

Announcements

1. Christmas tree lighting
2. Donation of trailer
3. Potluck
4. Xmas Parties
5. Christmas Eve service @ 4:30pm

God's will be done
Matthew 1:18-20

One of the things we can trust most is God's will. God will accomplish what He has set out to do. Nothing can thwart His sovereign plan. We know how this all turns out. As followers of Christ, we can trust that God wins and that His promises are true.

Our theme this Christmas season is Fear Not! A phrase and command mentioned in somewhat multiple times through scripture. Why? Because mankind is naturally fearful and when sin entered the world it was now a complicated fear, driven by what we lost and no longer had. We now experienced rejection, failure, sorrow, hurt, shame, and more. So fear drives a lot of what we do.

Fear is used to control people. On the playground at school you have the bully who threatens to beat you up if you don't give him what he wants. In relationships, love is threatened to be withheld to get something from the other person. In jobs, sometimes we are threatened we will lose our job if we don't do something our supervisor wants. In our government we are threatened with fines, taxes, jail time if we don't do as commanded.

In the last 9 months our fears have been heightened and for some, they have become paralyzed. Fear has grown amongst people. We fear our own death. We fear the death of a loved one. Those are things we should respect. But, those fears have been inappropriately played upon to grab control. When fear begins to grasp us, freedom's bright light is snuffed out. When freedom's light is snuffed out, hope begins to dwindle.

As people of God we have hope. We have a future. This life is not it. There is a pastor who has coined the phrase, 'live your best life now.' Living out my faith and experiencing God is more fulfilling than my life before Christ, but I still live in this world where sin is rampant and fear abounds and it has an effect on me everyday. My best life is going to be on the other side of the grave where "He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." as Revelation 21:4 says. Isaiah 51:11 puts it this way, "So the redeemed of the LORD will return and enter Zion with singing, crowned with unending joy. Joy and gladness will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee." Philippians says "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns." My best life is yet to come. I have hope something greater is coming. That hope is found in the baby Jesus. That hope is found in the virgin birth. That hope is found in the perfect work of God to accomplish His will on this earth.

I mention this because I want to keep at the front of our minds that we have to be careful we don't let even a seed of fear that losing out on something in this world will ever compare to what our future in heaven with Christ will be like. I want to remind us our citizenship isn't here on earth, but in the heavenly realms with our Savior crowned with unending joy, where our faith will be perfected and mature.

When I was looking at the FEAR NOT words in Matthew spoken to Joseph, one thing became clear, God will accomplish His will. God will accomplish His will in you and I.

He has a track record set before Him that we can trust in His will and it is a good will, it is a pleasing will as Romans 12:2 mentions. We can trust it whether it takes us through a time of suffering and hardship or if it brings us

blessing and happiness. God as being sovereign by definition has the say at the end of the day. He is in control. He will come out on top at the end. He has a plan. His plan is to prosper those who are His. He will be victorious.

God's sovereignty is defined as His complete and total independent control over every creature, event, and circumstance at every moment in history. Subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent, God does what He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. God is in complete control of every molecule in the universe at every moment, and everything that happens is either caused or allowed by Him for His own perfect purposes.

Isaiah 14:24 says, "The Lord of Heaven's Armies has sworn this oath: "It will all happen as I have planned. It will be as I have decided." Just a few chapters later God said, "Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish."

Those are hard sayings. Those are words that are hard to grasp and not easily sink in. Without trust that God is good and believing the character of God, these sayings sound like an egotistical, narcissistic, selfish God that is only about Himself and not the good of His creation. As 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit."

The obvious question to come would be, "If God is in control and His will will be done, why does He allow bad things to happen? Why doesn't He just 'will' good things only?" That answer is simple and yet extremely complicated to answer.

There are things that are completely beyond our human grasp. Like Paul quoted from Isaiah in Romans 11, "Who can know the mind of God? Or who has been His counselor?"

It makes sense to me why people are angry at God. It makes sense to me why people feel they can't trust the God of the Bible. When a person looks through their un-sovereign, limited scope of eternity they can't see the

whole picture. As humans, we can only see things through foggy, broken glasses. We try to make sense of things from a very limited viewpoint. So, we can't understand why God does or allows some of the things He does.

God sees all of eternity as a whole. We only know what we have personally experienced and then filter what we think through those experiences.

When we talk about God's will it is important to remember that in God's sovereignty, He did create opportunity, choices. He created within us the opportunity to follow Him or the opportunity to deny Him. He created within us the ability to love and to hate. We can love Him or hate Him. It should be no surprise that if some choose to hate Him there will be a divide amongst all of creation. It also will be no surprise that if some choose to hate Him, they will not listen and instead do things according to their will. They will be controlled by their wants, emotions, and limited thinking. They will have to dictate their own outcome and strive to make this life their best life, because that is where their hope lies.

In scripture, when it talk's about God's will, there is God's sovereign will and His permissive will and His secretive will. They are not at odds with one another. The three work together. It isn't something we can fully understand, but it does begin to give us understanding.

