

The Word of God which serves as the basis of our sermon meditation is recorded in the Old Testament reading from 2 Kings, the 5th chapter, verse 1-14 and the Gospel Reading from St. Mark, the 1st chapter, verses 40-45 as read earlier.

In the 1950's and even on TV Land and channels that show the classic sitcoms, there was show called "Father Knows Best." It had a lengthy run on television and depicted the "ins and outs" and the "ups and downs" of a middle class family. Though the father may not have always known best, the idea of the father as the dispenser of wisdom and advice for all to live by was part and parcel of the show. Even today parents will tell their children why or why they may not do something since they know best.

Underlying such a claim is the expectation that parents, whether the father or the mother, possess superior wisdom, knowledge, and experience. The parents' goal is to lead their children in the best possible path based on all they themselves have learned and experienced during their lifetimes as well as the nature of the request and circumstances. Though parents may look back and question whether it was the best course of action, their heartfelt goal is to do what is always best for the family and for their children.

In even a greater way we learn today that the Lord's will is always best and thus it is to be followed and accepted by us in our lives as His people. For the Lord's will, written down in the pages of the Holy Bible, reveals to us the way of salvation and the life of faith filled with the Father's grace and care. Throughout His Word and especially encapsulated in the Ten Commandments, God tells us what His will is for our everyday lives, and how we, as His people, are to live in accordance to that will by faith.

So we hear from God that we are to use His name rightly. We should hear His Word taught and preached. We are to honor our parents and other authorities. We are not to harm another person in word or in deed. We are not to take things from others or want to take things from another. We are also to use our sexuality in ways that are pleasing to Him and in keeping with His divine design for us as men, women, and for marriage.

"The Lord's Will Is Always Best"

2 Kings 5.1-14 & St. Mark 1.40-45

6th Sunday after the Epiphany 2006

God tells us these things and more, revealing that this is His will and that we may also have to experience some mockery and ridicule when we are faithful to His ways. That is to say, as you and I strive to fulfill His will in our lives, apply ourselves to keeping His commandments, we may very well take some heat from others. They might rib us and call us “goody-two shoes” and some other names that are not so kind. Yet, we are to stay the course and not stray from the Lord’s will knowing and trusting it is always best, even when it doesn’t appear to be at the time.

But we also know that there are times when we do not always think the Lord’s ways and will are always best. We often have our own ideas of what is best for us and for others. Take, for instance, Naaman, the Syrian Army Commander, in our Old Testament reading. He learns of Elisha the prophet of God and how he might heal him of his leprosy. Naaman arrives at the door of Elisha’s house and Elisha instructs him to go and wash in the Jordan River 7 times. Seems simple enough, right? No mystery about what ought to be done that the Lord’s will might be done in his life.

But Naaman is upset and outraged. He questions the will of God as uttered by Elisha complaining about washing in the Jordan River. It’s not dramatic enough for his liking. He thinks the prophet should come out and wave his hand to heal him, after all, in his opinion, it would be a greater demonstration of God’s power than washing in the Jordan River 7 times. Naaman is so incensed that he is ready to leave and return home without even attempting to follow Elisha’s instructions.

His servants however bring him to his senses. They reason with him and convince him that the prophet’s words are best for him and his condition. They even point out that if the prophet had told him to do something more demanding and dramatic, that he would have done it so why not do this simple thing? Naaman goes and washes in the Jordan 7 times and is healed. The Lord’s will, he learns, is always best.

Or, take the leper whom Jesus healed in our Gospel reading. Our Lord has compassion on him and even touches him in the process. The Lord, knowing what is best for His own ministry tells the man to go and show himself to the priest and commands him

sternly not to tell anyone else. Seems a little strange, doesn’t it? Why was Jesus willing to heal the man but not willing that the healed leper tell others about He who healed him?

It is because the Lord Jesus knows what is best for His ministry and for the faith of the people. He knows that if the man would go and tell others about his miraculous healing that others would come to Jesus looking for a miracle worker and not the Messiah come to heal mankind from their sins. He knows that if the man would go and tell others that His preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God would fall on deaf ears and thus the Father’s will would be hindered in that place.

