

The CORE TEACHINGS of JESUS

Making Decisions That Reflect God's Will

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello men. Welcome to the Man in the Mirror Bible study. For those of you who are online, I'm Pat Morley, and we're in a series called **The Core Teachings of Jesus**. So, I was talking to my wife last week and I said, "I am just so confused about what I should be praying for. I guess I'll just have to pray for God's will to be done." And then I thought about it, I said, "Oh, I guess that's what I should've been praying for all along, God's will."

This morning the title of our message is *Making Decisions That Reflect God's Will*. Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 26:38. What I want to do and I think the goal here, what we're trying to accomplish this morning is just to give you a little bit more confidence about knowing what the will of God is and how to find it. What is the will of God and how do we find it? And it's important because the stakes are so high on the decisions that we're making. If you're going to be on the bomb squad, it's a good idea to know where to cut the wire. And so the stakes in some of the decisions that we're making are so high that having more confidence about where to cut the wire would be a good thing.

ALIGNING YOUR DESIRES

The first thing I want us to talk about is aligning your desires with God's will. Matthew 7:21, Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount about 15% of the Jesus's words, Jesus spoke 34,450 words and about 15% of them are in the Sermon on the Mount. We've looked at a few verses already in this series from the Sermon on the Mount Matthew 7:21, Jesus says, "Many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord.'" But Jesus said, "Those who say, 'Lord, Lord,' not all of those people are going to enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven."

"So many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord,' but they're not going to enter the kingdom of heaven." So what is this will of God? Because this is a core teaching. In order to enter heaven, you need to do the will of God. Well, we all have desires, things we want. The question would be, one question would be, do you want what God wants or do you want God to want what you want? You see? I'm going to propose to you that it's not a bad thing that you have hopes that God would want what you want.

We're going to see in this passage about Jesus that Jesus wanted something and He was hoping that God wanted the same thing. It's the story that takes place after the upper room. This is the setting. The upper room discourse has taken place and Jesus is now going out into the garden of Gethsemane. He's told the disciples stay over there. He's taken Peter James and John. He's walked over here a little ways and He's asked them to stay with Him. In verse 38 He says, verse 38 says, "Then He said to them, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

So Jesus is going through an excruciating time. In the Luke passage it says that He was sweating and His sweat was like drops of blood. There's a medical term called hematidrosis where literally the body under extreme sets of anxiety can literally sweat blood. And so Jesus was going through an extreme time of anxiety as I was when I said to my wife a couple of weeks ago, "I'm so confused I don't even know what to pray for. I guess I'll just pray for the will of God."

And the reason that I came up with that particular thought is in this text reading on verse 39 going a little farther, "He fell with His face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me, yet not as I will, but as you will.'" So Jesus, His desire was to be released from this sorrow, from this suffering, this anxiety that was making Him sweat like drops of blood. Who knows? Maybe even literally drops the blood. "My Father, if it is possible, please take away this cup of suffering from me and yet not my desire is not what I will, but what you will."

And then in verse 42, "He went away a second time and prayed, 'My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away, unless I drink it may your will be done.'" And then in verse 44 it says He went away and once more, He prayed for the third time saying the same thing. He was trying to align His desires with the will of God. He understood the value of that. So I want us to look at a few related texts here. I've gone ahead and put this up on the screen. You may want to just take a picture of it if you are interested in taking a look at that later.

In the Sermon on the Mount is where we find also the Lord's prayer. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. So Jesus is teaching us how to pray and He's teaching us to pray for the will of God to come. And then later the experience that Jesus has when He's trying to accomplish the very thing that He was telling us to pray, giving us an example for how we could go about it to try to align our desires, what we want with the will of God.

Ephesians 1:11 says that God is working out everything in conformity with a purpose of His will. God is working out everything in conformity with a purpose... So you can work against God's will. But the idea that we're getting at here is how you can have confidence that you can know and do His will. So Romans 8:29, what is God's will? One way of summarizing it. We're not talking in this session today about what is God's will for the world? We're talking about what is God's will for you? How do you know God's will for you and your circumstances?

Romans 8:29 I think is a great summation. There are many summary verses in the Bible. A great summation of what God's will is for you. And that is for you to be conformed to the image of His son. It's for you and I to become like Jesus Christ to be conformed to His image. In fact, by the Bible in that verse even says that we are predestined. It's God's will that we will be conformed to the image of Jesus. Philippians chapter two, verses 12 and 13, "Continue to work out your salvation, work out your salvation with fear and trembling." That's your part. "For it is God who works in you both to will and to act according to His good pleasure or His will."

