

Sermon- The Cause of Motion

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

Sunday, October 27, 2019

Today I am going to take a break from the Gospel of John to focus on something very fundamental to our relationship to God. The title of the sermon today may sound more like a physics lecture than a sermon. But the motion of objects is a very basic aspect of the universe. And I do want to talk about something very basic about ourselves as people. Let me tell you why. You see everyone of those who believe and follow Jesus Christ stumble on a day to day basis. Why? Not because we don't know what God wants of us. Not because we don't know what the Bible says we should do in a particular situation. We stumble because we have not allowed the power of the Holy Spirit to percolate down to the basic level of our individual thoughts and actions and even more basically the motivations behind those thoughts and actions. So today I am going to start with what drives our behavior and see if we can rewire it so that it aligns with what our Lord and Savior expects it to be. You'all with me so far?

In 1911, Sigmund Freud in thinking about this question of what drives human behavior proposed the Pleasure principle. It is a simple theory that everything people do is driven by a basic desire to avoid pain and pursue pleasure. That theory did explain many aspects of human behavior and was a good starting point but since then this question of basic motivation has been expanded¹ and we now think of 6 basic human drives. The drive to Acquire things, the drive to have human relationships, the drive to learn and satisfy one's curiosity, the drive to defend and protect oneself and finally the drive to experience joy. In other words when you look at why people do anything and everything in life, people who study human behavior say that you can find one of these 5 drives

¹ Abraham Maslow, Clayton Alderfer, Josh Kauffman

behind those actions. What I have shared so far is not from the Bible. It is just secular people discussing other secular people. But I think we have to look everywhere for knowledge as long as we understand how to process it through the lens of Christ. So what is a human drive? A human drive is a pull towards a kind of activity that promises a critical reward to us. So the drive to Acquire things means implies that people have this desire to acquire material things because we feel that it will satisfy a deep and important need. Drives are powerful like a vacuum has a need to be filled. To get filled a vacuum will not stay a vacuum but suck up everything around it that can fill it. So when you look at any drive the equation is simple. There is a strong need for a certain thing. And the individual will pull in whatever they think will satisfy that need. And we know that all people everywhere think there are 5 things that can satisfy all human needs, things, relationships, curiosity, security and pleasure. The need is there, the individual drives towards to the entity that promises to fulfill the need, the need is met and the individual is satisfied. That should be the end of the story right?

But here is the thing. Life is not that simple. What happens in practice is that you drive towards these 5 things that promise to satisfy a need. You get it and then you find it is not actually fulfilling the need as you expected. I know Mennonites are not as materialistic as the average person but imagine with me if you will ☹️ You ever really wanted a car or a house or some object and when you get it, you find that in some fundamental way it has a problem you never expected it to have. In fact there is a term for it. It is called Buyer's Remorse. The fact is, you realize that it is not meeting your expectations and you almost want to return it right away. Anybody had that feeling? Now most people get over Buyer's Remorse and keep the object anyway. There is an extreme form of this in cases of addiction in which the thing or experience they sought after did not give them the high according to their expectations so now they have to pursue more of the substance to get the high they were expecting. There is a book in the Bible that talks about this. Any guesses? Yes it is the book of Ecclesiastes in which

Solomon tries to satisfy every one of those drives and finds that there is a problem. No matter how much resources you have to satisfy yourself, you cannot acquire enough things or relationships or security or knowledge or pleasure that will fully satisfy. Ecc 5:10 says, *“¹⁰ Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness!”* It is not just money or material things that don't live up to the promise. You take all those 5 drives and you will find that in the end it does not bring true happiness because they don't fill the vacuum in the human heart.

Now you have a real problem. Because if all 5 motivating drives for human behavior are pursued to the fullest like in the case of king Solomon and they do not truly satisfy as King Solomon declared, now what is any human being to do?

This is what the famous scientist Blaise Pascal was referring to when he said, “inside every human heart is a God shaped Vacuum that only he can fill”. What is going on is this. It is true that human beings were created with holes in our hearts. This hole was meant to be filled by God. But instead of filling the hole with God, there is a tendency in all human beings to try and stuff the God vacuum in us with everything else but God. That in essence is what even Adam and Eve were trying to do. They saw the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil and they figured that instead of waiting till evening when God would come to walk with them that they could fill their curiosity drive directly without God. That way they would be like God. The human drive that substitutes the 5 things for God is the root cause of all fallenness in the world.

OK so what is the real God doing in this situation as He looks down and sees people driven in all these directions and trying to substitute Him for other things? Well, Proverbs 16:9 says, **“The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.”** Ps 127:1 says **“Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain”**. Speaking of city's in China you have a very strange situation now where entire cities with rows of

skyscrapers and all the amenities have been built but there are no people in it because they are building expecting the future migration of people from the villages or to take care of population growth. If you google ghost cities in China not one or two but literally 100's of them. Nobody knows if they will ever get populated. Nowhere in the world does development happen in this way that a whole city is built and kept for people in the future. And sometimes no one may come. The Bible is very clear, people are free to go about doing their own thing **but** God decides the outcome. This is how God remains sovereign and in control of everything even though human beings have free will.

Another analogy of how this works is like this. If you think of your car engine, the engine is spinning from the time you start the car to the time you shut it off right? But whether the wheels of your car are spinning or not is decided by something called the clutch. In a manual transmission when you press the clutch it disconnects the engine from the wheels. So at that time the engine can spin all it wants but that power that is being produced is going nowhere. In the same way we can be as driven as we want but unless we are driving in the direction God wants Psalms 127:1 or Proverbs 16:9 is saying that God will have his foot on the clutch and we will be spinning our wheels and going nowhere.

