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Where Are you Going for Inspiration?

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John 6:60-69 (ESV)

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

Isaiah 40:31 (ESV)

...but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Well, today we're on one of my favorite topics, and that topic is inspiration. I have always loved being moved, being inspired. You know, the current definition for inspiration and what it means to be inspired, according to Webster, is to have an animating, enlivening, or awakening influence exerted upon oneself. It's to be spurred on. The word inspire literally means to breathe into or to blow into. We began the new year last week, last Sunday, talking about the time that God has given us and using that time to the fullest, to the best of our ability to honor God, to steward it well. And then the question I have for you today is, where are you going to get inspired for that use of that time for your life? You know, it has been said that we're generally motivated by either inspiration, some animating, enlivening influence exerted upon us, or by desperation.

God does speak to us in our pain, as the great author C.S. Lewis said, and he uses a megaphone sometimes in our pain. But it's so much more fun to be inspired down the pathway of life than to be desperate and have to make a move, the great speaker Tony Robbins once said, in life, you and I need either inspiration or desperation. It was John Maxwell who said, also, some sort of illumination or some new knowledge can also jar us and get us moving. But the truth is, oftentimes if we don't act out of inspiration and the knowledge new knowledge that inspires us, desperation will eventually make us act. And of course, the great Henry David Thoreau has a famous saying that has, I think, resonated with so many hearts, is why it's so famous. And he said, most men, and of course, he's referring to people, lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them. It's a sad statement that is so popular in such a well-known statement. Most people live lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them. That's not what God intended for you and me. He intended for us. Why did Jesus come? To give us life to the full, and that life is here now, in the time that he's given us to live, and he wants us to live in the fullness of life with him. And to do this, he's given us each other. And that's why the writer of Hebrews said we should spur one another on. That literally means the same as inspired. Stir each other up toward love and good deeds. And Paul wrote to young Timothy, and he said, he reminded him, I want you to inspire yourself. Do what it takes to motivate yourself. Fan into flame the gift that God had put within you. And so I'm asking you today, where are you going for inspiration in this new year? The inspiration for your life? The question is this whom or what has brought you any kind of inspiration in the past? I just want you to think about this today.

What has animated you, enlivened you, awakened you, exerted influence upon you in some way in your life, stirred you on, moved you in the past? I want you to think about the first time you were ever inspired. I can tell you exactly when it was for me. I don't know exactly the age I was, but I can still feel walking into the Honda motorcycle shop in Harlan, Iowa back when I was a kid, and there in the corner sat a three Wheeler. That was just my size. It was a motorized three Wheeler that had one wheel way out front, and you could recline in a seat. It was almost like a tricycle type of three Wheeler, and it was \$90 and I didn't have any money, but we were just coming towards the summer and my father was going to pay me a dollar a day for doing the chores. And the summer is about three months. That would be about \$90 by the end of the summer. And I knew that if I saved my money, I would be able to purchase that three Wheeler at the end of the summer. And I saved up the money.

I went in there and I'll never forget the gentleman there. Randy Pausch was his name, and I asked him to save the three Wheeler for me, and he did. And I went in there and he sold it to

me for \$85. I was so inspired by seeing that three Wheeler. I worked all summer to purchase it, and it was later that winter I'll. Just tell you the rest of the story. I drove the three Wheeler down our half-mile lane to get on the bus. It was cold one day. I chained it at the end of the of our lane to a big telephone pole. I hopped on it, started it. In the cold winter, the throttle froze at full speed. I couldn't get it to slow down, so I shut it off. And then I just left it there and walked home. Came back a little later after doing the chores and it was gone. And the Lord started to teach me at that moment that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. But that was my first inspiration in life, really moved to do something, to be inspired. As you think about this coming year, to whom or what are you going to inspiration for? Webster's current definition is to have that animating, enlivening, awakening, influence exerted upon someone. But I want to take you back to Webster's, one of his original definitions, and this is before it was politically correct in Webster.

And and there was more of a God-centered focus in the words that we use, Webster's second definition. And that's as far back as I've been able to find around the word inspiration. Is this to be influenced, moved, or guided by divine or supernatural infusion? This is what I'm praying for you this year. It's what I'm praying for myself that God Himself, the divine, will speak into our hearts and we won't be inspired by the temporary things of this world. But you and I can be inspired by the supernatural work of God in our hearts, as we consider how to utilize our lives in this next year. When you study the scriptures, it's very easy to see that God, he's told us there, he wants to inspire us for good. We read as a scripture today, Isaiah 40, verse 31, those that wait upon the Lord, they'll renew their strength. They'll mount up with wings as eagles. Doesn't this sound like someone who's getting inspired from within? Those that wait upon the Lord, they'll renew their strength. Mount up on wings as eagles. They'll run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. What was said to Daniel in 11 chapter 11, verse 32, in the Old Testament about God, the people that know their God. If you're deepening in a relationship with him, the people that know their God shall be strong and do exploits.

