

Sermon: What Motivates You?

Text: John 5:19-44 ESV

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October 11, 2020

Introduction: He had been a powerful preacher from out in the desert, son of a priest, baptizer of many. He had been so popular at one time that he was compared to the prophets – some even thought he might be the Messiah. Later he would be thrown into prison and finally beheaded as his thanks for leading a life devoted to God.

While John the Baptizer was still popular, some of his disciples started following another young preacher. This son of a carpenter was healing people, and performing other miracles – even raising the dead.

They enjoyed his sermons, commented favorably on his style and delivery. Some said that he was far superior to John and others they had heard – but yet some of these very people would deny Him, betray Him and help to see him crucified later.

What causes people to change their thinking, their allegiance, their faith? It is basically a question of motivation!

What motivates you?

“Motivation is a hypothetical internal process that provides the energy for behavior and directs it toward a specific goal.” (*Psychology – Understanding Behavior* p. 220 by Baron, Byrne, Kantowitz.) Almost sound like faith doesn't it?

What moves you? If you are a teenage boy, a teenage girl can move you. An Ohio State University football game can move some. We are all moved by different things, people, events.

Jesus was motivated by God. **John 5:19-20 ESV** ¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.

Jesus realized he was dependant on God and not self-sufficient, so how much more do we need to come to the same conclusion!

Jesus does what His father does. Here we have a proper model.

Jesus and the Father have a common purpose – they do and want the same things.

“C. H. Dodd discerned an ‘embedded parable’ in [verses 19 and 20](#): Jesus draws an analogy from his own boyhood experience in the carpenter’s workshop...” - Bruce, p. 128

If you think what Jesus has done up to this point in the Gospel is great, you will really be amazed at what he does next.

Like so much of John’s gospel, the miracle (sign) is followed by the discourse or teaching. From this point on, if you hadn’t read the preceding verses you might think Jesus had raised someone from the dead instead of a healing.

Listen: [John 5:21-23 ESV](#) ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

One cannot say “I believe in God,” but not in Jesus.

Unfortunately, none of our motives are pure like Jesus’ were — We are motivated in different ways many times. Often we are motivated by the:

I. Fear of Punishment [5:24-25](#) (Key verses for 1st 2 points)

[John 5:24-25 ESV](#) ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. ²⁵ “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

People are converted sometimes out of fear of punishment - in an attempt to avoid God’s wrath.

Hell-fire and brimstone sermons have brought people into the Church, but have robbed many of the joy of Christian living. The fear of death can motivate some. COVID-19 sadly has paralyzed people into inactivity. It has stopped corporate in-person worship for nearly 20-25% of our membership.

Coming Judgment may motivate some. We heard it maybe when we were young: “you just wait wait till your father gets home.” The fear of what dad might do to me was almost always worse then the reality.

We should be afraid of God’s judgment only if someone or something else is at our spiritual center and usurping priority over God.

Many times people will succumb to “peer pressure,” seeking to please others instead of God, in times of moral or ethical crisis. Listen to Eugene Peterson here: [John 5:41-44 The Message](#) 41-44 “I’m not interested in crowd approval. And do you know why? Because I know you and your crowds. I know that love, especially God’s love, is not on your working agenda. I came with the authority of my Father, and you either dismiss me or avoid me. If another came, acting self-important, you would welcome him with open arms. How do you expect to get anywhere with God when you spend all your time jockeying for position with each other, ranking your rivals and ignoring God?

We need to seek God’s approval.

Adults are not immune to pressure from people and not only from their peers, but sometimes by their children.

Illus. You might hear: “I’ll let my child decide how he is to believe,” or “if little Johnny doesn’t want to go to Church (little Johnny is only 4) then I won’t make him go.” Or you might also have heard: “I was made to go to church, and I grew up to resent Church.” Yeah, I was made to go to school — but I grew up to be equipped educationally, to go on to college, and lead a productive life.

There are all kinds of punishment – and rejection is one of the worst, but the kind of rejection that will be the ultimate in horror is when God says to the unfaithful: “Depart from me I never knew you.”

This is not the best kind of motivation, but it is one.