But God's hand of providence is more than a clutch plate. Proverbs 16:33 ***"The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord."*** In other words every dice that is rolled and every coin that is tossed falls exactly where God wants it to fall. Does that mean we should in our council meetings we should simply be tossing a coin for every decision? Not really because God has given us access to His wisdom and we are expected to seek His wisdom in our decision making process. But the point is that God is not just hitting the clutch when we think our spinning is pointless. God is actually moving the car exactly where **he** wants it to go.

On the other hand you might wonder, if God is in control to this extent then why did he not hit the clutch when Hitler or Stalin or Bin Laden was doing what they were doing, right? Well, God does not fully explain the presence of evil or why bad things happen in this world. However what the Bible says is that there is a difference between how the spinning of the engines of someone who is in Christ and the spinning of the engine of the one who is not in Christ is transmitted to the wheels and makes a difference in this world. For a person who is not in Christ, they are in some kind of autonomy. They are driving their own car and while God still has the last word on how the clutch operates and where he puts the car, God does let some people drive off the cliff if that is what they chose.

But when it comes to people who are in Christ, the Bible goes further and says that God takes our spinning and directs the outcome in very specific ways. What way you ask? Well Romans 8:28 says ***“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose”*** This verse as you can see is a promise with a condition. The promise is quite spectacular. It says that no matter how you spin God is going to take that and make the outcome work out for good. The condition is that you have to be a person called according to His purpose, in other words someone who is a Christ follower. So let me retranslate this for you. If you are a Christ follower, in other words if the intentions of your heart are in the right place, then God takes the spinning of your engines and the spinning of other people and everything in the environment you are in and makes it work towards a good outcome. Isn't that just the most incredible promise?

And think about this. In the large scheme of things between the battle between God and Satan, no matter what Satan does it helps God win in the end right? The cross was the greatest example of that in action. When God took on human limitations and came in the flesh, Satan thought this is my chance. I can eliminate God and be the ruler of the

universe. So he did his worst on the cross. But that resulted in the perfect sacrifice being offered for human sin and God the Father raised Jesus back to life thus completing the Trinity once more and winning an incredible victory for humankind and for God. So this is the way God operates. God is guaranteed to checkmate his enemy. Now Rom 8:28 is saying, if you are a Christ follower then you get the benefit of this guaranteed checkmating even at the individual level in your own life. God works all things for good for those who love him and have been called according to His purposes. When you love God, the revving of your engine will not be pointless but result in good things happening in your life.

Now you might say that my life is not focused on winning or losing. I am not in a contest with anybody. I am just concerned about how I put food on the table and pay my bills. Well then I have good news for you as well. Because the passage that we just read from Matt 6 is just for you. And it builds on the revelation in Proverbs 16 and Ps 127. It works alongside Rom 8:28. It says my friends that you do not need to worry about your clothing or what you will eat. In fact it says in verse 32 that, ***“All these needs dominate the minds of the unbelievers”***. Verse 32 is referring to the five drives, the need for material things, emotional needs, relational needs, curiosity and security. All these needs dominate the mind of those who are not Christ followers. Why don't I just call it their 5 cylinder engines are revving towards these needs.

But Matt 6 is saying something absolutely fascinating. It is saying, if you are a Christ follower, you should not be revving your engines towards those 5 drives. You focus on seeking first the kingdom of God and its righteousness. Seek first God's goals and God will seek to satisfy your needs. It is another remarkable exchange for those who are Christ followers. God is having a look, there is no point in simply revving your engines because anyway if you are a believer you know that the clutch pedal is in my hands. All your revving will mean nothing because it is my job to establish your work and bring

fruit to your labors. So listen up, if you are aligned with me then rev your engines to take care of my needs and my promise to you is that I will take care of your needs.

Here is the remarkable thing about this exchange. God does not need us to take care of His needs. God can do anything and everything without a single human being helping him to do anything. But he is co-opting us to do his work like a mother asks a 5 year old to help her with dinner. You know that what the 5 year old does is no “real” help.

Actually the mom could have done it faster and better without the 5 year old’s help. But she gives the 5 year old the great privilege of scoping out the cookie dough or whatever they are doing. For you and me to do anything that God wants is this incredible privilege. And if we do without asking the question, but what about my time or my money or my needs, then God will do something incredible. Because you were willing to scope out the cookie dough, God is going to get you some cookies that will hit all the right spots. You do what God wants you to do without focusing on your needs and God will miraculously take care of things in such a way that all your needs will be met.

So what is the Cause of Motion? The human tendency is to think that the cause of motion is the 5 cylinder drive that revs from the time you wake up to the time you go to sleep. The Bible says the human drives causes only the engines to spin. The forward motion your vehicle has is when God has the clutch engaged. The cause of motion at the most fundamental level is God taking the work that you do and the intensions of your heart and establishing it and giving it success. And God can do more than just engage the clutch. Even if your engine misfires or if you are running out of fuel God can take all your effort and everything in your environment and establish it for your good. And God also says when you work to help God with his plans for the world then he will take care of all your needs.

The choice is ours. We can spin at 3000 rpm and go nowhere or we can do 800 rpm and land speed records in the direction that is pleasing to God. My prayer for each one of us is that we will know intimately the root cause of productivity for God and move with God in the driver seat taking us all on a remarkable journey to the promised land. Let us pray.