TITLE: Determining the Will of God

TEXT: 1st Thess. 5:16-18; Ja. 1:17; Ro. 8:28;

 1 Co. 12:1-31; Col. 3:17

(Play song “Let the Eagle Fly” sung by Angela McKenzie)

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about determining the will of God. How many of you here today have ever wonder just what Gods will for your life is?

 When we talk about the will of God for one’s life the answer to that question is divided into two separate categories.

 The first is not at all that hard to discern—the second can be a little more challenging.

 The two categories are: What is Gods general will for my life once I become a Christian and then what is God’s specific will for me personally as a Christian.

 The First is not all that hard to discern because Scripture actually addresses that pretty clearly in Scriptures such as in:
**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18(NIV)**  **16Be joyful always;**  **17pray continually;**  **18give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.**

What is God’s general will for all Christians?

**To Be joyful always; To pray continually; and to
give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.**

To be Joyful always….

 The Greek word that is translated joyful here is:

***khah'ee-ro* A primary verb; to be full of *“cheer”*, that is, calmly *happy* or well off..**

This does not necessarily speak of always having a smile painted on your face 24-7, but of something much, much deeper. Ones being calmly happy..

 I think of it as being fully satisfied with and in life and the peace that brings to one’s heart.

Then we are to pray continually….

 The Greek word for continually is:

***ad-ee-al-ipe'-toce***

***uninterruptedly*, that is, *without* *omission* (on an appropriate occasion):—without ceasing.**

 What is prayer? Prayer is simply communication with God. We are to always be in communication with God! Not always in form, as in on our knees with head bowed, but always being aware of His presence and our dependence upon Him in all areas of our day.

 That when the situations arise seeking God is our first thought ---not our last.

 Then possibly the most difficult….

**18give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.**

The Greek word used for thankful here is:

***yoo-khar-is-teh'-o***

 **to *be* *grateful*, that is, (actually) to *express* *gratitude* (towards); specifically to *say* *grace* at a meal:—(give) thank (-ful, -s).**

We are to be thankful or express gratitude to God in all circumstances…

 The Greek word for all is:

***Pas***

 **apparently a primary word; *all*, *any*, *every*, the *whole:*—all (manner of, means) alway (-s).**

To be thankful in all of life’s circumstances…

 There is a wonderful story about Corrie Ten Boom when she and her sister Betsy were in a German Concentration camp.

 The barracks where Corrie ten Boom and her sister Betsy were kept in, the Nazi concentration camp Ravensbruck, were terribly overcrowded and flea-infested.

  They miraculously had been able to smuggle a Bible into the camp, and in that Bible they read that in all things they were to give thanks, and that God can use anything for good.

 Corrie's sister Betsy decided this meant thanking God for the fleas. This was too much for Corrie, who said she could do no such thing. Betsy insisted, so Corrie gave in and prayed to God, thanking Him even for the fleas.

  During the next several months, a wonderful, but curious, thing happened. They found that the guards never entered their barracks. This meant the women were not assaulted. It also meant they were able to do the unthinkable, which was to hold open Bible studies and prayer meetings in the heart of a Nazi concentration camp. Through this, countless numbers of women came to faith in Christ.

 Only at the end did they discover why the guards had left them alone and would not enter their barracks. It was because of the fleas.

Henry Mitchell shared that many years ago, he went to hear Doctor Martin Luther King, Sr.

King said his mother had told him to always thank God for what was left. And that was something to think about: if you’ve got enough breath left to complain, you have something left. I thought that was very impressive, and I really made a mental note of it.

Some years later I went back to Atlanta to Ebenezer Church, and by this time Dr. King had lost A. D. and M. L. his two sons, and his beloved wife had been shot to death right before his eyes at the organ in that very sanctuary. Guess what the old man was saying? ‘Thank God for what’s left.’ There’s always enough left in life to make it worth living.

 **Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.**

Notice this verse says that we are to give thanks **in** all circumstances and not **for** all circumstances….

 And there is a big difference!

I have gone through trials in my life that I was able to be thankful in but was not thankful for….

 I never broke a bone until I was in my late thirties.

 Then when doing a little remodel project a chimney fell on my left arm and about 2 tons of bricks fell on my arm causing a double compound fracture that required around 12 surgeries over a 5 year period.

