

“I Came to Do the Father’s Will”

John 6:38-40

This morning we are going to talk about doing “the will of God.” For our purposes today, the will of God is what God wants - what pleases and honors Him. The Scriptures articulate the will of God in virtually every area of life - in our thoughts, words, and actions; in the home, the church, and the workplace; in every stage of life.

I can think of about a dozen biblical, logical reasons why you and I should be wholeheartedly devoted to **doing** the will of God.

- The will of God leads to a joyful life: there is great satisfaction in following God’s lead; there is great frustration in following anyone or anything else.
- Doing the will of God you avoid the anxiety of hypocrisy: you don’t have the nagging stress that accompanies appearing to be one thing and doing another.
- Doing the will of God leads to rest: Jesus said, “Come to Me all who are weary and burdened down, and I will give you rest.” Those who are apprenticed to Jesus and learn to do the will of God experience genuine rest. Even though discipleship is strenuous, it leads to rest.

Honestly, there are many reasons why you and I should be wholeheartedly devoted to doing the will of God. But the reason we’ll consider today is this: ***We are Christlike when we are wholeheartedly devoted to the will of God.*** We are like our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The prospect of being like Jesus should be a powerful motivation to doing to the will of God.

This Advent season we’re considering four statements Jesus made about why He came to earth (advent = coming). We’ve already studied Jesus’ statements, “I came to seek and save that which was lost,” and “I came to bring a sword.” Today we are going to study Jesus’ statement, “I came to do the will of [the Father],” in John 6:35-40. Here Jesus explained how He was wholeheartedly committed to doing the will of the One who sent Him. Once we understand Jesus’ commitment to the will of the Father, we’ll be in a position to explore being like Christ by being committed to the will of God.

Jesus’ commitment to the will of the Father (John 6:35-40) We’re jumping into the middle of this chapter, so I’d like to set the context briefly. The first part of the chapter records how Jesus fed the five thousand, multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish. The people were so impressed that the next day they went looking for Jesus (who had crossed over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee). When they found Him, Jesus confronted them with this observation:

26 Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.”

The bread that filled their stomachs was symbolic. It symbolized another “food” which would never perish - a food that Jesus Himself would give them. As was normally the

case, the people didn't understand what Jesus was saying, so they launch into a discussion of how Moses provided bread (manna) for the children of Israel. When they finally requested of Jesus, "Lord, give us this bread," He replied in this way:

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

Jesus Himself is the "food" that will never perish. The person who comes to Him and believes in Him will have his/her spiritual ***hunger satisfied*** and his/her spiritual ***thirst quenched***. Sin leaves us empty and hungry and thirsty. When we trust that Jesus' death paid for our sin, the emptiness is gone and we now experience life.

But in verse 36 Jesus points out that they (the people) hadn't experienced this type of life because they didn't believe in Him.

36 "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.

They had seen Jesus in the sense of seeing His power; they had witnessed Him feeding the five thousand (see 6:1-15). Because of His super-powers they wanted to "take Him by force" and "make Him their King" (6:15); they really didn't understand the type of kingdom Jesus was establishing. Jesus' evaluation was that they "did not believe" in Him. But lest they think that His mission was therefore going to be a failure, Jesus adds this statement:

37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

Jesus viewed those who came to faith in Him as a gift from the Father. Jesus says two things about those whom the Father gives to Him. First, Jesus says that they "will come to Me"; even though the crowds didn't believe, some would come to Jesus as the bread of life and would never hunger or thirst again. Second, (and now He speaks of individuals who believe), Jesus says that He "will certainly not cast out" the one who comes to Him. Jesus is using a figure of speech (litotes) in which "something is asserted by negating its contrary" (Carson, p. 290). When He says he will certainly ***not*** cast out the one who comes to Him He is saying that He ***will*** preserve or keep that person in His care; Jesus will keep that person secure.

In verse 38 Jesus explains why we can be sure He will keep safe those whom the Father gives to Him.

