

My wife Marsha and I are just about to have a week on Rotto.

I love Rottnest but it wasn't always that way. My first visit to this much beloved WA icon was 26 years ago. I'd just moved here from Queensland to get married to Marsha.

- Arrived in Perth – height of summer
- Nothing could have prepared me for the heat (fan-forced oven)
- People kept telling me - "It's a dry heat" – this did not help
- Grew up on Sunshine Coast – north of Brisbane – so green
- The sea breeze blows almost all day long
- Rainforests all the way to the beach
- I love rainforests
- By comparison, Perth – seemed like desert to the sea
- In the morning, when the beach was at its best it was too cold for a Queenslander
- In the afternoon, when it was hot enough for a swim, the wind sandblasted the skin from my body and the bitumen in the car park burnt off what was left on the soles of my feet.
- And where were all the trees?

I was feeling homesick and grumbling like an Israelite in the wilderness.

- Marsha – let's go to Rottnest Island
- All I heard was "island" and the images that flooded my head were of Fraser Island, Hamilton, Island and other tropical Queensland destinations
- So, the day arrived for us to catch the ferry from Barrack St jetty
- My expectations were high and they just kept building all the way down the river and out into Gage Roads.

- Finally, I would have some respite amongst the palm trees, rainforests and waterfalls.
- You can imagine my heartbreak when I stepped ashore at Thompson's Bay
- It was ten years before I went back

Ridiculous, unreasonable expectations.

- How could I expect Rotto to be anything other than what it was?
- Now, I love the place. And, in large part that's because I don't expect to be anything it can't be.

I don't think I'm on my own in expecting things in life to satisfy me in a way they were never intended to.

One of my favourite contemporary Christian authors is Tim Keller. I heard him speak at a conference a few years ago and he said something that was absolute common sense but the way he put it really challenged me take a long hard look at what I love in life and what I expect from the things I love.

“If you love anything (or anyone) more than God, you will crush them or it with your expectations and, in the end they will break your heart.”

The bible calls loving anything more than God sin and it's not just sinful, it's doomed to failure.

I suspect that if you asked most Australians for a definition of sin, the answer you'd get would have something to do with doing bad things, breaking the rules or “being naughty”. Most Christians have pretty much the same idea.

When we pray the prayer of confession in our church gatherings we ask God to forgive us for breaking his holy law by the things we've done and the things we've chosen not to do. It's quite right for us to do that but where does sin come from? What causes it? It's got a lot to do with what and who we love and in what order. The big question is do I love God more than the things he's made.

John 6 tells us about how a crowd who'd enjoyed a miraculous meal where Jesus fed at least 10 000 people with just 5 loaves and two fish tried to *make him king by force* (6:15). Later in the chapter (6:26) Jesus tells them he knows that it's not him they love but what he can give them (in that case, full stomachs). He says, "*I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty*" (6:35). Only Jesus can truly and perfectly satisfy so he says, "love me more than my gifts".

Paul puts his finger right on the heart of the problem of sin in Romans 1:18-25. He says that, although the whole creation points to God as the supreme giver and satisfier of everything good, human beings choose, over and over again, to love the creation more than their creator.

St Augustine (writing around 800AD) said that sin is essentially the consequence of 'disordered loves'. Basically, we love ourselves and the things around us more than we love God.

Martin Luther said it comes down to whether or not we really trust in salvation by grace alone. If I love anything more than God that's what I'm trusting for my salvation. That's what I'm trusting to make things right and give me life.

The problem isn't just loving bad things more than God - its loving good things more than God. I think that's an even bigger problem.

Let me put it like this. God has created us with good desires. He's hard-wired us to long for things like rest, security, justice, a sense of worth, a place where we belong and to love and be loved.

- Its right to want those things
- But where do we go to have those desires satisfied?

