

Lent 3, 2007

St. John's

One of the great difficulties that each of us face in our Christian life is the difficulty of understanding the will of God.

It is difficult because the will of God is to be understood at 2 levels.

The first level is how do I understand God's will for me? How do I know what God's will is for me? And do I live according to God's will?

The difficulty in all of this is that God, in his infinite wisdom, entrusted us, his children, with brains and we have the ability to think, and because we have the ability to think, we are called upon each day to make choices. To make decisions.

When we are faced with making decisions our question as Christians is: what is the will of God for me in this?

You see it seemed so easy for Moses who had a burning bush and God actually talked to him. Jesus had signs and wonders and it seemed so easy for him. But you know I don't think it really was that easy for Jesus or for Moses. I think that they too had choices to make and I think that they too had to make decisions in prayer, in faith and in the belief that God would be with them. And I also think that what they decided they were not sure where it was going to lead them.

You see I do not believe that every minute of every day is planned for us by God. I believe that our choices and our decisions determine the road of life that we take. Some decisions will be good and some not so good. And I think that there are many decisions that we make when God simply smiles and wonders where we are taking him now.

For us to take seriously doing the will of God is first to realize that God does not have our life planned for us, and that we are not some kind of Christian puppet that God pulls the strings and we dance. Taking seriously the will of God is to weigh each decision carefully and prayerfully and ask ourselves what good will it do, what harm will it bring, how will it affect me, how will it affect others, and what greater good can I make out of this?

The will of God is for us to understand that our life is not one that is mapped out and we simply follow the course. So the first level of understanding God's will is the level of how do I understand what God's will is for me and how do I fashion my life to allow God to be part of my decisions?

The second level of understanding the will of God is the level that is often told to us that what happens to some people is the will of God.

A friend is struck with a terrible disease and some say it's the will of God.

A small child has a sickness and dies and some say it's the will of God.

Communities are devastated by floods, tornadoes and earthquakes and some say it was the will of God.

Some Galileans are killed by Roman soldiers and some said to Jesus it was because of their sin. A tower falls on and kills some people and some say it was the will of God.

My question in all of this is, if this is the will of God then what sort of God do we preach? What sort of God do we believe in? What sort of God would single out some of his children to be very sick, some of his children to die young, some of his children to be flooded, earthquaked and tornadoed.

My answer is that this is not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The God that our lord Jesus Christ told us of is God who loves all of his children equally and if he is God who love his children equally then he does not discriminate against any of his children. He does not pick on one and say you will be sick –I will it. He does not pick on a community and say here's a tornado– I will it. We cannot and must not preach our God like that.

Then why do people get sick and why do natural disasters happen?

The answer is because that's the way it is.

We have bodies that can go wrong.

We have a system of nature that, in spite of its beauty, has a violent streak and that's the way it is. Things do not happen because God has singled out anybody or any place.

So when we pray each day, as I trust we do, the words -thy will be done - I hope we understand more deeply that our life is not mapped out for us and our choices and decisions that we make do affect the course of our lives and do affect other people's lives. I hope we understand that even if it is a bad choice there is with God always the second chance. Even the fig tree that was not bearing fruit was not wasting the soil.

And I hope we understand more deeply that the will of God is not to inflict poverty or sickness, disaster or death on certain ones of his children.

Our God is a God who loves all of his children equally and his will for us is simply to know that he is with us all of the time. All of the time.

Amen