

Scripture:
Mark 3:20-35

“The will of God ---- just do it!”

What does it mean to live as the people of God?

What does it mean to live as the people of God --- under the rule of God?

What kind of life are we to live if we understand ourselves as God’s people?

These are the kind of questions our gospel reading this morning poses.

How is our life different ----- how are we suddenly different once we commit ourselves to the will of God?

Because that is what we are called to do as disciples of Jesus Christ ---- commit our lives to the will of God.

Just as Jesus committed Himself to the will of God ---- and absolutely everything else became secondary.

In our gospel reading today we quickly see that the religious leaders --- the teachers of law ---- as verse 22 says ----- as well as Jesus biological family think He is ----- as verse 21 puts it ----- “out of his mind.”

But why?

Why would both His own family --- and the religious leaders think that Jesus had lost his marbles --- and was out of his mind?

Well first of all it would appear that he had left what many would consider a good and stable job.

He very likely had a flourishing business --- job security --- it was after all likely a family carpenter’s business going back generations that Jesus worked at.

And then one day quite suddenly He pushes this all aside and becomes a wandering teacher ---- one among many wandering teachers with no possessions --- or entourage ---- or security.

And not only this --- but He comes to heads with leaders and those in positions of authority in His society.

And coming to heads with the kind of people Jesus was coming to heads with could only spell disaster for Him ----- and yet He carried on.

And not only this but when He does decide to surround Himself with key followers ---- who does He choose.....

A couple of fisherman ---- a reformed tax collector ---- and a fanatical nationalist ----- a zealot ----- not exactly the kind of people anyone with any kind of ambition would be likely to choose --- at least not from a strictly worldly perspective.

Jesus had made it abundantly clear to the authorities and leaders --- He had made it abundantly clear to His family and relatives that the things which were valued in society --- a good paying job --- respectability ---- choosing friends of high and good standing meant very little to Him.

Jesus had thrown away security --- safety --- and respectability.

The opinion of society was of little concern to Him.

From this perspective one can see how the leaders in his culture as well as His family thought He had lost His mind.

What mattered to Jesus more than anything else was doing God's will.

What appalled Jesus' friends --- family ---- and culture ----- and at times even His Disciples ---- were the risks the He was taking ---- risks which many of them thought ----- no one with any sense would ever choose to make.

The truth is ----- when the voice of our neighbours --- or our culture ---- or our family ----- becomes more important than the voice of God ----- we are destined for ruin.

When the voice of our neighbours --- or our culture --- or our family ----- becomes more important than the voice of God ----- we are destined for ruin.

Jesus wasn't about to let the voice of His family --- His neighbours ---- the teachers of the law --- become more important than the voice of God.

And because of this they thought He was out of His mind.

Ahead of family --- ahead of all preconceived notions of power ---- organization and importance ----- respectability even ----- Jesus puts God.

And it's interesting to note that Jesus basically spends Zero time --- none at all ---- trying to figure out God's will ----- and literally all of His time --- just doing it --- living it out.

When Jesus taught ---- He often said things like -----

---- "The kingdom of God is like a man who found a treasure..."

---- "The kingdom of God is like man who planted a seed..."

--- "The kingdom of God is like a man who found a pearl..."

--- "The kingdom of God is like a man who bought a field..."

and so on.

Notice He describes the kingdom of God ----- but doesn't ever try to figure it out.

The title of this message is ---- "The will of God ---- just do it."

That's how Jesus lived ---- simply living out the will of God.

Never trying to figure it out --- just simply doing it --- and inviting others to join Him.

Think of this Table set before us today.

What did Jesus say to those who He first shared this meal with ---- "Do this in remembrance of me."

He didn't go into some kind of great diatribe --- attempting to explain the power --- mystery --- beauty --- and awe ----- of what was happening in this

meal --- instead He simply said to his followers ---- “Do this in remembrance of me.”

There is very little need to agonize over --- and try to figure out certain things in life ---- God’s will being the pre-eminent example of this.

When we do as Jesus instructed --- when we do as God so leads us ----- all of the rest ----- the details ----- the meaning --- the understanding ---- the reasoning come later ---- as if through a glass and darkly perhaps --- but they do come --- as God so chooses.

The family unit in Palestine at the time of Christ ---- as it is today in our culture ---- was of primary concern --- and held in high high esteem ---- and of great value.

And it was even more stressed then ---- as it was a tribal culture based on kinship.

And along comes Jesus redefining all that is valuable --- and respected ---- and held in high esteem ---- the family unit ---- and otherwise ---- and redefines it.

Verse 32 from Mark’s gospel today ---- “A crowd was sitting around him --- - and they told him. “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

To which Jesus replies --- verse 33 ---- “Who are my mother and brothers?”

And then to top it all of verses 34 and 35 --- “Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said --- “Here are my mother and my brothers! --- -- Whoever does God’s will is my brother --- and sister --- and mother.”

“Whoever does God’s will is my brother --- and sister --- and mother.”

