To Will One Thing
Matthew 13:44-58

Intro

In 1846, the Danish Christian Philosopher Søren Kierkegaard wrote a work entitled *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing*…

- And I would highly encourage you to read this devotional work as it is a wonderful exhortation reminding us that the best thing that we can do as believers is *seek the good*…

In other words, as Christians we are called *to a wholehearted commitment to the good under God* — to the ultimate good that God has called us to seek…

- And when we *will this one thing* — when we seek to do His will — to pursue what He wants us to pursue — then we will experience an ever increasing purity of heart…

This willing one thing is perfectly exemplified in the Lord Jesus — and is especially highlighted in John's gospel…

John 4:34 (NKJV)
…"My food is to <u>do the will</u> of Him who sent Me, and to <u>finish His work</u>."

John 5:30 (NKJV)
"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because <u>I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me</u>.

John 6:38 (NKJV)
"For I have come down from heaven, <u>not to do My own will</u>, but the <u>will of Him who sent Me</u>."

John 8:29 (NKJV)
"And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I <u>always do those things that please Him</u>."

Now, it seems clear that this *willing one thing* was the focus of the Lord Jesus' life…

- And I believe that *willing one thing* is the focus of the passage that we will be studying this morning…

So, *purity of heart is to will one thing* — to will to do the Father's will — to seek what it is that He wants for us — and to trust that whatever He wants for us is our highest good…

With this in mind, let's move into the first section of our study as the Lord Jesus continues sharing parables of the kingdom…

<u>1) Parable of the Hidden Treasure</u> (vs 44)

Now, there are two primary ways to interpret the first two parables that we will encounter in our study…

Many commentators view the **man** in the first parable and the **merchant** in the second parable as representation of the Lord Jesus…

And I can understand that interpretation…

If that is the correct interpretation, then these parables would be speaking of how the Lord Jesus gave up all to save us — which is an undeniably biblical truth…

With that said, I interpret these two parables differently…

I think that the **man** and the **merchant** are representative of the ***believer*** and I will explain why as we move through the verses…

- But, as always, I encourage you to study this passage on your own and don't simply take my word for it…

We are each responsible — as individuals before God — for what we believe — because what we believe will impact how we live…

So, let's look at vs…

44 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

This is a very interesting parable…

- [expand on the picture that the parable presents…]

Now, I believe that the focus of the story is on the **man** who — through whatever circumstance — finds **treasure hidden in a field**…

And since we live in the Permian Basin, we must believe that the treasure in the field is ***oil***…

- Now, the man in the parable knows that the field contains great treasure so he is willing to sell all that he has so that he can purchase the field and obtain the treasure…

*And please notice the word **joy** that is found in vs 44…*

Notice that the man is willing to sell all that he has — joyfully — in order to purchase the field…

Why?…

Because the man understands that what the field offers — the treasure that is in it — far outweighs anything that he currently possesses…

And I believe that this is a picture of the life that is offered to us as disciples of Christ…

Now, commentators who do not believe that this parable represents the believer rightly point out the fact that we cannot buy our earn our salvation…

- And I completely agree — but I do not believe that salvation is the point of the parable…

Instead, I believe that Jesus is pointing out something that He often pointed out…

That in order to enjoy the abundant life that He offers, we must let go of the things that we currently treasure…

- In other words, for us to enjoy the incomprehensible treasure that He is offering us, we must, in some sense, be willing to sell off all that we have…

Let's turn to several examples of Jesus speaking on this subject…

Matthew 10:37-39 (NKJV)

37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

39 He who finds his life will lose it, and <u>he who loses his life for My sake will find it.</u>"

Matthew 16:24-26 (NKJV)

24 …"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him <u>deny himself</u>, and take up his cross, and <u>follow Me</u>.

25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but <u>whoever loses his life for My sake will find it</u>.

26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Mark 10:17-22 (NKJV)

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

19 You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' "

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Mark 10:29-31 (NKJV)

29 …"Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's,

30 who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.

31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

John 10:10 (NKJV)

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

And the Apostle Paul reminds us that selling all we have — letting go of our will and our way — is always going to be worth it…

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (NKJV)

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us <u>a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory</u>,

18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

And here are two of my favorite quotes on this subject…

CS Lewis
"There are better things ahead than any we leave behind."

Jim Elliot
"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

Let's turn back to Matthew 13 as we move into our second section…

<u>2) Parable of the Pearl of Great Price</u> (vs 45-46)

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls,

46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

We that this is a very similar parable…

But please notice that in this parable we see that the **merchant** is *actively seeking* **beautiful pearls**…

- And in his search he finds the **one pearl of great price** — and he gathers up all that he has and sells all that he has in order to gain possession of that one pearl…

I believe that this is a picture of the fact that ***purity of heart is willing one thing****…*

And it is in that one thing — ***in a vibrant relationship with the infinite God*** — that we find what we were always truly looking for…

Unfortunately, all too often we think that life that we are looking for can be found in things other than the pearl of great price — in something other than an interactive relationship with our Creator…

Dallas Willard
"Now, the primary source of our entanglement is our desires—really, not just our desires themselves, but our enslavement to them and confusion about them. Temptation to sin always originates in desire. We have set our hearts on too many different things, some of which are wrong or evil, and all of which are in conflict with some others."