God's sovereign will is the most important. It is His will that He commands to happen and nothing can change. For example, He declared that man will die if Adam and Eve ate the fruit. They did, and death was to follow. He declared that Jesus would die on the cross so that those who repent and believe would no suffer the eternal effects of death, but would have a relationship with God and everlasting life. And that is what Jesus did. God has declared that sin will be judged. He declared that He will come again. He declared that those who don't believe in Him will suffer eternal separation from any and all of His grace and blessing. God's control over the universe extends to the smallest of details. Matthew 10:29 says, "But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it." Proverbs 16:33 says, "We may throw the dice, but the Lord determines how they fall." Here is one that should get us thinking, Proverbs 21:1 "The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the Lord; He guides it

wherever he pleases.” Is it possible that God is in the midst of all that is going on in your life, our country, in our world, and working out His good, perfect plan? Is it possible that Romans 8:28 is in play? “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”

God’s permissive will is where God states His commands, but permits man to operate contrary to His command. We can choose to obey His commands or choose our own will. Being His permissive will does not mean we are able to choose without consequence. There will be consequence for disobedience. That consequence often times isn’t felt now, but later on. Also, the consequence not only have impact upon you, but those around you. Cause and effect is a true scientific principle. It is important for us to hear that God uses mankind’s obedience and disobedience to accomplish His will. God’s sovereignty uses all that goes on within His permissive will.

One of the greatest examples I can think of with God’s permissive will is illustrated in Joseph’s life. Not Jesus’s earthly father, but in Jacob’s son Joseph. Jacob had 12 sons. Joseph was his favored son and his brothers were jealous so they sell him into slavery and tell their father he was killed by a wild animal. Joseph does most things right while under Potiphar’s care and then get’s thrown in jail because Potiphar’s wife lied about him. While in jail, he does most things right and is promised to be out of jail if he interprets a dream. He does, and is forgot about for a long time. It’s now been 13 years or more since his brothers sold him into slavery. Pharaoh has a dream and no one could interpret it, until one day a guy says I know of a guy who could interpret dreams. Joseph interprets the dream and Pharaoh eventually makes him second in all the kingdom. Joseph, again, does most things right and a great famine hits. His brothers come to the Egypt for help due to the supply that Egypt had. What is Joseph’s response? “You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.” God allowed the sin’s of Joseph’s brothers to bring calamity upon Joseph. But God used it to further on His purpose. God had the power to intervene, to maybe stop the tragedy against Joseph. He permitted evil, but it was with a purpose.

It was through Joseph being sent to Egypt that brought the Hebrew nation to Egypt. It was through being in Egypt and the mistreating that brought about Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. It was through Moses that God took the Hebrew nation to the promised land. It was through being in the promised land and their disobedience of God's command to conquer all of the promised land that led to the rise of Rome. It was during this period that led up to Rome and the captivities of Israel that the leadership of Israel would be filled with greed and lust and the hunger for power and control. It was under Rome's watchful care that Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary were forced to move to Egypt when Jesus was 2 years old and then move back to Nazareth where Jesus would grow up as a carpenter and then soon be put on a cross to suffer for all of mankind's sin so that those who would repent and believe could be restored to a growing relationship with God. God used sin and tragedy to accomplish His sovereign will. Why doesn't God just do it a different way? He decreed it to be this way and He used man's will and sin to accomplish what He set out to do. Does it break God's heart when man chooses other than God's will or suffers? You bet!!

God's secretive will is that which is revealed to us in the future or maybe isn't. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The Lord our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions."

Why do I bring all this up? How does this fit into our passage this morning? God's sovereign was accomplished. Joseph had a choice, but God directed His steps. You and I can trust that God will accomplish His will. We have a hope.

Let me read our verses again. Matthew 1:18-20. "This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit."

Step into Joseph's shoes for a moment. What was he feeling? What was he thinking?

-the marriage agreement

-made between parents

-became a legal deal

-1 year of being betrothed/engaged

-to make sure there was no infidelity

-to make sure the woman was not pregnant

-

How do we learn to obey God's permissive will?

-first, you must choose to trust that God is who He says He is and that He wants to lead you

-God gives us the Spirit of God who is our guide, leads us into truth,

-then get to know who He is through

-immerse yourself in scripture

-come to Him in prayer

-serve Him

-in doing these things you are living out Romans 12:1 and setting yourself up for Romans 12:2 to take shape in your life.

"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

As you are transformed you will begin to think differently. You will begin to use the wisdom of God. God will direct your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take."

Matthew 6:33 tells us to “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously”... There is a second part to this that will follow...“and he will give you everything you need.” This verse comes on the coat tails of Jesus telling us not to worry.

Joseph was faced with a decision. He was faced with a big decision. A decision that would have an impact upon him no matter what he decided. It would have an impact upon Mary. It would have an impact upon this baby that Mary was carrying that wasn't his biological child. Joseph was a man of character and he was a man who sought to do right in the eyes of the Lord. God lead his steps.

Fear not. God will accomplish His will.