They'll take action. They'll be inspired by God to do things. Isaiah 42 verse five says, he, this God, the one who created the heavens and spread out the earth, he does this. He gives breath. That's inspires into us, his people. He gives breath to its people and life to those who walk on it. Second Chronicles 16 nine. The eyes of the Lord range to and fro across the earth, looking for those whose hearts are fully surrendered to him, that he may strongly support them. Here's what I want to tell you today, friends. I'm asking this question as you look at the New year and the time that God is giving you, where are you going for the inspiration in your life to be inspired in life? Ephesians chapter two verse ten says this we are God's workmanship, created

in Christ. Jesus brought into him to do things that he's prepared in advance for us to do. He has an inspired life specifically designed for each one of us. Good things he wants to move us to do in this year, animated by His Spirit, inspired by his spirit and his inspirations often come to move us to do actions of love and service in our homes, for our spouses, our children, our family, our friends to make sacrifices of love and service to bring hope and joy into people's hearts in dark places, to bring encouragement.

All this good, God wants to put in us to pass on through us, to inspire us to this kind of action, to help move people down the road of internal freedom from sin. Jesus came to set captives free—external freedom. He's, you see in His word, even as He frees the slaves in the Old Testament, He wants people to live in freedom and a fullness of life before Him. He wants to help lift people out of oppression, to set captives free and help people walk in the fullness of life. And you and I get to be a part of this if we're walking with God and we're deepening with Him. We'll be inspired to bring more and more of God's love and His freeing power, and His joy and His hope and all of these things to those around us.

God is willing to inspire us for our good, but His Word also tells us this: it's hard for His inspiration to flow in unbelieving or dirty vessels. It's interesting. When Jesus started His earthly ministry, He quickly went to where He was raised and where people knew Him. In Matthew chapter 13, we read in verse 58, when He got into His hometown, it says this: He did not do many miracles there. His inspiration didn't flow there. His power didn't flow there because of their lack of faith, their lack of belief. They didn't acknowledge who He was. They didn't believe Him in what He was saying.

And there are many things that can limit the flow of God's inspiration in the work of His Spirit in a person's life. Lack of faith. We see that doubt there. We have to be open to say, "God, if you're there, help us believe. Help us trust you. Help us walk in your power and strength." Doubt can limit that. Intellectual pride can limit God's flow in our lives. Traditional religious frameworks that don't allow the freedom. You know, the Scripture says where the Spirit of God is, there is freedom. And we want to have ourselves surrendered and available to experience His Spirit work in us. And religious tradition would limit His power. We see that with the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Fear of inspiration, fear of being out of control, can keep us resisting the Spirit's work in our life, or quenching the Spirit's fire as the way it's phrased in some scriptures. Unconfessed sin, if we're housing and holding on to something that we know is wrong in our lives, that'll limit God's ability to flow through us with an unyielding spirit before Him.

God is willing to inspire us for our good, friends. Are you moving towards Him? Is my question. Where are you going for inspiration? Is your inspiration coming from the values of this world, or are you drawing more and more inspiration from God? And it's hard for His inspiration to flow in unbelieving and dirty vessels. But I want to say this: you see this in the scriptures when the inspirational wind of God's Spirit gets to flowing in a person's life. I mean, it knows no bounds. If you've seen people who've been moved or inspired in some way, you'll agree with me on this. Number one, they're hard to control. They are hard to control. And number two, they often shuffle the deck on the status quo. They make changes. And this is human beings down through history. We could go with listing names, but I want to give you a little example.

My wife is an artist. Her name is Chris, and she loves decorating and rearranging furniture. And she operates an entire store that has decorations and different kinds of even jewelry and that kind of stuff in it. And I can tell you this when she gets to going on her creative, inspiring work and she's moved in, her inspiration for what she sees could be, I can just tell you this: just stay out of her way. She's going to, I'm going to help move furniture. We're going to rearrange. We're going to change. She gets inspired. Inspired people are hard to control, and they disrupt the status quo. I mean, that's kind of a fun analogy, but listen, I wonder what God has for you this coming year.

I wonder if He's stirring you to get out of your comfort zone and inspire you to be a bit of a different person, that you've been a person that brings more light to the world. A person that brings more hope to the world. A person that carries more truth to the world. Where are you going for your inspiration, friends? I can tell you this. God is waiting for us to come to Him, and we're drawn to Him. But yet we resist Him. We see that in our gospel text today. As we move towards the Lord, we have to die to ourselves. But as we die to ourselves, His Spirit can come more alive in us. And in our gospel text today, we see this. Jesus is talking to them about dying to themselves to live more and more fully for Him so that He can encapsulate them more. They can be more controlled by, ultimately, His Holy Spirit that He would send.

And many people don't understand the depth of this teaching. We see this in John's gospel, and they leave him on. On hearing this, many disciples said, "It's a hard teaching; who can accept it?" Many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him. But then Simon Peter says to Him, Jesus said to them, "Do you want to leave? Two to the 12." And Peter said,

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

Where else will you turn, friend, for what you need to be inspired to do this next year? Well, except turning to Him, the one who has the words of eternal life, the one who came to bring us life to the full, the one who is the Holy One of God. I want to invite you to seek Him with your whole heart for the inspiration you need to use your time well in 2024. Let's pray together. Father, thank you for this chance to look into your word, to let it speak to us about your desire to inspire us. We're living in that time where you have said you'll pour out your spirit on all people. Old men will dream dreams. Young men will see visions. The same for women. You show no favoritism. You will show yourself faithful to those who seek you.

Even now, as people are listening to this, draw them to yourself and cause them to want to seek the work of your spirit, the inspiring work of your spirit in their lives. For this next year, get specific with us in leading us. Lord, help us be open to your work, your inspiration in our lives for your name's sake. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.