

Title: God Wants MORE  
Date: March 27, 2022  
Subject: God wants more people to be with him in his eternal home.  
Scripture: Matthew 9:35 – 38, 22:1 – 14; Luke 10:1 – 3, 14:15 – 24; 2 Peter 3:6 - 9

God has more for us to experience of what he has for his children. There are things he wants us to grow in -- hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a larger heart for him, increase in wisdom and faithfulness, more love for him and others, persevering and looking forward to the more he has for us in heaven.

Did you ever consider that God, The Almighty Supreme Being of the universe, also wants MORE for himself? What could he possibly want? Power? Knowledge? Life? No he has all of them to the fullest degree.

The loving Heavenly Father wants more people to be with him. Scripture tells us: “The Lord doesn’t want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). These words are in the context of impending judgment where there was a quick mention of the global flood (2 Peter 3:6).

To learn more about the flood we go back to chapter 2. There we find a man named Noah was a preacher of righteousness prior to the flood. He was God’s instrument to try to get more people on the massive ark he was building. One of the interesting things about the ark is the extra capacity beyond what was necessary for the Noah’s family, the animals and food. There was room for thousands and thousands of people. God was patient and wanted more people but only eight accepted his invitation.

Though the Noah’s ark had limited capacity, God has unlimited capacity in his love and in his heaven. God continues to be patient and wants more people so they don't have to perish. God wants people from every nation, tribe, people and language (Revelation 7:9). He wants Campbellsportonians (or whatever the proper term is), beggars from Bombay, India, Australian Aborigines, Iraqi Sunnis and Wall Street kajillionaires. He wants men. He wants women. He wants children. He wants you and he wants me.

We revel in and relish the fact he wants us. Maybe the most comforting part of the most familiar verse of the Bible is it includes us. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Sometimes it suggested we replace the word “world” with our names to help nail down that point.

However, the word “world” indicates God's not real particular about who he lets into his family. Add to that “whoever.” God will let anybody and everybody in if they meet his single solitary condition of placing their personal trust in Jesus. God’s willingness to accept “whoever” is a really good thing considering who we were -- sinners alienated from God by our rebellion against him.

In spite of who we were...God reached out to us. God makes his invitation broad. There's room at the cross where Jesus died for all people to come.

Video: Light of the World (God is light and has brought us into the light)

Last week we noticed Jesus used parables to teach about anticipating heaven. One of these earthly stories with a heavenly meaning compares the kingdom of heaven to a great banquet.

Read Luke 14:15 – 24.

The version in Matthew has a king prepare a wedding banquet for his son (Matthew 22:1 – 14). It's easy to see God the Father as the king. That version describes in tough to absorb words about what happens to those who refuse the invitation to attend the banquet. (The king inflicts his vengeance and wrath on those who reject his invitation. This points to the judgment and wrath of God that will come upon people who reject Jesus Christ. Not a pleasant picture to see but it is an integral part of what God has in store.)

We can mesh the telling of the story together. We begin with the gracious actions of the king. He's prepared a lavish wedding banquet and has sent out invitations. The way it worked in the ancient world is people received something like a “save the date” notification. Then, when final preparations were made and the day of the feast had come, the call was made for the invited to come and enjoy.

The master in the parable alerts the servant that it's time for him to let people know “It's time for the banquet.” The servant does his job and is met with indifference. People made excuses and refused to attend. The servant reported to his master and the master became angry.

His anger is redirected to getting people to come. He commands the servant to go into the streets and alleys of the town to find guests. Did you notice the potential guests -- “the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame”? (Luke 14:21). Banquets in ancient societies were geared toward society's upper crust, the influential, the power brokers, the beautiful people. Much like what happens in elite society today. Most humans have selective compassion...on those whom we want to show it – the right kind of people, friends, family, those who are nice to us.

God has compassion toward all people. The invitees are emblematic of the spiritual nature of the kinds of people to whom God reaches out – the broken, damaged, hurting, needy. Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17). “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Matthew's version extends the invitation to anyone who can be found. It's an indiscriminate invitation.

People respond and come to the banquet. It's not enough for the master. He tells his servant: READ Luke 14:23.

This might be Tom Kiser's favorite verse, at least in some versions, since he's from West Virginia: “Go out to the highways and country roads” (NET Bible, Good News Translation).

At least you'll remember where the search for people is expanded. Go farther. Keep going...from the streets and alleys of the city out to rural areas. We could think of it in terms of where we live, as the invitation moves from where it's easier to access people to those who live at a distance, people in rural areas, out in the country roads and lanes, sometimes who go underserved. (And sometimes even worse, are thought to be not worth the trouble).

God wants a full house and he isn't a quitter in his effort to attain one. Jesus, the Word of God, "came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:11, 12). To all. Just because some ignore his offer, he doesn't give up. He wants people to attend the wedding supper of his Son.

Jesus alluded to the Father's pursuit. He spoke of this in his heavenly stories about the lost sheep, lost coin and lost son (Luke 15). God is the shepherd who seeks lost, wandering sheep and when he finds one, he rejoices and calls others to rejoice. He seeks people as the woman sought her lost coin and when she found it, told neighbors to rejoice with her because she'd found it. God is the Father looking for people who've wandered far from home to turn to him and come home where he'll welcome them.

God the Father took the initiative by sending His Son to earth. Like Father, like Son. Jesus reflected the plan of the Father. Jesus proclaimed himself to be the light of the world (John 8:12). He didn't limit himself by saying he was the light of Jerusalem, one city. He didn't say he was the light of Israel, one people group. He said, "I am the light of the world." He followed this declaration with a keyword we had earlier: "Whoever... whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

Jesus used the image of a shepherd to illustrate his search for more people. READ Matthew 9:35 – 38.

