

This thing that is, that is tempting you towards being troubled doesn't stand in the way of your pleasing me. This thing that I have appointed that is tempting you to being troubled is the means by which I want you to please me. And just like Jesus arrived at the waters of baptism and the father could say, before he'd ever done anything noteworthy, before he ever got to the thing that he thought he's supposed to be doing, or that we thought he's supposed to be doing, his father says he's well-pleasing.

And before we ever get to the thing that we have in our minds as the real, the great ambition to accomplish or perform, when we're dealing with the interruption, we have the opportunity to hear the father say, this is my son. This is my daughter. I'm pleased with, not with how you're doing the thing that you thought was

the great thing, with how you're dealing with what I've appointed.

I'm pleased with you. And the pressures that we experience are our preparation for whatever the Lord has. We don't need a lot more time.

For example, I find myself pressed for time these days. And I find myself wishing, I think I mentioned that in men's Bible study the other night. I find myself wishing for more time, but the Lord doesn't, says you don't need more time.

You need to yield to my dealings with you. That's what you need. You need to be faithful in what I have appointed.

If you yield, you'll be prepared. You think what you need is time to prepare. What you don't realize is by removing your time is your preparation.

What a blessing when we can really see the father's hand in everything. He's saying, as it were, let me prepare you. You think you need to get prepared.

Let me prepare you. Will you trust me in what I've appointed? That if you will honor me in it, and if you will look for my hand in it, if you will cast what I've given you back upon me, I'll sustain you. And you'll be pleasing to me, whether you ever do the thing that you thought was going to be pleasing or not.

Last thing I'll say, just because this has been a blessing to me. I've got a coworker who, you know, I don't think he's a Christian to my knowledge, but anytime I've just gotten in touch with him recently, and we've been coordinating on something, for whatever reason, every time he text messages me, he starts with, peace, Jeremy. And then, hey, are you using this computer right now? You know, or whatever.

Peace, Jeremy. Hey, do you need a key to this room? Peace, Jeremy. And I thought at first, I just thought I was just kind of being a cool guy.

But then I was, as I was thinking about this topic with the Lord and his appointment, I thought, I see that in my life too. The Lord comes in and in various circumstances, you know, the first thing he says, peace, peace, Jeremy. That's what he said to the disciples in John chapter 20.

That's the last verse I wanted to mention. They're all concerned. Their Lord has left.

They don't know what to do. And it says in John chapter 20, verse 19, that when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, the doors were shut and the disciples were, because of fear, they were shut. Jesus came and stood in their midst.

And what did he say? Peace be with you. Peace be with you. And then look at verse 26.

After eight days, the disciples were again inside, again afraid. And Thomas was with them. And Jesus came, the doors having been shut.

And he stood in their midst and he said, peace be with you. Peace. And in the midst of these troubling times, in the midst of, you know, lots of demands and those two places where Jesus was prepared at work and at home, in those two places where Jesus was pleasing to the Lord at work and at home, when our hearts are tending towards trouble, what does the Lord want to say to us? He wants to say peace.

I want to, I want to bring my peace into this situation. And I want you to be able to rest. I want you to be able to trust in me before it's worked out, before you get to whatever the good work you think you need to do is.

Be at peace. And I've been hearing the Lord say that to me. I've been hearing him call me to that.

I pray that, that, um, I want to, I want to be willing. I want to yield. I want to see everything that the Lord appoints as a blessed preparation, not as an inconvenience, not as in the way, but as the way he is appointed.

I pray the Lord would help me, help us all.

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