**Desire Deferred to Desire Fulfilled**

John 4:15-19; Galatians 5:13; Proverbs 13:12, 19

I’m not sure about you, but, for me, the last year has opened my eyes to the fact that I have a lot of unfulfilled desires in my life.

What are you hoping for in life?

Sometimes it may be hard for us to put our finger on what we are hoping for. And often times, hope seems hard to hold on to. What I believe has made this last year so difficult is that fact that it has been so much harder to “serve one another in love.” With technology, isolation has become easier and easier and some people even go so far as thinking it is a virtue to stay home and stay away from each other.

This kind of thinking is actually the opposite of healthy life. God wants us, as Christians, to be part of His mission in fulfilling the deepest desires of the human heart. And we cannot do that without being intimately involved in other people’s lives.

“*You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh (self-service); rather, serve one another humbly in love.*” (Galatians 5:13, NIV)

“*In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*” (Matthew 5:16, NIV)

“*Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*” (1 Peter 4:1–2, NIV)

“*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.*” (Proverbs 13:12, NIV)

“*A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul....*” (Proverbs 13:19, NIV)

Today I am going to take a break from 1 Corinthians. I wasn’t quite ready to deal with that text yet. Instead we are going to look at John 4 beginning with verse 15. In these verses we will see that the Woman at the well was going to have the longing of her soul fulfilled. Because right now, maybe more than ever, people are desperately hoping to have their longings fulfilled.

“*The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.” He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.” “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.*” (John 4:15–19, NIV)

I can’t begin to understand the longings of this woman’s soul. After five husbands and a current live in, especially in her culture, the hurts and disappointment ran deep. The Bible doesn’t tell us why she has had five husbands in the past, but quite honestly judgmental outsiders rarely care why. Not to mention the personal emotional baggage that would have gone along with having had five previous husbands. This woman like any young girl, or young man for that matter, grew up with certain healthy God-given desires, desires that, when fulfilled would be a “tree of life,” or “streams of living water.”

For the sake of time in my studies I used a book (that I haven’t read yet) called “The Seven Desires of Every Heart,” to examine just what it was that this woman was looking for.

According to Mark and Debra Lasser the seven desires of every human heart include:

To be heard and understood

To be Affirmed

To be blessed

To be safe

To be touched

To be chosen

To be included

I am not saying that these seven desires encompass all human desire, but I think that the more you study them in the Bible the more clear they become in our lives. What I would propose is that, we as Christians are to be the conduit to others of Christ’s love, as we fulfill these desires in other people’s lives we help them understand their deep need for Christ. We are Christ’s ambassadors. Christ isn’t literally meeting people at the well anymore. Instead, He is sending us. Or maybe it would be better to say we have been sent with Him in us.

We are the hands and feet of Christ and as we work to help others have the longings of their hearts fulfilled we are offering them a cup of cold living water. Someone who is hungry or thirsty doesn’t just need food and water, they need the rest in their soul that comes from knowing the provider of all things. I would venture to say that this is why God gave us these desires. The first we will look at is the desire to be heard and known.

Psalm 69:33 says:

“*The Lord hears the needy and does not despise his captive people.*” (Psalm 69:33, NIV)

Psalm 116:1

“*I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.*” (Psalm 116:1, NIV)

Isaiah 30:19

“*People of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you.*” (Isaiah 30:19, NIV)

“*Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*” (Psalm 139:16, NIV)

The woman at the well wanted to be known, that is why she had given herself up to the man she was with. All of us long to be known, and it is a healthy longing, but God wants that our intimate relationships are patterned according to His will.

**Christ hears us, and knows us**

And as Christ’s ambassadors, it as if Christ is making His appeal through us, we are to listen and get to know people.

This takes Time, it takes Study, it takes practice, because we have to learn to listen to people.

It also takes asking questions that show you want to know **them** (**fears, hopes, dreams, hurts, likes, dislikes, their deepest desires**)

The next desire we will talk about is the desire to be affirmed for what we do, we need encouragement and when we get it (and view it rightly), it is God Himself affirming us.

Paul said to the Colossians:

“*I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.*” (Colossians 4:8, NIV)

*“The worker deserves his wages.”*” (1 Timothy 5:18, NIV)

When we see others do things that are good and right and praiseworthy we are Christ’s hands and feet to bring good to them. As Proverbs 13:21 states:

“*Trouble pursues the sinner, but the righteous are rewarded with good things.*” (Proverbs 13:21, NIV)

There are at least three actions steps to showing Christ’s love by affirming others:

1. Pay attention to the positive (and beneficial) things that people do
2. Say things that you would want to hear from others
3. Reward them in ways you would want to be rewarded

Christ did not shun the woman at the well, like others (especially Jewish men) would have done. He affirmed that she was valuable, he spoke to her and even asked her for help.