Jesus had compassion on the crowds. He was a shepherd surrounded by sheep needing someone to guide them. Jesus searched for people during his travels. He sought out the first disciples along the sea of Galilee, waited by a well while his followers went to get food so he could talk with a Samaritan woman, crossed the Sea of Galilee to encounter two demon possessed men so they could have freedom from their bondage to Satan, went to non-Jewish areas where he found people who had more trust in him (Matthew 15:21 – 27), called a despised tax collector out a tree so they could have a meal together where Jesus would share about salvation, had a conversation with a rich, young ruler...from a class of people many think don't need what Jesus has to offer (Luke 18:18 - 23). Jesus said he came to seek and to save what was lost (Luke 19:10).

The priority of getting more people was paramount. After the description of the harvest and request for prayer for more workers, Jesus sent out the 12 disciples (Matthew 10:5). Later he sent out 72 of his followers to go into every town and place where he was about to go (Luke 10:2). The Lord again stated the harvest is plentiful and the first thing he asks his followers to do is pray. Pray for more workers. Then he sends them out. Immediately after the call to pray he says "Go!" (Luke 10:3).

Just before his ascension, Jesus again put prayer and going together. He told the disciples they needed to pray and wait for the Holy Spirit to empower them and then they were to go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:5 – 8).

Us. Look. We've been told repeatedly the harvest is plentiful. The first step is looking at the harvest (both Matthew and Luke). With the woman at the well in John 4, Jesus says open your eyes and look at the ripened fields ready for an eternal harvest. He doesn't mention prayer at this point but does get into going as in being sent.

We are to look, see with understanding, see the need. We're to be aware of the situation of people without Christ, of what God promises for those who come to Christ, and what people need to hear so they can place their trust in him. We're to look and see a harvest, see people as needy whether we're see them at work, school, around the kitchen table, in the neighborhood or on the other side of the world.

Why don't we look? Why do we have closed eyes? Maybe it's because we're focused on the wrong stuff - the stuff of this world. Maybe we're unwilling to look because if we see the need, it might move us to do something. Maybe our vision needs to be corrected because we see people as annoyances.

Go. As we've seen in the various Scriptures "go" is either stated or implied.

Sometimes people come to us, like on Easter or our special Awana celebration Sunday. It's about what we can do to help them understand what Jesus Christ has done for them personally. It's about them. It's about us doing what it takes to reach them and be prepared to do so. In their coming, we are to go to them.

There's a convenience store chain called "Kum & Go" spelled K U M. It's pretty clever. It also summarizes what we hope - people will come so we can communicate the good news of Jesus but we also are to go with the message.

Video: Fire Station Failure

That video really hits home for me as it pointedly speaks to our going. I don't believe I need to say much more beyond what the video illustrated for us.

Back up to the need to pray. Pray. Jesus asks those who've placed their trust in him to pray to God the Father to send out workers into his harvest field. Pray for more workers in Japan - the Schaeffers mentioned the need. Pray for more workers in Thailand - Debbie Vik mentioned a need. Pray for more workers in the good ol' USA. Pray for more workers in Campbellsport. Pray for more workers in our church. Pray for more workers in our neighborhoods. Pray for more workers in our schools. Pray for more workers with kids. Pray for more workers with adults. Pray for more workers to know what they believe and believe what they know. Pray for workers who will care for, show mercy to and love people. Pray for more workers to have open doors. Pray more workers have opportunities to clearly proclaim the good news about Christ. The Savior huddles close to us and whispers in our ears: "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:38).

It's because God wanted us to be with him forever and wants MORE people to be with him forever.

(John Ortberg tells the story (*Love Beyond Reason*, pp. 11, 12) of his sister Barbie, and her favorite doll, Pandy: "When Pandy was young and a looker, Barbie loved her. She loved her with a love that was too strong for Pandy's own good. When Barbie went to bed at night, Pandy lay next to her. When Barbie had lunch, Pandy ate beside her at the table. When Barbie could get away with it, Pandy took a bath with her. Barbie's love for that doll was, from Pandy's point of view, pretty nearly a fatal attraction.

“By the time I knew Pandy, she was not a particularly attractive doll. In fact, to tell the truth she was a mess. She was no longer a very valuable doll; I’m not sure we could have given her away. But for reasons that no one could ever quite figure out, in the way that kids sometimes do, my sister Barbie loved that little rag doll still. She loved her as strongly in the days of Pandy’s raggedness as she ever had in her days of great beauty. Other dolls came and went. Pandy was family. Love Barbie, love her rag doll. It was a package deal.

“Once we took a vacation from our home in Rockford, Illinois, to Canada. We had returned almost all the way home when we realized at the Illinois border that Pandy had not come back with us. She had remained behind at the hotel in Canada. No other option was thinkable! My father turned the car around and we drove from Illinois all the way back to Canada. We were a devoted family. Not a particularly bright family, perhaps, but devoted.

“We rushed into the hotel and checked with the desk clerk in the lobby — no Pandy. We ran back up to our room — no Pandy. We ran downstairs and found the laundry room — Pandy was there, wrapped up in the sheets, about to be washed to death. The measure of my sister’s love for that doll was that she would travel all the way to a distant country to save her.”

That’s a small illustration of the extent to which God went to find us and to which he goes to get MORE people. May we join him.