Rest

- Aust – land of the long weekend
- We love our holidays, days off, weekends away, lying by a pool somewhere exotic, getting out on a boat, bushwalking, cycling, trips down south or across to Rotto or just a quiet weekend at home
- Maybe we find some rest or maybe we come back needing a break after our holiday...
- But how long does that feeling of rest last?
- How long has it been since you felt like you were really rested – genuinely freed up from the cares and stresses of life?
- Augustine hit the nail on the head all those years ago when he wrote, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you."
- Jesus said, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest..."*

Security

- Job / Career
- Income / Home / Investments/ Retirement income
- But is there really such a thing as job security anymore?
- What have the events of recent years done for your confidence in financial markets and investments?
- If you lose your job, how secure is your home?

- If an investment goes south, how does that impact on your plans for a comfortable retirement?
- These are tough and real issues that must be weighing on at least some of your minds this morning.
- It's right to want to feel secure but what are you loving and trusting to satisfy that desire?
- Why do you love it?
- Is it because it seems concrete and tangible?
- Really?
- Israel's King David desperately wanted to feel safe and secure and in Psalm 27 he tells us where he found security.

(1) The LORD is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?

(4-5) One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek:

that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life...

For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling;

he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

Justice

- A desire that's incredibly close to God's heart.
- We turn on the TV, go online, open the paper and our hearts scream for justice
- How are we humans going with meeting our desire for justice?
- Is it pride or shame that makes us think we have do it ourselves?
- There is only one place to go for justice – the cross
- Jesus suffered the worst injustice the world has ever inflicted so that he can take away every reason to weep and say, *"I am making everything new!"* (Rev 21:4-5).

Love

- God's designed us to desire love and a sense of worth and belonging
- Mostly we look to our wives, families and friends to meet those desires
- We rely on relationships to reassure us that we are loved and valued

But people let us down – often the people closest to us

- sometimes intentionally, but often without meaning to
- Relationships get broken
- Human relationships are inherently fragile because they're *human* relationships

I have had to do some serious repenting in my marriage over this.

- I was expecting my wife to be what only God can be for me.
- I had turned my wife and my marriage into an idol
- I expected my wife to completely satisfy my desire to feel loved and valued
- It's not unreasonable or wrong to want my wife to love and value me but I can't make her and our marriage the primary and definitive source of that satisfaction.
- The fact is our wives get sick, sad, tired... At times, we'll grieve or anger them and they won't like us very much.
- Marriages have their difficult patches.
- God hasn't given us our wives to replace him as the source of our satisfaction but so that we can love *them*.

Unless I love God more than my wife my love for her will be so much less than it could be. She will always be, in one way or another, a means to satisfy my desires. I'll always expect things from her that only God can give.

If you expect your relationships – wife, children, friends to meet your desire to be loved and treasured, you will crush them and those relationships with your expectations and they will break your heart because they aren't designed or intended to truly fulfil that desire.

Loving God means trusting him to perfectly satisfy every good desire he's put in your heart. John Piper says that “God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in him.”

When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was he said **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and ‘love your neighbour as yourself”** (Lk 10:27)

- God doesn't give us any command (especially one as great as this) without giving us the grace and the blessing for carrying it out
- The first “great command” makes it possible to obey the second because when we obey the first we stop making people a means of satisfying our desires and instead we're set free to love them.

God doesn't ask us to give up our good desires – he wants to thoroughly and abundantly satisfy us with himself.

The man who found the treasure in the field (Mtt 13) joyfully sold everything he had so he could make it his own. Both the man who found the treasure hidden in a field and the merchant who found the pearl of great value knew that they'd found something more precious than everything else they had put together.

One found it even though he hadn't been looking for it and the other had been searching for it for a long, long time, but to gain the treasure, they had

to be willing to stop depending on everything else to satisfy them. And they didn't hesitate because they knew what a priceless treasure they'd discovered.

How is such a radical change of heart possible? Only by grace – only because of what Jesus has done.

At the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, Satan offered to satisfy his good desires – he offered him an easy kingdom and quick path to status and power. Along the way the crowds offered him the same thing. But Jesus knew God had something infinitely better planned.

For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:2)

Jesus has done everything that needed to be done so that we can be extravagantly satisfied with real rest, eternal security, perfect justice and limitless love. So brothers, why go anywhere else but to him?