

Isaiah 40:1-8  
Matthew 20:20-28

## We Want

A long list of desires, of wants. Some of these things we think we need to be filled up or to be fulfilled. We often long for things that we think we need, but if we were to reflect deeply on these things would they be needs or wants?

In the scripture from Matthew the mother of James and John wants her sons to have seats of recognition and power along side Jesus. She comes to Jesus and Jesus asks her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, In your kingdom.' And Jesus responds, 'You do not know what you are asking.'"

What do you want? For some it is the necessities of life, food security and a home for safety. And there are things that we do desire that just make life more enjoyable and are true needs. It is not my intention to insinuate that needs and wants are a bad thing. But as we ponder this time of Advent, it may be the appropriate time to think about things more deeply than just want or need and take a look at what we long for.

In an article in Psychology Today, Dr. Andy Tix writes about longing for an experience. He shares...

One particular fishing memory stands out from this past summer. I woke up early to hike to a new location. I made my way downstream until I found the most lovely spot where trout were rising all around! I was all alone—surrounded by lush hills—as I tried to apply all I had learned from a summer of practice. After catching a few fish, the sunshine broke through the clouds and landed on my shoulders. The combination of the warmth of the sun and the coolness of the meandering river on my legs made me pause. I looked up and saw a bald eagle fly overhead. My heart filled with gratitude.

Eventually—and unfortunately—I needed to leave. As I walked upstream, I twisted my knee on a rock and tore my meniscus. I have often imagined being back in that scene—feeling the sun on my shoulders as I felt the river move around me - but I have not been able to return yet. Even when my knee heals, I'm not sure this same experience can be recaptured.

As I reflect on this story, I wonder why fly fishing captivated my interest for so long, why that particular day in the sunlight resonated with me so much, and what it is exactly I yearn for now. What I have concluded is that there is a part of me that longs

for a connection with awe-inspiring beauty, and that this is a core aspect of my personality, for good and for bad.<sup>1</sup>

As we begin this time of Advent, a time of waiting, what are we really longing for? Maybe you long for a healing and restoring of a relationship.

Another word for longing may be better understood as yearning. We yearn for someone or something...maybe a memory of something long past...the touch of a partner, a phone call to one's mother to share news only to remember that her presence is in heaven and not on earth. Maybe it is the comfort of a pet now gone. Maybe these examples stirred in you a memory of a longing or yearning.

The words from Isaiah chapter 40 are written to people in exile...a people yearning for some semblance of what life used to be like. They have felt abandoned by God. They are far from their homeland from which they were taken captive and led away. Their king, kingdom, and temple all gone. They were longing to know God with them again and longing to return home. Longing for what was, likely knowing that things would never be the same again. Yet it is here that God shows up with a word of comfort and a word of hope, "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup>Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. <sup>3</sup>A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. <sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Things will never be the same for the people who come back to the land after being exiled for hundreds of years, but God will take their wants, their longings, their yearnings and restore and shape the people through their relationship with God. And when God does the shaping, the restoring, it is always in ways that we can not imagine or comprehend and rarely anticipate.

When you consider your own longings today, what sits most deeply on your heart? When you long for more, what is it that you are longing for more of? It is very human to long for more. Yet, I wonder if what we long for is something that was instilled in us from the time of our birth...a longing for God. A longing for relationship with God that sustains our living, that brings the hope, peace, joy, and love that we really lean into at Advent. And the extension of that being a longing for relationships of hope, peace, joy, and love with family, friends, in community, and even globally.

One of my favorite pieces and one that was deeply touching that the Thunder Bay Community Choir sang was *There is a Yearning*. I couldn't sing it without being moved to tears. It tugged at something deep in me. Let me share the poem by Susan Bentall

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<sup>1</sup> Tix. Dr. Andy. [Longing for More | Psychology Today](#) Accessed November 29, 2024.

Boersma, that was set to music at the risk that without the sound of seventy plus voices singing it may not have the same impact. Still, the words are stunning.

### **THE YEARNING**

There is a yearning  
in hearts weighed down by ancient grief and centuries of sorrow.

There is a yearning in hearts that in the darkness hide and in the shades of death abide,  
a yearning for tomorrow.

There is a yearning, a yearning for the promised One,  
the Firstborn of creation.

There is a yearning for the Lord who visited His own,  
and by His death for sin atoned, to bring to us salvation.

Emmanuel, Emmanuel within our hearts, the yearning.

There is a yearning  
that fills the hearts of those who wait the day of His appearing.

There is a yearning when all our sorrows are erased and we shall see the One who  
placed within our hearts the yearning.

Emmanuel, Emmanuel within our hearts, the yearning.

In this season of Advent may we look deeply at our longing for more and seek to find it's home with God the Father, experience it in the Christ Child, and through the Holy Spirit stirring in our hearts, minds, and bodies. This is Advent, the time of waiting, the time of yearning, a time for longing to experience more of God with us.