

ONE THING I Desire
January 14, 2019

ONE THING sharing time

Last week we started a conversation about our ONE THING.

What is the ONE THING that defines who you are
and what you *do* in life?

What gives you energy at the same time you're expending energy to do it?

What you do just because you love doing it?

Over and above all your daily responsibilities,
where does your creative energy take you?

I enjoyed talking to many of you after the service, so let's hear some of your ONE THINGS.

Tony – being a good dad and taking care of my family
(And he's always working on doing it better!)

Luz – creating order out of chaos

Sonia – fixing and building things

Pete V. – music (just got a new drum set for Christmas!)

Gloria – helping people

Mona – nursing

Linda – music

Steve – justice, speaking truth to power

Today we're going to talk about your ONE THING from a different perspective.

Instead of asking what you love *doing*,

we're going to ask, *where* does the energy and passion for that ONE THING come from.

Pete Drago hit the nail right on the head.

When I asked him last Sunday, "So Pete, what's your ONE THING?"
he said, "Connecting to God."

Then I made the observation that this *vertical* ONE THING
was the source of his *horizontal* ONE THING.

Pete's horizontal ONE THING is connecting with people. Pete loves people.

He loves to connect, share, give whatever he's got with great generosity.

Pete's not a happy man unless he is connecting with people.

That's his ONE THING, and he got it right that the source of this passion is in the vertical.

And King David got it right.

David is the one who makes our next ONE THING statement in Psalm 27.

When David wrote Psalm 27, he was not in a happy place.

In Psalms 27 he mentions just a few things that are going wrong . . .

Evil people who have come to devour me

Enemies and foes who are attacking me

A mighty army is surrounding me

Not in a happy place.

The world's gone crazy on the horizontal.

It's time to cry out to God.

So, here's David's prayer. **Psalm 27:4**

One thing I have desired of the Lord,

That will I seek:

Put yourself in David's shoes.

This miserable world and these miserable people are making you miserable.

You're appalled by their behavior.

You can't stop thinking about it.

You can't stop talking about it.

What's the ONE THING *you* desire from the LORD in this moment?

A little divine retribution comes to mind!

A little vindication comes to mind.

You'd be happy for the Lion of Judah to show up and roar!

You want him to fix this mess. (Verity's comment. . .)

So, let's see what David desires.

One thing I have desired of the Lord,

That will I seek:

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord

All the days of my life,

To gaze on the beauty of the Lord

And to seek him in his temple.

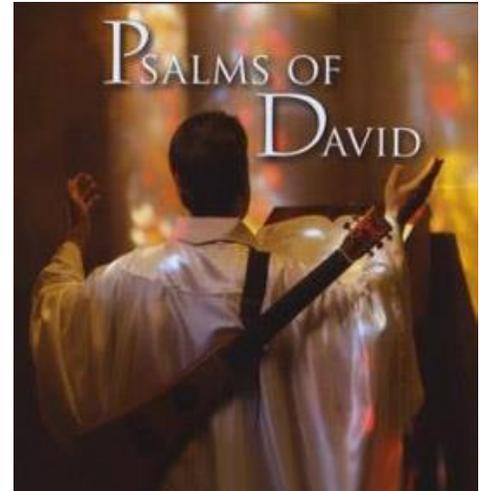
Really David? That's it?

That's your ONE THING?

You get one wish, and that's what you wish for?

Come on!

That wasn't even in my top five!



How's that ONE THING going to solve any of my problems?

First of all, let's make sure we understand what it is David is desiring.
What does David mean by dwelling in **God's house** and
seeking him in his **temple**?

Would that be, like for us, wanting to spend all of our time at church?
Was it that David wanted to bask all day in serene confines of the temple,
like a monk who has nothing to do all day but be religious?

You realize, that when David wrote this, there was no temple.
It was his son Solomon who would build it after his death.
David can't literally mean that he wants to hang out in the temple.

Listen to New Testament Stephen in his great sermon just before he was stoned to death:
[The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands,](#)
As God said through the prophet Isaiah:
["Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.](#)
[What house will you build for me?"](#)

Anyone who thinks God can be confined to a building, has no concept of his immensity.

And remember Jacob.
He's on his journey to look for a wife,
and he stops to sleep outdoors, on the ground in Bethel.
There he has a dream of a ladder going up to heaven
with angels ascending and descending on it.
When he wakes up, he says,
["Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."](#)
[He was afraid and said](#)
["How awesome is this place!](#)
[This is none other than the house of God."](#) (Out of doors, in the middle of the night)

The house of God, the temple of God, is a metaphor.
A metaphor for the felt, discernable, awesome awareness of God's presence.
Like Jacob said, ["God was always here, I just wasn't aware of it."](#)
But once we are aware . . . there's no place else we'd rather be.

I love what Pastor Verity shared during the Christmas holidays.
He said of the wise men were compelled to leave their home
and travel at great inconvenience and expense to a far country?"

And why?

- They weren't coming to see the great temple.
- They weren't coming to practice the religion of the land.
- They weren't coming to be students of the priests
and teachers of the law and learn all about the Messiah.
- They weren't coming to listen to sermons or hear great music.

They came for only *one* reason—to be in the presence of the Christ child.
And when they were finally in his presence,
they were overjoyed and fell down in worship.

Like the wisemen, the ONE THING that David desired
was the precious, beautiful presence of the Lord.

At first glance, this doesn't seem to address *any* of his problem.
The irony is, however, that divine presence is the *only* answer to all our problems.