God is working in us to give us the desire and the ability to do God's will. That's how God's will comes about. Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the Lord, align your desires with God's will. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." Because of that verse, one day I almost abandoned the Christian faith. Because I had been working so hard to build a business and I had desires and I had goals and I had ambitions and I had plans and I had responsibilities, and I had desires and I was working so hard to get these. And I was reading my Bible every day and I was reading this text repeatedly, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."

And I knew what my desires were and I was working to be delighted in the Lord, what I really came to realize is that's not true. And I said, "Uh oh, that's not true." And so when I studied this text over and over again, I came to understand that the word delight in the original Hebrew language means something like being soft or being pliable or being malleable. So delight yourself in the Lord means bringing yourself into the presence of Almighty God who has predestined you to be conformed to the image of His son and delight in Him, find your pleasure in God and then He will give you the desires of your heart. Not because they're your desires, but because when you delight in the Lord, then the Lord will change the desires of your heart to be more like His son, Jesus. And then He's free give you the desires of your heart because they're His desires.

They're no longer just your desires. Your desires have become His desires. Father, if you're willing to take away this cup, yet not what I will, but what you will. So delight in the master and He will give you the desires of your heart. Romans 12:2, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." God wants to change the way you think. He wants to change the way I think. He wants to change the way we think.

And then you will be able it says to test and approve what God's will is. His good pleasing and perfect will. When we allow God to conform us to the image of Jesus, when we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, when we let Him work in us to do and to act according to His good purpose. When we're no longer conformed, but rather we let Him change the way we think. And when we delight in Him, then our desires become aligned with God's will. That's step one.

So I think there's a way to summarize all this. I've been using this for a few years and that is that a disciple is not asking the question what do I want anymore? A disciple of Jesus is no longer focused on what I want, not what I want, Father, but what you want. Not my will Father, but your will Lord, I'm going to tell you what I want, but at the end of the day what I really want is I want your will to be done, not mine. If you can, if you can do this for me. If you can take away this disease, then please do that. Yet not what I will, not what I desire, but what you will, what you want.

Lord, if you could reconcile this marriage, if you could somehow help us to figure out how to live in harmony. If we could set aside our differences, if we could just decide to that we're going to not focus on our incompatibilities, but we're going to focus on our compatibilities. If you could do that, that's what I desire. That's what I desire, yet not what I will, but what you will. And so the Big Idea today, **A disciple asks, "What does the Master need?" not, "What do I want?"**

A disciple asks what does the master need, not what do I want?

THINGS THAT ARE SETTLED

And so now I want to help you or remind you or further clarify for you how you can discover the will of God. There are some things that are already settled. And then there are some things that are not settled. It's interesting because many people would think that the things that are not settled are numerous and they are. Who are you going to marry? Where are you going to live? What kind of car are you going to drive? What kind of career? What city? What house? Where are you going to go to school? How many children are you going to have?

Our circumstances, there are numerous things which are not already settled, but actually a lot more has already been settled than not. For example, how tall you are, your Myers-Briggs personality profile or your Enneagram, your physique, your body type, your athleticism, your physical appearance, your ethnicity, your brains, your microbiome. I was reading about your microbiome.

So the body, this is just one article. I don't even know if it's true or not, but your body has 30 trillion cells in it. Your microbiome, which is the bacteria and the fungi and the viruses that we have, this one article said we have 39 trillion of those. So we have more fungus and bacteria in us than we have us in us. And it's interesting all the different ways it works. The organs that you have, the five senses that you have. There's so much more that has been settled than that.

So there are two kinds of things that have been settled. There are things that have been decreed, which is what I just been talking about. If you're going to go bald like me, there's not a thing you can do about that. That's been decreed. The other kinds of things that have been settled are the things that have been prescribed. So there are things in the world that are moral and then there are things in the world that are priority. So moral things when you have a moral decision, that's a decision between right and wrong. But a priority decision is a decision often between right and right.

In other words, there's no one right answer. Who cares whether you get the red car, the blue car? That's just a priority decision. But the things that are prescribed, you can find in God's Word. For example, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, not a bad life verse. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Not a bad life verse.

Love one another. We've talked about that. Love God. We've talked about that. Pray for the Lord to send out workers into the harvest field. We have talked about that. Marry first, there'll be plenty time for Martha. We've talked about that. These are things that are prescribed in the Bible and they are part of His will. Things that are decreed you have no choice about. Things that are prescribed you can obey or not obey, but they have been settled. They have been settled.

