

The Reading Of The Will Series

October 25, 2023

Scripture: John 21:15-25, Psalms 37:4

Summary: God's will for someone, no matter what other details there are, it boils down to loving Him first and serving others, just the same as for Peter.

A pastor received a call from a church that offered him a salary four times what he was then receiving. Being a devout man, he spent much time in prayer trying to discern what God wanted him to do. One day a friend met the pastor's young son on the street. "Do you know what your dad is going to do?" he asked. "Well," replied the lad, "Dad's praying, but Mom's packing!"

To know the will of God in our lives is not as easy as we wish it were.

If you have ever struggled with knowing what God wants you to do after school, knowing whom God wants you to marry, knowing if you should take that job or this one, knowing what direction to take in your life, knowing what you want to say but not how or when to say it, then you know how difficult it sometimes is to discern God's will for your life.

If He would just use a burning bush, a thunder-and-lightning storm or a talking donkey nowadays, then it would be easier to follow Him.

For us today, though, Jesus' general principles about knowing God's call for your life, whether it's a certain school, a certain job, a certain spouse, a certain ministry or a certain choice you face, what He said to Peter applies to us as well. V15-25.

The first thing, and perhaps the most important, about God's will for your life is that loving Him is most important.

Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him: v15, v16, v17.

Three times Peter had sworn that he didn't even know Jesus, at the same time the Lord was being falsely accused and tried; now Peter had to acknowledge Him 3 times.

Likely this was not mainly about forgiveness, although that's in there. But Jesus had already met with Peter one-on-one on the day He rose from the grave, back a couple of weeks. Appearing to Peter, just the two of them together, was a sign of Jesus' forgiveness towards the repentant fisherman. Likely Jesus' asking the question 3 times was a call to what's really important: loving Him first and foremost.

V15 asks: do you love me more than these? What's "these"? Do you love me more than these men love me?

Or, do you love me more than you love these guys?

Or, do you love me more than you love these nets, these fish, these boats, this life? What is most important? Your comfort, your pleasure, getting what you want rather than seeking what I want?

Loving Jesus means putting Him first. Above all other things.

You wonder what God wants for your life?

He starts with your heart. He wants your affections, your gratitude, your servitude.

To love Jesus means laying your life, your desires, your preferences, your whims, down at His feet, and letting Him handle them. It means saying "yes" to Him and "no" to your own self-centered ambitions. Not that what you want is necessarily wrong.

I really don't believe that God wants us not to have fun and enjoy ourselves.

After all, David wrote these words in Psalm 37:4:

"Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart." God wants us to delight, enjoy what God has to offer us in life.

The problem is, often God has a better plan for us than what we want and desire, what we crave and lust for.

God's plans are better, even if they don't seem that way when we are on the outside looking in.

This is what Jesus told Peter about laying his life down: v18a. It's as if Jesus is saying, when you were a young believer, you were still in control of your own life. You did what you felt.

In fact, some people never grow up out of this. No matter how long they walk with God, they still want their own way.

Their own way of singing, preaching, doing church. And if it's not their way, they just leave or complain.

But Jesus tells Peter, as well as those immature believers, to grow up and move on. He describes Peter's future: v18b. Maturity for the Christian is not getting your own way.

Maturity for the Christian is submitting yourself to what God wants for you. Because submitting yourself to God's will leads to God's glory: v19.

This is the neat thing about living to give God glory. He satisfies us.

Someone once said: You are most satisfied when in your life God is glorified. When you point to Him in all you do. When your life shows that you love Him. When He reveals His will to you and you do it, being obedient to His plans. Understand: loving Him first and above all else points to how good He is. Loving yourself first and above all else points to how good you are. And you aren't good enough to live up to that. No matter how good you are, you don't deserve the glory and focus and attention. God is jealous for the glory, and He will take it from you.

He will let you fall so that you are reminded of how good you aren't. As long as you are too proud to admit that His way is best, He will oppose you. But when you say, "Yes, I will love you more than these. I will seek your glory in all things." This is where you find life. Psalm 63:3 says: "Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you." You should seek His glory because the love He gives you is better than doing and getting all you want.

So, in seeking to know God's will for your life, first know that loving Him and putting Him first is most important.

The second thing about discovering God's will for your life also flows from v15,16 and 17. "Feed my lambs", "Take care of my sheep", "Feed my sheep." If we love Him, we will take care of others. That is, we will serve others. God's will for your life involves serving other people.

In our search for where God wants us to go, it does matter how we get there. And by the way, God is calling us to be more helpful and useful to other people than that farmer, too.

Serving people is absolutely part of God's will for our lives on earth. But you say, "I already serve people. I take care of my family, I clothe my family, I look after the older members of my family. I'm already doing all I need to do."

Well, that's all good, but why do you do it? Do you do it because you have to, or because you choose to? Do you serve others because it's expected, or because you want to get them closer to Jesus?

If your reasons to serve are anything besides pleasing Him, they are flawed.

One last thought from this passage about serving others: v21-22.

When Peter asked what God's plans were for John, Jesus said, "Um, none of your business."

You are to serve others, not examine them. It is not your place to figure out God's will for someone else. But we do it often. "Well, I know I don't go to prayer meetings, but neither does so-and-so, and I have a better reason than her." Or even, "I'm a better Christian than him. Why does he get all the breaks in life?" Or, "I know I'm not a very good Christian, but I'm better than them." As if God grades on a curve. As if being better than another sinful person who deserves hell gets you any closer to Him.

Serving others means not judging their performance. It means loving them no strings attached.

It means putting their needs ahead of yours, not because of who they are, but because of who you are.

As a Christian, you are a new creation. You are an ambassador of Heaven. You have been set free, not to do whatever you want, but to serve others.

If you are looking for God's will for your life, it comes down to these two issues: loving Him first. It's about giving Him the glory in all things. And it's about serving others second. That means not comparing yourself to them; it's about putting their needs ahead of yours. They need God, and it's the believer's job to do all we can to help others see Him in us and find Him.

So why not take some time to find out if the direction you're going in is God's will for you. Is there something else he wants you to do? Is there something more He wants you to do? Spend time just listening to His still small voice. Get somewhere quiet and say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Take the Bible and ask Him to show a verse to you, and ask Him to help it make sense. Ask a Christian committed to God who also knows you well, "Do you see areas in my life where I fall short of God's will?" A real friend will tell you the truth, and do it in love.

What is not surprising about this passage is that it affirms who we are as a church. As a RIVER, it's God will that we Reflect Christ's love to others (in evangelism); that we Increase in the knowledge and image of Christ (in discipleship); that we Value Christ highly thru worship (that's loving Him first and foremost); that we Encourage others thru relationships (that's fellowship); and that we Reach out to others thru service. That's a summary of God's will for Peter. That's also God's will for anyone who calls themselves Christians. To live above yourselves.