38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Here in verse 38 we have Jesus' own statement about what He came to earth to do. Even though there's no evidence that Jesus had a will (or purpose) that was any different from His heavenly Father's, He repeatedly said that He didn't come to do His own will, but the will of His Father. Jesus made this point to emphasize that He was on a mission. Did you notice how Jesus described God the Father in this verse? "Him who sent Me." Jesus lived His life as Someone who was **sent** - as Someone sent on a mission by the God of the universe.

Specifically, the will of God involved preserving everyone that His Father had given Him. In verse 39 He says that the will of God is that He "lose nothing" (not a single person) and that He would "raise it up on the last day." In verse 40 Jesus restates "those whom the Father gives to Me" as "everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him"; God's sovereignty and human responsibility are two sides of the same coin. Jesus' mission involved preserving and keeping safe those who come to Him in faith; those who are His will be raised up on the last day - the day of His return.

Jesus lived His life with a single-minded devotion to the will of God. In John 4:34 Jesus told His disciples, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work." The will of God is what nourished Jesus; He fed on it. The night before the crucifixion, Jesus agonized over what was about to happen to Him. His prayer to the Father reflected this commitment to do the will of God no matter what it cost Him (Mark 14:36):

36 And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

Jesus' commitment to the will of God meant being willing to endure the agony and humiliation of the cross. Because of His death and resurrection Jesus is able to protect and keep every believer until He raises us up on the last day. Because He was committed to His Father, Jesus lived with single-minded devotion to His Father's will.

Jesus came not to do His own will but the will of His Father. If you and I are Christlike, we will be like Jesus in this way. We too will be able to say, "I am not on this planet to do what I want; I live to do what God wants. I don't seek to do my own will; I seek to do my Father's will." Let's think about our commitment to the will of the Father.

Our Commitment to the Will of the Father Our commitment to the will of God will involve two things. First, stated in the broadest terms, the will of God for our lives involves:

Believing in Jesus and adopting His Mission as our Own. (John 6:38-40)

In John 6 we've seen that it is the will of God that we "see" Jesus and "come to Him" and "believe in Him." When we believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins, we experience Him as the bread of life. Our spiritual hunger is satisfied; our spiritual thirst is quenched. When we do this - as we talked about so much in the book of Hebrews this fall - we enter into the new covenant. Part of our calling in the new

covenant is to adopt His mission as our own. We are now called to help “make disciples of all the nations” - being involved in the exhilarating, messy, frustrating, glorious work of helping others come to faith in Christ and then experience God in all of life.

In this covenant we have an internal motivation to know God and do His will in the details of our lives. God puts His Spirit within us and writes His law/word/truth on our hearts. A desire to do the will of God flows from a deep place in our lives. Paul wrote in Romans 7:22, “I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man.” This is one of the surest marks of a believer. Even if it's hard and even if obedience is sporadic at best, a believer agrees with the will of God in the deepest part of his/her soul.

This informs the way we preach the Word on Sunday mornings. We never feel like it's our job to convince you to do things you don't want to do. If you're a believer, you already “joyfully concur with the law of God”; your deepest longing is already to do the will of God. We try to appeal to the deepest longing of your heart and then challenge and encourage you to live out what you know is true.

If you believe in Jesus and adopt His mission as your own, you are now ready to do the will of God in everyday life. If you're not committed to the mission of the church, the idea that you need to do the will of God in every area of your life will seem like a real pain or a chore or a burden. But if you adopt Jesus' mission as your own, doing the will of God in the details of your life will seem like an obvious course to pursue.

Doing the Will of God in Everyday Life: The Scriptures speak about ***knowing*** the will of God, ***praying*** according to the will of God, ***doing*** the will of God. [You can think of this as a 12-minute workshop on pursuing the will of God in everyday life.]

Knowing the will of God. The Bible is fundamentally about God, right? It talks about a lot of different things, but the Bible is about God. God went to the trouble of inspiring and preserving the Scriptures so that we would understand who He is, how He thinks, and what He does. The reason we spend time reading and meditating on Scripture is so that we know the will of God in the details of our lives. At times Paul explicitly told people that they should ***know*** the will of God in some area of life (see Ephesians 5:15-17 or 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). But everything that is advocated in Scripture reflects the will of God.