And so when you are trying to figure out what God's will is, if it's something that's already been decreed you don't have to look any further. If it's something that has been prescribed, you don't have to look any further. You know what to do. Big Idea today; **A disciple asks, "What does the Master need?" not, "What do I want?"**

All right, I'm thinking about getting a divorce. The question is not what do I want? The question is has God already spoken about this? What does the master need? And so many other things.

HOW TO WORK OUT WHAT'S NOT SETTLED

And then there are some things that are not settled so let's talk a little bit about how to work out what has not already been settled. And I gave you some of the examples of things that this could be. So you may want to take a picture of this seven ways to hear what the master needs. God has given us discipline, He's given us habits that we can adopt, we can follow, we can practice in order to understand how to work out the things that have not already been settled. Most everything has been settled, but for the things that haven't been settled, the first way would be God's Word. If it's in the Bible, you don't need to look any further. God's Word.

Through prayer, Jesus invokes us to prayer. We're going to talk about a core teaching around prayer. The ministry of the Holy Spirit. The spirit is interceding. You know this, right? Romans 8:26-27 The spirit intercedes for us with groans so deep that words cannot express in accordance with God's will. So the Holy Spirit is praying for us in accordance with God's will.

Conscience and self-examination. We have a conscience. Take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ. Our circumstances. If you're 5'6", you're not going to be an NBA star. If you like numbers and don't appreciate being around people, you're not probably going to be a good salesman. Six, counsel. Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed. And we all have had those experiences probably right here at your table.

Fasting. Taking some time to slow down the body, the pace of life and listen so that all these other ways that we can hear the master speaking can be better heard. I always wanted to live on a lake and I used to drive our family around and look at lakefront houses, lakefront lots. Finally, my wife said to me, one day she said, "Our kids are going to be gone pretty soon. Why don't you use stop this?" And my desires to live in a lake. "Why don't you just put that on hold because in a couple of years we can move anywhere we want to the whole world?" And I said, "You know, that makes sense." So I said okay.

And then the next week I was driving around looking at some real estate and I saw a handmade lakefront lot for sale sign and out of habit, I mean just literally out of habit, the car wheel turned on me and I didn't have my hands on the wheel. The car just turned, went down the street. And I looked at it and thought that was interesting. And I happened to be going by that same area with my wife later that evening. And so I said, "Let me just run you by this lot. I thought it was kind of interesting."

And honestly, at that point, I cross my heart hope to die. I had no designs on that lot. I just thought it was interesting and it was night. I drove down to the lot and went out onto the lot and I said, "Isn't this

interesting?" And I was turning around to leave and my wife, she said, "Let's buy it." I said, What? Have you gone crazy? We just agreed like two weeks ago or whatever that we would put this on hold." "See, no, no I know, but let's buy it anyway." So we did and I met the seller on the property on the lot the next morning. Shook hands on a price. He went away. Later that day he called me later that afternoon, Saturday afternoon, He calls me and He says, Pat, I just wanted to give you a call because, well, I had told this other guy that if I ever had an offer I would let him know and he's agreed to pay \$10,000 more for the lot."

And I'm a business guy, I've been around the block once or twice and so I know what that deal is. So I said, "Well, that's very interesting because I thought we shook hands and you gave me your word this morning that we were going to close this deal at this particular price." He says, "Yeah, I know, but that was before I talked to this other guy." Anyway, we went back and forth like this for a little while. Finally, I said to him, he's a good brother. I said, "Look, if it is God's sovereign will for us to buy this lot, then there's nothing that you or I can do to stop that from happening. And if it is not God's sovereign will for us to have this lot, no amount of me begging you right now to honor your deal is going to change anything. So you just go ahead and do what you need to do."

I won't go the whole length of the pause, 30 seconds or so. He said, "Well, I guess since you put it like that, you've got the lot." In that moment, in that moment, he understood that a disciple isn't asking the question what do I want? He's asking the question what does the master need? It's already prescribed what you're supposed to do when you give someone your word. The Big Idea today; **A disciple asks, "What does the Master need?" not, "What do I want?"**

Let's pray. My dearest Father, first of all, thank you for your holy word that gives us these insights into your core teachings, your character. Lord, there are things we have that have been decreed and so they're settled. There are things that are prescribed that are your will, help us to obey. There are things that have not been prescribed, help us to apply these different ways that we can hear what it is that the master needs. We ask this in Jesus's name. Amen.