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CRAVINGS, LONGINGS, and DESIRES

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~ Scripture: Genesis 3:1-13 ~

INTRODUCTION

Much of our lives is spent engaging and disengaging from cravings. They seem to come in multiples. Have you had this conflict: “Gee, I’d sure like to catch another 5-10 minutes of sleep, but if I do I won’t have time to stop by Dunkin Donuts for my morning coffee.”

If you could storyboard our days, they’d pretty much be described and defined by our cravings. Our souls are created to crave things that actually bring life and health. But at the same time, it is in our nature to go after things that are more destructive and devastating.

Think of something that makes you sick or leaves you unsatisfied. Every time Marcie & I go to a movie, we’ve usually had a salad or sandwich and are full. But the smell of popcorn gets us every time. We buy it. . . I eat most of it. . . and my mouth is dry, my stomach is gorged. Why do I do this? I know what’s going to happen, yet the temporary pleasure is worth the discomfort.

I used to work in my father’s candy store. I never developed a dislike for the product. ☺
Later, in seminary, I had a part-time job in a bar-b-que joint. The smell coming out of the smokestack got me every time. In fact, the owner counted on that being the thing that would draw people in. He was no dummy.

It seems like we were designed to crave! There’s something in our core that desires, longs, enjoys. There are certain things that just naturally connect to us, that stir us up. But not everything. I’ve never seen anyone crave *lima beans*. Any lima bean cravers out there? ☺

Now to illustrate that, I’ve brought two boxes this morning. [GO DOWN TO FIRST 2 ROWS.]
I want to offer some out of each box.....

[BOX OF CANDY + BOX OF ROCKS]

Now you can see why Jesus said in **Luke 11:(11 & 13)** -- "*Which of you fathers, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone instead? . . . If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give...*"

This morning, I want to look at “soul cravings” – those intrinsic (built in) human cravings, longings, and desires that everyone of us has. . .

- If you’re a follower of Jesus Christ (i.e.: you know God and know He lives within you): I hope you’ll come to a better understanding of how these things work within you so that the things we feed on don’t end up feeding on us and the things we enjoy don’t end up owning us.
- If you’re searching for God: I hope you’ll discover God has created you in His image & likeness so that your soul craves after Him.

I. GENESIS 3:1-13

The Bible gives us the story of humanity; it's largely a story of craving.

You might also look at it as the story of God and His craving (for us, to be connected to us).

¹*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"*

²*The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden. ³But God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "*

⁴*"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

⁶*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.*

⁸*Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"* **Busted!**

¹⁰*He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."*

¹¹*And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"*

¹²*The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."*

¹³*Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

Let me ask you: When God created the world and put Adam & Eve in this Paradise, this Garden of Plenty, did they have any needs?

Your first response might be "NO!" It's paradise, right? The place where you have no needs.

Truth is, when God created man, he was filled with needs. Paradise is not a place where there are no needs. It is a place where all your needs are met in direct relationship to God who created you and everything for your pleasure.

A. When God created man, He breathed into us "*the breath of life*". Since that first breath, we have needed **OXYGEN**. Even in Paradise where everything was working exactly as God designed it, man needed air. It's not a craving you think about much—until you get congested and your nose gets stopped up. Then you are aware that every second of your life your body longs for oxygen.

B. Another craving intrinsic to our physiology is **FOOD**. The first command was to "*eat freely*" of all that vegetation God had created. He not only created us with the need to eat, but food tasted so good. God was the first gourmet chef. He was the first to say, "*Enjoy!*"

C. Genesis 2 tells us four rivers flowed out of the Garden. **WATER!** Another need He created within us to be satisfied. **EATING – DRINKING – BREATHING == all basic cravings.**

D. God saw it was not good for Adam to be alone and unoccupied. So He gave him a **TASK** — something meaningful to do (i.e.: naming the animals).

E. After the naming was done, Adam was still without a **HELPMATE**. God knew it was not good for man to be alone even before Adam understood the full dynamic of that need. So He took Adam through a process of making him aware of a deeper longing, craving, need in his soul—more powerful and real than breathing, eating, or drinking. He caused him to fall asleep, took out a rib, formed his counterpart (a woman), and they became companions.

We have soul cravings, longings, desires, and needs within our soul—including the need to eat, to drink, to breathe and the need for relationship, for shelter, for security, for significance. They are not there by accident. They are there because we have been designed and created by God in His image & likeness. And our souls will always crave these things.

F. Every human being has many layers of need. Psychologists have studied these layers (e.g.: Maslow's "*Hierarchy*"). Scripture says there is a craving deeper than all these. **EVERY HUMAN BEING HAS A CRAVING FOR GOD!!!** It drives us crazy. Sometimes we don't even know what that inner gnawing is. But it is always intended to drive us to God.

II. Matthew 4:1-4

There was a moment in the life of Jesus when He was fighting with His physical cravings. Isn't that part of our struggle? In addition to our deep longings for God, there are other cravings that seem to scream louder. . .that distract and pull us away (e.g.: the need to enjoy, to succeed, to be admired). Here we see Jesus stepping into a moment of intense, desperate craving:

¹Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." ⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

"Yeah," you say, "*but that's Jesus! Jesus hungry at 40 days isn't the same as me after 40 days.*" Not so! It's exactly like you & me after 40 days.