The remedy to this condition is to will one thing…

And the Lord Jesus gave this helpful instruction regarding willing one thing in…

Matthew 6:33 (NKJV)
"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

God and His kingdom are the pearl of great price and the wisest thing we can do is give all that we have and all that we are in pursuit of Him and His kingdom…

Let's move now to our third section…

3) Parable of the Dragnet (vs 47-50)

In this section, the Lord gives a parable that is similar to the parable of the wheat and the tares…

47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind,

- [expand — Going on field trips on a boat with a trawl net — catch all kinds of interesting things…]

48 which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.

Like the parable of the wheat and the tares, there is a *separation*…

- The **good** fish are gathered into vessels and the **bad** fish are thrown away…

- Now, it is important to remind ourselves that there are different ways to use the words **good** and **bad**…

And one of the ways to understand the words **good** and **bad** is that something is *good if it fits the purpose for which it was created* and it is *bad if it does not fit the purpose for which it was created*…

- [ex. a good coffee mug holds coffee and keeps it warm / a bad mug fails at one our both of these criteria…]

Likewise, a human being who responds to the invitation to enter into relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ is a *good human — a human who is fulfilling his purpose*…

- But a human being who refuses that invitation is a *bad human — a human who is refusing to fulfill his purpose*…

[ex. coffee mug with sentience and willfully refuses both to hold coffee and to keep it warm…]

- Now, this brings us to the question — what is the purpose of human beings? — why do they exist?…

I believe that this question is beautifully and succinctly answered by the Westminster Shorter Catechism…

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?
A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

- [expand on the answer…]

Moving on in Matthew 13 to vs 49-50…

49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just,
50 and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Separation of the wicked and the just — the believers and the unbelievers…

- The wicked are cast into the furnace of fire and there experience the wailing and gnashing of teeth associated with the judgment of Hell…

But it does not have to be this way — anyone who wishes to come to the Lord Jesus for salvation will be received by Him…

John 6:40 (NKJV)
"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Let's continue on now to our fourth section…

<u>4) The Instruction</u> (vs 51-52)

51 Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."
52 Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."

The disciples had already been instructed in the old covenant and now were being instructed regarding the new covenant…

- And Jesus exhorts them to wisely make reference to each as appropriate as they instructed others…

[expand — a good teacher should be able to draw from a rich treasure chest of knowledge in order to help others understand the truth…]

2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)
Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

We move now to our final section…

5) Harsh Homecoming (vs 53-58)

53 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there.
54 When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?
55 Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?
56 And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?"

As Jesus shared in His hometown synagogue, the people of the Nazareth are taken aback…

- And this is an example of the saying, *"familiarity breeds contempt"*…

You see, because the people of Nazareth knew Joseph and Mary, because they knew Jesus' brothers and His sisters, they could not accept Jesus' teaching…

- They thought they knew Jesus — and as far as they were concerned He was nothing special — and therefore they were unwilling to receive Him and His teaching…

This is just the sort of thing that we read of in…

John 1:10-11 (NKJV)
10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.
11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

Tragically, this is what happens when people *think that they know* Jesus because they have heard *this* or *that* about Him — but they don't really know Him…

- ***And if this describes you, please read the NT and get to know the Lord Jesus as He actually is…***

Unfortunately, the people of Jesus' hometown were unwilling to truly get to know Jesus — they had already made up their minds and they weren't interested in new information…

57 So they were offended at Him.

<u>offended</u> — *stumbled, scandalized…*

This reminds me of the end of Jesus' message to John the Baptist as John was in prison…

Matthew 11:6 (NKJV)
"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

Now, as we put Matthew 13:57 and Matthew 11:6 together we realize that these are the only two options…

A person can either be ***offended at Jesus*** or ***not offended because of Him***…

There is no other option…

- [expand — CS Lewis — The Trilemma of Lunatic, Liar or Lord…]

Continuing on in vs 57…

But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."

This is a sad reality…

LESSON — It is often very difficult to minister to people who are the closest to you — they may not be able to receive your message…

APPLICATION
1) Minister to those who are able to receive from you…
2) Pray for others to reach those who cannot receive from you…

58 Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

This is a tragic truth — unbelief limits the work that the Lord will do…

- [example — children of Israel refusing to go into the Promised Land…]

Tragically, a lack of faith keeps a person from receiving salvation even though the Lord desires that they be saved…

Matthew 23:37 (NKJV)
“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”

Conclusion

Now, as we begin to wind down our time, I want to turn to a couple of final passages that show the Lord Jesus purity of heart in willing one thing — and His is the example that we are to follow…

Philippians 2:5-11 (NKJV)
5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,
7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.
8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,
11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now to our final passage…

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NKJV)

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Let's pray…