 A few years later while out on a chaplaincy call in the middle of the night at a fire scene I tripped over a fire hose totally dislocating my right ankle and when falling suffered a spiral fracture to my right leg that required 2 surgeries over the next year.

 A few years ago while trimming a tree with a chain saw I was knocked off a ladder by the falling limb and fell about 10-12 feet with my right upper arm and shoulder being shattered when I landed on the curbing. I have had other dozen surgeries and a 3-4 shoulder replacements that have now broken down.

 I have never been thankful to God **fo**r any of these injuries!

 But I have been very thankful to God in them! In His sustaining grace to get me through each of these difficulties and what He has been able to teach me because of them.

 Before I went into the ministry one of the only real fears I can remember having was a fear of Doctors and hospitals.

 I suppose the fear of doctors came from when I grew up and went to the doctor when I was sick it almost always resulted in getting a shot as they didn’t use oral antibiotics back then. So early on I associated going to the doctor with the pain of getting a shot.

(That is my theory anyway)

Guess what? After having my first 12 surgeries and countless appointments with my orthopedic surgeon I got over my fear of hospitals and doctors…

 This all happened just prior to my going into the ministry.

 I think God saw that it wouldn’t be good for a pastor to be fearful of doctors and hospitals when he would be expected to go and visit them so often as a minister.

**James 1:17(NIV)
17Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.**

We give thanks to God for every good and perfect gift, but we are also to thank Him for how He will use all things for good in the lives of those who trust Him..

**Romans 8:28(NIV)**  **28And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**

 In this time of increasing inflation, high unemployment, in a time when many are facing physical and emotional and financial challenges, coming out of a time when we have been told we can’t go meet together in public and if we do we have to wear a mask or in some places can’t go to a restaurant unless you prove you’ve received an experimental vaccine, a time when many lost jobs and many businesses were forced out of business, there can be little doubt thatbeing joyful always; praying continually and giving thanks to God in all circumstances will be challenging at times, yet there is tremendous rewards when we do because we know that we are placing ourselves within the will of God and that is always the safest and best place for us to be.

 At those times in life when the circumstance we find ourselves in seems discouraging and we ask God why maybe we should take a moment and remember Corrie and Betsy Ten Boom and the fleas of Ravensbruck; and thank God anyway.

 But then we have the question of what is Gods specific will for my life as a Christian.

 This question may not be as easily discerned but God does have a specific will or calling for each of our lives as a Christian.

 My calling to the ministry was something that developed over several years but when the time came to start to fulfill that aspect of Gods will for my life He did make it very clear.

That was Gods specific calling for me but it is not Gods will that every Christian enter full time ministry.

 The apostle Paul illustrates the diversity of Gods individual callings when talking about the spiritual gifts within the Church body.

**1 Corinthians 12:1-31(NIV)**  **1Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.**  **4There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.**

**5There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.**  **6There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.**  **7Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.**  **8To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,**  **9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,**  **10to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.**  **11All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.**  **12The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.**  **13For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.**  **14Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.**  **15If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.
16And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.
17If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?**

 **18But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.**  **19If they were all one part, where would the body be?**  **20As it is, there are many parts, but one body.**  **21The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”**

And then he says:

**27Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.**

 Just as God has a specific spiritual giftedness that He gives to each of us as a part of His body, the Church, to bring about wholeness and completeness to that Body, He has a specific calling for our life as a Christian as well.

 Sometimes, many times, they may be one and the same—a giftedness to be used both within the Church body and outside of the Church body. Sometimes His specific calling for our life may be different from our giftedness to be administered within the Church body.

So how do we determine the specific will of God for our life?

 First think of where you are and what you are doing in your life right now…

 Are you the employee of a bank, a farmer, a city or state or federal worker, a homemaker, a secretary, a housewife?

 Whatever your occupation, whatever it is that you do right now, that is what Gods will is for you at this time in your life!

 I have known people who have been literally consumed with the question of what Gods will for their life is and it has made them anything but happy in life…In fact, most of the time, they find themselves constantly in a state of inner turmoil and mostly unproductive as a Christian.

 My council to them is; whatever it is that you are doing right now needs to be seen as Gods specific will for your life!

 If you are a banker, a farmer, a city or state or federal worker, a homemaker or a secretary then strive to be the best banker or farmer or city or state or federal worker or homemaker or secretary that you can be for Christ!