I read once about 40 days of hunger—how the body begins to eat itself. And there's pain, then no pain, then even greater pain. Oh the physical anguish Jesus must have felt!

Now, this passage is about temptation. You can't have temptation in your life without a craving in your soul. So what's really going on here when the Tempter comes and says, "*If you're the Son of God, take these stones and turn them into bread*"?

I believe the Evil One was saying: "*Your real craving at this moment is for food, not God. You don't have to crave 'God'. After all, you are 'God' aren't you? Just act like Him!*"

[By the way, the enemy wasn't appealing to Jesus' weakness so much as His strength. That's sometimes how he gets us, by tempting us to misuse our strengths.]

Jesus gives His answer in **v. 4** (re-read). What is this, a diet plan? Whenever you're hungry, just read the Bible. Don't eat, read the Psalms. Don't eat, read Numbers (that'll cover bacon ☺). Just read the Bible and your hunger will go away.

- Jesus is NOT saying: "*I don't need food; I just read the Word of God.*"
- BUT: "*You don't understand what actually satisfies the deepest need of the human soul. It's not bread. It's not water. It's every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God my Father. You see, when God My Father spoke, He created everything good. But if I turn these stones into bread outside God's will or desire, that bread will not satisfy. It would be like eating rocks.*"

Jesus was quoting Deuteronomy 8. Over & over again, God has tried to get across to us not to make the

mistake Adam & Eve made when they saw the fruit and thought this is what we need to live.

III. Deuteronomy 8:2-3 – Moses writes:

²*Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*

MANNA == Word lit. means “*what is it?*”
Don’t know, but it met all their nutritional needs.
And it came everyday. In fact if they tried to save it, it would turn bad.
Except for the Sabbath. They were to collect twice as much the day before.

The object lesson is clear: God built us to hunger. . .then feeds us.

When Jesus quotes this to the Evil One, He’s saying: “*You still don’t get it. We were created by God. He created us with needs. God longs to satisfy those needs.*”

- He created us with need to drink → so He created a world with water.
- He created us with need to eat → so He created a world that produces food.
- He created us to breathe → so He provided the atmosphere.
- He created us for relationship → so He provided human community, marriage & family.
- He created us for Himself → so He gave us a living spirit that seeks out a relationship with Him, that seeks to be connected with Him. He has put that longing in our hearts.

The tragedy is: As you live out the life God has given you, life gets better & better. The more you have, the more tempted you are to forget your need of GOD.

When life is going well [e.g.: have a job. . .getting promotions. . .family is doing well. . .kids going to U-M on a full scholarship (in fact they’re sending you \$ for sending them) ☺. . .car runs on almost no gas and never needs repair. . .your wife sees you as Tom Cruise. . .your husband sees you as a homecoming queen], it’s easy to forget that what souls most deeply crave is God—because it’s way down inside and we’ve got it covered with all these external things.

CONCLUSION

Go back to **Genesis 3**. The Tempter comes to Adam & Eve and says: “*God is trying to hold back from you in asking you not to eat from the tree. He’s trying to keep from you what you need most, long for most—what your soul is truly craving for. He’s not telling you that if you eat from that particular tree all your cravings will be satisfied.*”

What the Tempter DIDN’T tell them is that if they ate of the tree they would sever themselves from the very One who could satisfy their deepest needs. And live the rest of their lives owned, controlled, imprisoned to cravings that are never quite satisfied. . .that end up destroying them.

It is not incidental that the Scripture gives images of God in relation to cravings:

- **(Psalm 34:8)** – “*O taste and see that the Lord is good*”
- **Jesus said** – “*I am the Bread of Life*” [John 6:48]
“*If you understood who I am you’d come and drink this Living Water*” [John 4:10]
- **Psalm 42:1-2, 7** –
¹*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.*
²*My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?*
⁷*Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. [“I have been swept off my feet by You.”]*

These verses show how intrinsic is our craving after God. You & I were created in the image and likeness of God. Inside every one of us are some soul cravings that He put there. . .that can only be satisfied in Him:

- The craving to be loved / for intimacy;
- The craving to be accepted / to connect;
- The craving for destiny / to do something significant;
- The craving to find the hero within us;
- The craving for meaning / to make sense of life;
- The craving to find what is true / and know who can be trusted.

There is a Tempter who will work overtime trying to convince you the only way to satisfy the deepest longings of your soul is to turn your back on God (i.e.: search for it without Him).

My message to you today: **Don't run from the One whom your soul longs for most.**

I'm going to ask you to pray a dangerous prayer today. I'm going to ask you to ask God to heighten your need of Him. . .to make more profound your craving for Him. . .to make you as desperate for Him as you are for the air you breathe.

Wonderful thing, *when you hunger & thirst for righteousness*—which is truly what it means to be 'like God'—*you will be filled.* **[Matthew 5:6]**

LET's PRAY: You know the intrinsic cravings that drive us mad when we try to fulfill them outside of You—how they leave us beside ourselves, broken-hearted, guilt-ridden. You know the times we have sought momentary pleasure to alleviate some pain deep inside our soul. You know the times we have fallen prey to the Tempters line—as did Adam & Eve—that “*you will become like God*”. But instead of becoming like You, we became fools. Lord, where we have need of forgiveness, please grant it. But, Lord, also do that deeper work of healing and cleansing. Bring us back to health. Make us fully alive. Let us begin to find our real satisfaction in You.