This ties right in to the next desire that all people have, the desire to be praised for who they are. All people are created in God’s image, for God’s glory. As God said to Jesus and the Holy Spirit in Genesis 1:26-27:

“*Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*” (Genesis 1:26–27, NIV)

Even unbelievers display God’s glory, whenever we see godly attributes in others we should praise them and help them understand that they are a fearfully and wonderfully made one of a kind.

If this woman understood this, she wouldn’t have to come to the well at the hottest time of the day. She, like she will do soon, would have turned from her sin and known that Jesus covered her shame.

We see later in the narrative that the woman returns to her town and:

“*Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.”*” (John 4:39, NIV)

This is because Jesus had fulfilled her longing for SAFETY.

All people have a desire to be safe. And this safety comes from the Lord and is evidenced as Christ lives in us:

“*In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.*” (Psalm 4:8, NIV)

“*The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.*” (Proverbs 18:10, NIV)

“*“Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan, I will now arise,” says the Lord. “I will protect them from those who malign them.”*” (Psalm 12:5, NIV)

How can we as the Church arise to help others see the safety of the gospel?

1. Understand the safety you have in the gospel (If you don’t know safe pasture you can’t be safe pasture for others).
2. Be accepting of others even with their sin (you don’t condone it, but you love them)
3. Be open to your own sinfulness so that others feel safe to admit their own
4. Know and take into account others hopes, dreams and especially their fears so you don’t crush or scare them.

Jesus was offering the woman at the well living water that would well up to eternal life, can you enter into any safer place than that?

I am going to list the last three more desires that all people share and some applications that should follow because of our knowledge of them.

1. They desire healthy touch (Jesus touched people and people touched Jesus and it brought healing, healing that symbolized a crossing over from death to life). We too, are to use the ministry of touch.

Study and learn how to encourage others with appropriate touch (all have different bubbles)

Learn to allow others access to appropriate touch.

Pay attention to what others close to the person would consider appropriate.

1. People desire to be passionately desired by someone else (This is one of the most apparent in the woman at the well, she wanted to be wanted and it led her to sin instead of leading her to express it correctly).

Work to build your desire to desire others (This happens as you work at listening to them and getting to know them).

Let others know that you are with them because you want to be with them—not simply because they want you and you feel it is your duty. No one wants someone hanging with them because they feel like they have to.

1. They desire to be included (1 John 3:1; John 1:12; 1 Peter 2:21-22; Acts 14:22; John 13:15; Php 3:17; 1Tim 1:16; Eph 1:13; Gal 2:19-21).

Include others in your world—even in seemingly mundane activities.

Let Christ live through you

All people have these seven longings of their hearts and all are seeking to have them fulfilled. Every time we converse with another person we should view them as if they were the woman at the well and we are Christ.

1. They desire to be heard and known (we are to listen like Christ listened and knew her)
2. They desire to be affirmed for what they do (we are to celebrate and encourage the positive things they are doing)
3. They desire to be praised for who they are (we are to praise them for living according to God’s image and design)
4. They desire to be safe (because we know the safety of Christ, we are to be a safe place for others)
5. They desire healthy touch (we are engage in the ministry of touch, a hug from a believer can be like a hug from Christ Himself)
6. They desire to be passionately desired by someone else (as we pursue others and let them know they are wanted, we are evidence to them that God desires them)
7. They desire to be included (as we include others in our pursuits, passions and daily practices, we can help others to see that we have been included in Christ’s plan and they have too).

Who do you know that has a hope deferred?

Who do you know who isn’t quite understanding what to do with their God given desire?

Don’t label them a sinner and shun them, help them to understand that their wants and desires are good and God has a purpose for them. This woman believed Jesus because He knew her heart, we too know the basic longings of the human soul, because we ourselves have come to know the One who has given us eternal rest. Continue to help others see Christ as He works in you to help them have their longings fulfilled.

You and I we have streams of living water that is meant to be placed in cups and dispensed to the thirsty soul. As Jesus said,

“*And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”*” (Matthew 10:42, NIV)

“*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.*” (Proverbs 13:12, NIV)

“*A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul....*” (Proverbs 13:19, NIV)

There are a lot of people longing to have their unmet desires fulfilled. Our reactions to COVID-19 have wreaked havoc on people.

Many are desperately trying to isolate themselves in order to save their lives and in the process they are hearts are growing sick because they are being kept from the most important aspects of living.

How will you use the freedom and fulfillment Christ has given you, to help others see what can He can do for them?