 Strive to be a reflection of Jesus to those who are around you wherever it is that you are right now and you will be directly centered within the will of God!

 A woman by the name of Linda Clare once shared:

“My long hours working as a childcare provider often tempted me to complain about my job. Although I didn’t know what work God wanted me to do, I was sure it must be something other than “just” babysitting. Then one day, a father who came to pick up his toddler commented, “You taught Kasey to pray. She says grace at home now, and my wife and I are thinking of attending church.”

God’s direction suddenly became clear. Now, when others ask what I do for a living, I smile and say, “I ‘just’ babysit for the Lord.”

**Colossians 3:17(NIV)
17And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

Don’t allow yourself to get consumed with what God’s specific will for your life may be but see what you do right now as God’s specific will for your life at this given time. And if God wants you to go in another direction, do something else with your life, change your calling, He will let you know.

 But until that time-- **whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

## Henry Scougal, A 16th century Scottish Puritan who was a pastor and professor of divinity at King's College in Aberdeen once said this:

“The greatest business of our calling is to advance divine life in the world ... to frame and mold the souls of men into a conformity to God ... to enlighten their understandings and inform their judgments, rectify their wills and order their passions and sanctify their affections. The world lieth in sin, and it is our work to awaken men out of their deadly sleep—to rescue them out of that dismal condition. We are the instruments of God for effecting these great designs; and though we be not accountable for the success when we have done what lieth within our power, yet nothing below this should be our aim; and we should never cease our endeavors until that gracious change be wrought in every person committed to our charge.

We could paraphrase Henry Scougal’s thoughts by reflecting upon Col. 3:17…. **whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

 I am a political junkie. My favorite program on television and that which I watch the most is Fox News.

I remember one summer when one of our grandkids from Colorado who came to stay with us for couple weeks, that when he went back home his dad complained to me that he now watched Fox news all the time.

I love it when a politician actually has something positive to say that is worth repeating.

Does anyone know who the singing Senator is?

It was Senator John Ashcroft who later became the Attorney General under President George W Bush.

 The song that we played at the beginning of the service this morning was written by John Ashcroft after the 911 attacks on our country and later recorded and sung by Angela McKenzie.

John Ashcroft once said this:

 Simon, the Cyrenian, a nobody in the crowd, is called upon to help carry the redemptive load of the Savior. What a privilege!

So too, God is calling us—nobodies—with the challenge of carrying the cross to a needy world … a calling to help bear his redemptive load, so that it may make a difference, not just on Calvary, but in the communities where we live and work.

—Senator John Ashcroft

 Our specific calling as a Christian is to carry the cross of Christ into our world helping to bear His redemptive load, so that it may make a difference in the communities where we live and work, using the unique giftedness, abilities and personalities that God has provided us with wherever we are right now.

 God may possible change that specific calling as to the where and how but the purpose will always remain the same---to impact our world for Christ leading others to Him.

 Gods will for each of our life as a Christian is to represent Him and His interest to the best of our God given abilities wherever it is that we are right now.

 Again, God may change our specific calling as to the where and how but the purpose will always remain the same----to impact our world for Christ leading others to the salvation that can only be found in Him.

Today, do you appreciate the calling that God has placed upon your life and are you serving Him in that calling where He has you right now?

 If you do then you are smack dab in middle of Gods will for your life and there is no better, no safer, no more productive place to be than that.

This eagle's place is in the sky.
She's still got a lot of flying to do.
You can see it in her eye,
Though she's cried a bit
For what we've put her though.

She's soared above the lifted lamp
That guards sweet freedom's door.
In the dews, the damps, the watchfires
Of a nation torn by war.

Oh, she's far too young to die
You can see it in her eye
She's not yet begun to fly.
It's time to let the mighty eagle soar once more.

Let the eagle soar,
Like she’s never soared before.
From rocky coast to golden shore,
Let the mighty eagle soar.
Soar with healing in her wings,
As the land beneath her sings:
'Only God, no other kings.'
Let the mighty eagle soar.

This country’s far too young to die.
We’ve still got a lot of climbing to do,
And we, we can make it if we try.
Built by toils and struggles
God has led us through.

We've fought for freedom dear
both here and on the distant shore
Paid a price a sacrifice
A price you can't ignore
Oh, we're far too young to die
We can make it if we try
We've not yet begun to fly.
It's time to let the mighty eagle soar once more.

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