What motivates you?

Some are motivated by:

II. The Expectation of Reward

The reward of eternal life in heaven may motivate some. (READ [verse 25](#))

[John 5:25 ESV](#) 25 “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

Jesus is certainly talking about the “spiritually dead.” This is not unlike Ezekiel’s imagery in the O. T. “When Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy to the most unpromising congregation that ever a preacher faced, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord’ ([Ezekiel 37:4](#)), it was the breath of God entering into them that enabled them to respond. It is the same Spirit who now enables the spiritually dead to hear the voice of the Son of God and enter into life.” - Bruce, *John*, p. 131

So eternal life is based on hearing, but this is not just a physical reception of an audio signal but understanding coupled with our obedience of God.

Positive reinforcement is not a new concept to God. He rewarded the faithful in the O.T. with land/cattle/wealth, with wives/children and protection from the enemy. That was salvation to them. But some today confuse the O.T. promises with the N.T. ones. They expect God to bless them with wealth, health and all things good, but that is not how it always works. Our rewards may very well be mostly in the hereafter.

But if you want to be rewarded, listen to what Jesus tells us:

[Matthew 5:44-45 ESV](#) ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

What????

e.g. Sun on the evil *and* the good
Rain on the just *and* the unjust

If I were in charge of rain/sun Christians lives *would be* free of worry and suffering – yet those are the very things that can bring faith and a more mature love of God.

Some people are in jobs that they do not like, and the reason they even continue to go to work each day is the reward of pay day, but some jobs just don’t pay enough.

Illus. Relate the experience I had in leaving Leprino (the \$\$\$offers to stay) My bosses did not understand what really motivated me. Really, the reward for me was answering God’s call on my life. And my bosses did not understand what had happened. I’d been converted (so-to-speak) for the second time in my life.

Life in God/Jesus has to become more than dead ritual/liturgy/tradition - routine.

Listen to Jesus speak here: [John 5:39-40 ESV](#) ³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Coming to every service is commendable, and we want you to do that. You may be doing it out of fear or expecting a reward from God, but there is a better motivation to do things.

What motivates you?

I hope it is:

III. Love for God

“The closing verses of the chapter ([vv. 41-47](#)) make it clear that Jesus will not be received as one sent from God. The reason is simple: he is not one of them. In fact, how can any new and fresh word from God come to those who already possess it so certainly?” - Craddock, *John*, p. 49

[John 5:41-43 ESV](#) ⁴¹ I do not receive glory from people. ⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.

The religious leaders had not believed the sign at the pool (last week's sermon) depriving themselves of life and exposing themselves to judgment because of their own rejection of Jesus, the Life-Giver.

The difference in motivation is instead of self being the center, God/Christ must become the all important person in our lives and our model for everything!

Again:

[John 5:19 ESV](#) ¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

Jesus is our perfect model of love and submission to the Father. (REPEAT)

1. Love of God results in imitation of God. Some say imitation is the highest form of flattery.
2. And this love finds us in service to God because of what He has done.

3. We must accept His word, His testimony. When we accept the Message of God we also accept His Messenger, even Jesus. He is the Very Word come from God, the Father.

If we really love God – the words “Take up your cross and follow me” are not nearly as hard to obey.

Jesus said, “for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”

The love we have for God will determine the validity of our confession.

When we put God first, everything else falls into place.

Let’s put ourselves in God’s place. Our children may do things out of fear of punishment, they sometimes do things because we reward them or promise a reward – but the best children in the world will be motivated out of love for their parents.

God desires no less!

Conclusion: To accept Jesus and to believe in God are the same thing; fear turns into love. Fear becomes peace, and we enter into a new relationship with God where the Judge becomes the Father. Distant becomes near, Strangers become friends and then perfect love casts out all fear. Mature love does not live out of fear of punishment or expecting a reward, but simply because God has become our primary concern.

AGAIN: [John 5:24-25 ESV](#) ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. ²⁵ “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

Can you hear the Father’s call?

**God would like for you to know Him, this morning,
through giving your life to Him -
believing in Jesus Christ and His love for you!**