But the leper believes he knows what is best and runs off disobeying Jesus’ instructions. Notice what happens. Jesus is unable to enter the city St. Mark records. Our Lord had to remain out of the city and the people instead sought Him out as the miracle worker rather than the Messiah inaugurating the Kingdom of Heaven on earth by the Gospel. The leper disobeyed the Lord’s will and interfered with His saving ministry in that place.

But Naaman and this leper are not the only ones who believe they know better than God are they? Man still does this today believing that the Lord’s will is not always best. So man promotes sexual permissiveness and immorality on television, in movies, in music, on websites and more. Then they complain about the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, the divorce rate, and broken homes, and the disintegration of the family. Man still does this today when they believe they ought to say whatever they want to say about anyone and then cry foul when others bad mouth them, back-stab them, and assault their reputations.

But we do the same in our lives, do we not? Though we know what the Lord’s will is and that it is always best for our lives, even when it is not popular to perform it and is difficult to believe it, we, corrupted by the leprosy of our sin question and blatantly disobey that will of the Lord in our lives. As sorrows and troubles come our way we question whether God cares or knows what He is doing much like Naaman did in his life. Like the leper in the Gospel we run off and disobey God’s will and more often than not end up in trouble all because we have not followed the Lord’s will

with respect to our parents, the use of our tongues, the laws of the land and more.

It, of course, is not God's will that we sin and disobey Him, but sin and disobey Him we do when we question and do not follow His will. For such we deserve to receive God's correction and punishment. We deserve to be left to our sinful ways and to perish eternally in those sins. For though we have believed we have known best, we have shown that we know nothing but sin and disobedience since we disobey God's perfect and holy will. For that we should be eternally separated from God even as lepers were separated from all others because of the corruption of their disease.

But God in Jesus Christ has had compassion on us for it is not the Lord's will that we perish eternally in our sin and corruption. Jesus Himself tells us this in many people's favorite Bible verse which says "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The Lord's will is that we be delivered from our sin, cleanse of our spiritual leprosy, and be eternally pure and holy before Him in heaven.

The Lord will for us is salvation, not punishment, deliverance not damnation, life not death. So, for us and for our salvation, Jesus Christ came and fulfilled the Father's will. As our Savior Jesus faced the temptations to question and disobey the Father's will but as our Sin-Substitute, as our Redeemer, He kept the whole will and law of God for each and every one of us.

Even as He is facing His sufferings and death, as He is praying the Garden of Gethsemane for the cup to be removed from Him if possible, Jesus still prays "but, not Mine, but Thy will be done." We learn from the Scriptures that His fulfillment of the Father's will for our salvation was foretold as the Psalmist wrote "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law *is* within my heart."

Laying down His life on the cross of Calvary and enduring the torments of Hell, Jesus died as our atoning sacrifice and

announced that all had been fulfilled for our salvation when He cried out from the cross "It is finished!" On account of His holy life, death, and resurrection, the judgment and punishment of God has been taken away from us. We through faith have been cleansed of our sins, washed in His blood, plunged in the waters of Holy Baptism making us clean and acceptable to the Father in heaven.

We are able to do this because our High Priest, Jesus Christ, made the offering required for us to be clean and without blemish in the sight of Heaven. He made the offering and the sacrifice needed for our salvation and for the removal of our spiritual leprosy, for the washing away of our sin. He willingly entered into this sin-filled existence of ours, willingly took on Himself all the filth and disease of our sin on His own body, and died so that we may approach the Father on high without fear and stand before Him holy for eternity.

For this is the Lord's will for every sinner – that we be cleansed and made whole through faith in Jesus Christ who was crucified and raised for our salvation. It is His will that we never be separated from Him and so by faith He has made us His people. It is His will that everything in our lives work together for our good, for our eternal welfare so that we obtain the salvation Jesus obtained for us by His innocent sufferings and death. Would we not agree that the Lord's will in this is best? So it is for all of our lives. Therefore, let us rejoice and be glad knowing the Lord's will is always best. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+