If you find it difficult to spend time reading the Scriptures, try approaching specific passages asking, “God, what does this passage tell me about Your will?” For example, in James 1:19–20 we read this:

19 *This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

As someone who tends to “enter a room mouth-first” (I tend to talk too much) these are great verses to ponder. It is the will of God that I am slow to speak (I shouldn't say

everything that pops into my head), that I am quick to hear (that I listen intently to what others are saying - really seeking understanding), and that I am slow to anger. Why slow to anger? Because my anger does not further the purposes of God in others' lives. These verses make me evaluate whether or not I'm committed to the mission of helping others follow Jesus. If I am, then I will realize that it is not God's will for me to get angry and tell people off. It may make me feel better, but it "does not achieve the righteousness of God."

Knowing the will of God is more than having a list of things that God wants us to do. It involves understanding His mind and His heart - whether we're talking about our thoughts, words, or actions.

Scripture also speaks of ***Praying according to the will of God***. One passage that teaches very directly that the will of God should inform our praying is 1 John 5.

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

Our confidence in prayer comes from praying "according to [God's] will." John is talking about praying for things that are compatible with the revealed will of God. You and I can have great confidence in praying for things that we know God already wants to do. We can know that He hears us (favorably) and that He will give us what we've asked. We don't know exactly how or when He will give us what we've asked, but we have confidence that He will. God wants us to want what He wants - so much so that we cry out to Him for those things.

For example, in light of James 1:19-20, praying according to the will of God might sound like this:

Heavenly Father, I pray that You would remind me to be slow to speak. Give me self-control to not say everything that comes into my mind. I pray that today I would be more eager to listen than to speak; as I listen help me discern what you're doing in others' lives. Teach me to put away anger because I know that it doesn't further what You are doing in others' lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

What type of person would possibly pray that type of prayer? Someone who's wholeheartedly devoted to the will of God. . . the person who wants to influence people for the cause of Christ. . . the person who is on mission.

Do you think God would hear favorably that type of prayer? Of course. You can live in anticipation of how God will answer your prayers.

Finally, the Scriptures speak about actually ***Doing the will of God***. (Matthew 12:50, Matthew 7:24-27, James 1:22) Last week we briefly considered Matthew 12 which

records the time when Jesus' mom and brothers showed up at a house where He was teaching and wanted to talk with Him. When Jesus was told that they were outside, He said that His disciples were now His family. He concluded by saying this:

50 "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

Jesus' spiritual family consists of "whoever does the will of [His] Father who is in heaven." The emphasis is upon living out the truth. The Pharisees understood the Scriptures in great detail, but Jesus' advice to the crowds and to His disciples (Matthew 23:1-3) was, "Do what they say but not what they do." They knew the will of God but they didn't live it out. By contrast, Jesus' disciples seek to embody the will of God as He revealed it through His life and teachings. At the end of the SoM in Matthew 7 Jesus explained what's at stake when it comes to doing the will of God.

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

The rain will fall, the floods will come, and the winds will blow in each of our lives. We will all face trials. The thing that determines whether or not we're devastated by these trials is not whether or not we know Jesus' teaching. Jesus says that the thing that determines whether or not we have stability and strength is whether or not we are in the habit of **acting** on His teachings - putting them into practice.

Back to James 1:19-20. . . You know the will of God: you should be slow to speak, quick to hear, and slow to anger. You have prayed according to the will of God because that's what you really want: you have asked God for the grace to have self-control in your speaking, eagerness to hear, and the desire to put away anger when it surfaces. Now you're in a great place to put this into action. You're sitting across the table from someone. . . Instead of being passive or instead of merely speaking the way you always do, you actively do the will of God from the heart. You eagerly listen to the other person. You give with your words instead of taking. You bless the other person.

My strong recommendation for this coming week is to pick one specific area of your life - a relationship, a circumstance, an area of obedience - and pursue the will of God wholeheartedly. Through the Scriptures seek to know the will of God in that area of your life. Allow that knowledge to inform your praying to the point where you want what God wants. Then humbly seek to do the will of God. In this way you will be Christlike because Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."