I have a story that I've shared with you before, but it's worthy of sharing again,

I was in my twenties and life was doing a number on me, as it is want to do.
I wasn't coping well, and so I had turned to food as my drug of choice.
I was a secret compulsive eater.
I was so disgusted with my behavior.

It was ruining my good opinion of myself.
And I didn't like the consequences of this behavior!
It was making me overweight and unhealthy.

I figured, "If I can just get this bad behavior to go away, I'll be just fine.
Cuz I'm, after all, I'm really a good person with a few bad habits."

So, I decided to write one of my very articulate letters to this pastor I'd read about.
(Don't ever be fooled, by the way.

Just because I'm articulate, doesn't make me wise.)

I asked him, "How can I stop this bad behavior?"

I will never forget what he told me,
evidenced by the fact that I can still remember it to this day.

He said, "Your problem is not your problem.

Get your eyes off your problem
and seek the problem solver."

Get your eyes off your horizontal problem and look up.
Desire the *presence* of Jesus!

His letter made me very angry.
What a simplistic response!
Who was he to tell me that my *spirituality* was in question?

I have come to believe that he was right on the mark.

There's a huge difference between desiring something *from* the Lord,
and desiring *the LORD*.

Do you see how this shifts your entire focus?
Instead of fixing your eyes on the *problem in the horizontal*,
on all the outrageous behavior all around
on a world gone crazy,
on your own failures and the failures of others,
your eyes have gone vertical.

I was moved by something the Lucy wrote on Facebook on New Years.
Most of us know what a challenging year this has been for Lucy.
A family found, a family lost, life-threatening situations.
I've asked her to read what she wrote:

Happy New Year to All.
May we bring our blessings and what we learned from 2018 into 2019.
Personally, for me, 2018 was the year I came closest to God. My relationship with him became stronger. I always was a believer, but this year was different. He's been right by my side and in my heart every single second. I am blessed mostly for this and thank Him for this ability to feel his presence.

That's the power of presence.
It's so awesome that we can only describe it with metaphor:

His presence is:
The secret place of the most high
The shadow of his wings
The rock that is higher than I

My shield,
my strength,
my portion,
my deliverer,
my shelter,
my strong tower,
my very present help in time of need.

When you experience his presence,
you know there's nowhere else you'd rather be.

For as David says in **Psalm 16:11**
[In your presence is fullness of joy;](#)
[At your right hand are pleasures forever more.](#)

Some of you are yet to experience this ONE THING – his precious presence.
I fear that some others of you have lost your *desire* for this ONE THING.

Here's a question for some of you long-time journey people.
When was the last time you experienced his presence?
When was the last time you heard him speak to you?
When was the last time the words of Scripture jumped off the page
and right into your heart?
When was the last time a worship song brought you to tears?
When was the last time you were deeply excited about spiritual things?

This is not to suggest that experiencing the presence of God is always a joyful experience.

Remember Jacob.
He has this awesome dream at Bethel and exclaims, [surely the Lord is in this place.](#)

Well, after he finds his wife, 14 years later he's returning home
and stops overnight in Bethel again.

Perhaps he's hoping to have another awesome dream.
You know what happens?
The angel of the Lord *does* show up,
but this time instead of an awesome dream, he gets a wrestling match.

The angel of the Lord wrestles with Jacob all night long,
putting his hip out of joint and leaving him with a limp for the rest of his life.
OUCH!

But, before the angel leaves, he gives Jacob a life-transforming blessing.
He changes his name from Jacob (which means “deceiver” which he was)
to Israel (which means, “wrestles with God and prevails” which he will now be)

The presence of the Lord didn’t feel as good the second time as it did the first time,
but . . . the presence of the Lord did what *had* to be done
to change his whole identity, saving his life physically and spiritually.

No matter how we experience the presence, it’s still the place to be.
It is the ONE THING worthy of desiring with our whole heart.
It is the ONE THING that can’t be taken away from you, by anything in the horizontal,
unless you give it away

Let me tell you a moment when I experienced the presence.
I started with the story of my eating problem.
I was told to desire ONE THING – the Lord.
One of my ways of doing that was reading the Scriptures every day.
I found the best time to do that was on the way to and from work –
which happened to be on the N train, going from Brooklyn to Manhattan and back
. . . during rush hour.

So, I had my small bible (no cell phones in those days.)
I’d hold onto the center pole with one hand,
standing like a sardine in an overpacked subway,
and hold onto my Bible with the other.
I’d tune everything out and tune God in.
So I’m reading this day in Psalm 103, when I had one of those moments
when the words just jump right off the page and into my heart.

The verse said,
“I will satisfy your mouth with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.”

The Lord said, I’m not calling you to live a life of deprivation,
never again getting to eat the foods you enjoy,
I’m going to change your desires
so that you will be deeply satisfied with what is good for you.

That was a huge paradigm shift and started the process of changing me
from the inside out.

The answer came as I was seeking the problem solver.

Do you remember this hymn?

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.

Let's do that right now as we let the words of Psalm 27 wash over us
May it awaken in us deep desire for his presence.

The LORD *is* my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The LORD *is* the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?
When the wicked came against me
To eat up my flesh,
My enemies and foes,
They stumbled and fell.
Though an army may encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear;
Though war may rise against me,
In this I will be confident.
One thing I have desired of the LORD,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD,
And to inquire in His temple.
For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.
And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me;
Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.