

# “But I Don’t Wanna”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – March 5, 2023

Genesis 12:1-4

A pastor was driving through the Pennsylvania Dutch Country with her daughter and her son. They passed an Amish horse and buggy and the little boy asked why they use horses instead of cars. The little boy’s mother explained that the Amish don’t believe in cars. After a few moments, he asked, “But can’t they see them?” Sometimes it is hard to understand why someone does not wanna use something.

“I don’t wanna.” “I don’t want to...” These are the words that we use to either be disobedient or to put our foot down and show some independence. However, God does not want us to do either. Our disobedience causes us to sin, and our independence takes us out of our relationship with God. We need God and we need to be in relationship with God. How many times have we ever responded to God by saying “I don’t wanna?”

Let us do some supposing for just a minute. Suppose **Abraham** had said, “No, God, I don’t wanna do that... I want to stay right where I am. I like it here. The soil is good, and my family is happy. No, God, I don’t want to be your Father of the Nations.” Suppose **Moses** had said, “No God, I don’t want to help those people out of Egypt. They got themselves into the mess; they can get themselves out.” Or just suppose **Mary** had said, “No, God, I don’t wanna have a baby. I would really be embarrassed.” Or suppose **Joseph** had said, “Are you kidding? I don’t wanna have anything to do with a child that certainly isn’t mine...” Or just suppose **Jesus** had said, “No thanks, God, I don’t see why I should die on the cross for all those other people out there.”

Of course, we never do those kinds of things, do we? Or then again, do we? Try these common occurrences. One is likely to fit you. Maybe even more.

God said, “Be faithful and read your Bible tonight. And go talk with your friend about faith.” You know that it needs to be done but the other side of your heart says, “But I don’t wanna. American Idol comes on tonight and I am kind of tired. Besides, so and so is going to call later and we are going to make plans for this weekend.”

And God said, “You need to go and visit Grandma. It is lonely for her since she has been in the nursing home, and she needs you to talk to.” And the other side of your hearts says, “But I don’t wanna go and visit her. She doesn’t even look like my grandma anymore. She doesn’t seem the same since she got sick and in the hospital. Besides, I hate that home. It smells funny and it makes me want to throw up.”

And God said, “You know you really should go to Sunday School, Worship, Bible Study, (you fill in the blank). The church really needs you!” And the other side of your hearts says, “But I don’t wanna. It is the same time as my favorite TV show. I can’t miss that. I’d have to make a special effort to be there; besides, I have already done those things. It is someone else’s turn.

And finally, Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations...” and the “I don’t wanna” side says, “I can’t do that! Why, what if I said something wrong? What if I get the door slammed in my face, or what if they say I’m being pushy?”

And I say again to you, what if all of God’s people had said, “But I don’t wanna...” Where would you and I be right now?

Let’s look at our Old Testament Lesson again. The Lord says to Abram, “*LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY, YOUR PEOPLE AND YOUR FATHER’S HOUSEHOLD AND GO TO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.*” Now just exactly how excited do you suppose Abram was to hear a message like that. And yet scripture says, “*SO ABRAM LEFT, AS THE LORD HAD TOLD HIM.*” Why? Why would Abram choose to be faithful to God? **But maybe the truth is: the why is not important.** What we need to concentrate on is that Abram did exactly what God asked him to do. He began the epic journey, walking hundreds of miles in obedience to God’s call. Now we aren’t talking here about a drive down to the local church to attend a meeting for an hour or two, or over to the neighbors to invite them to worship with us and coming back home again. We are talking about packing up everything you own and moving to Canaan, a land of great danger because of the people who lived there. We are talking about leaving forever, everything you have ever known, and moving to a place where your ancestors will inherit, but you will never fully own, all on a promise. The promise is that this childless couple will have more children than all the stars in the sky. You will inherit this land from this people you will live with. You will be a blessing to the world. God will bless those who bless you and will curse those who curse you. All you have to do is get up and start walking until God tells you to stop.

Why would Abram do such a thing? Because he had faith in God. He had faith that God would guide him in his decision making. And Abram's faith extended to trusting God enough to know that even though he himself did not know where he and his family were going, God did! And that was really all that mattered.

How did Abram know this? God told him that he would bless him, and Abram believed it.

And through Abram, God has promised to bless each one of us. What does it mean to be blessed? I think God is saying, *"YOU WILL BE MY PEOPLE, AND I WILL BE YOUR GOD."* When I think in terms of being blessed, I think of God's promise to be with us.

Do you remember the movie, **"Fiddler On The Roof?"** At the end, the Jewish peasants packed up all their belongings and sang mournfully, **"We will find a new homeland, because after all, God will lead us. God will still be with us."** It is a painful time to give up something or someone that we love, and yet God is there to comfort us, and to guide us and to lead us ever onward.

What does it mean to be blessed? Most of all, for us Christians today who believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior, it means that *GOD LOVED US SO MUCH THAT GOD SENT HIS ONLY SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM, SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE. FOR GOD SENT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD NOT TO CONDEMN THE WORLD, BUT THAT THE WORLD, THROUGH HIM, MIGHT BE SAVED.*

Perhaps as we continue our journey and we hear the "I don't wanna..." let us remember where we would be if Jesus said, "I don't wanna..." But Christ did not do that. Instead, Christ chose to die to save us. Let us, too, choose to be obedient. Amen.