In other words ----- Jesus takes the concept of family ---- the most important ----- non-negotiable --- unchangeable unit for that culture ----- and completely redefines it.

I can well imagine those that were there that day thinking something along the lines of ----- “Now wait just a minute ----- You can’t choose family ---

you can't change who your family is ---- God has done that for you at birth."
 ---- "And if you don't believe this than you've lost your mind."

"You can't just choose not be from your family --- it's not a choice you can make ---- you were born into it --- and that's that."

And Jesus simply takes this idea of family into His hands and transforms it -
 ----- saying ----- "Whoever does God's will is my brother --- and sister ---
 and mother."

"Whoever does God's will is my brother --- and sister --- and mother."

Busted again --- are the authorities.

Lost again --- are the authorities.

Flabbergasted again --- are the authorities.

Left speechless again.

Are those who try to understand His way.

And they are busted ----- at a loss ---- flabbergasted ---- and left confused
 and speechless precisely because they fail to perceive the Divine Rule ---
 God's will in His life.

And God's will is not only present in his life --- but it is the driving force
 behind everything He thinks and does.

Including His understanding of family.

That non-negotiable basic of all units ----- the family unit --- the one that
 you can't choose --- or negotiate ----- or alter or change.

And yet that's precisely what Jesus does.

Redefining what doesn't appear to be re-definable ---- changing the
 unchangeable.

Here Jesus redefines how our coming into life is understood ---- family unit -- just as in the end He redefines how our going out of life --- death --- is understood.

Taking the most basic --- and non-negotiable things this life has to offer ----- --- our birth and our death --- and changing them forever --- that's what Jesus does.

And He does the very same thing with everything in between birth and death as well --- our whole lives if we allow Him.

God's will ----- is such that it is not limited by birth --- how and by whom we come into this world.

God's will is such that it is not limited by death ----- when we leave this world --- and what happens to us after we leave.

The authorities --- the teachers of the law --- His family ----- think Jesus has lost His mind ---- and they think this precisely because they fail to see the divine rule ---- God's will ---- leading Him.

They still resort to pre Christ ways of thinking and understanding.

Family as defined by birth rights and order ---- as opposed to family as those that do the will of God.

Death defined by the day you breathe your last --- as opposed to death merely being another step along an infinite number of steps.

Jesus never once invited someone to follow Him so that they could intellectually figure out God's will together.

Jesus invited people to follow Him to live out God's will together.

The way of Christ ---- as our gospel passage reminds us today ----- is a way of seeing --- and doing things differently.

Differently in that God's will begins to reign supreme --- and not social convention ---- or respectability ----- or logic ----- or fairness even.

Respecting and living out God's will --- can place great strain ----- and stress --- it can be unfair --- and confusing for some at times.

Jesus' family and the teachers of the law ----- were totally at a loss at to what was happening with Him --- they thought He had lost His mind.

We can't ever try to contain or shrink down the will of God ---- it's far greater than we are.

In my brief time here thus far --- I have seen God's will lived out in concrete ways here --- without the need to try to contain it --- and it's a beautiful thing.

Our community outreach ----- and other acts of selfless love and generosity - --- servant hearts.

Part of what Jesus drives home in our gospel passage today is that sometimes as Christians ----- we do things that are perplexing and go against social conventions and practices and cultural understandings.

"He's out of His mind" ---- they said about Jesus in Mark's gospel today --- and not just strangers --- but those who knew Him best.

Sometimes we will be called as Christians to do things that appear odd and out of synch with the rest of the world.

And that's O.K. ----- and not only is that O.K. --- but in the process we may even re-define social conventions ---- transforming them and bringing them more into line with God's will.

The will of God --- just do it.

H.G Wells once said ----- "for most people the voice of their neighbours is louder than the voice of God."

I think he's onto something here ----- "for most people the voice of their neighbours is louder than the voice of God."

But it shouldn't to be this way.

Jesus clearly demonstrates in our gospel passage today that the voice of God --- must always be louder than any other voice ----- including that of our neighbours ---- including that of our family even ---- if need be.

We live in a culture of information junkies ----- and whether we realize it or not --- this begins to shape and inform who we are ----- and this creates a unique challenge for us as Christians --- because very often we are told to do --- God's will ----- without a full explanation.

We are given great gifts as Christians.

We don't venture blindly.

Discernment ----- faith --- hope ---- trust --- and so many more gifts enable us to do God's will.

But full disclosure --- all information -- complete explanations ----- step by step detailed outlines from beginning to end ----- are not always the way the will of God works.

Instead we have to trust --- discern --- be in tune together ---- and listen to God together ----- in order to faithfully follow His will.

And it's not always easy.

And we quickly find out in Marks' gospel today that it's not always easy --- as people question Jesus' soundness of mind.

The will of God ---- countercultural as it can often be --- is as powerful and beautiful today as it was when Jesus first walked the earth.

The divine rule --- God's will ---- was ever present in Jesus' life.

And He refused to let anything interfere with it.

And so it ought to be with us as well.

Just do it ----- when it comes to God's will.

Discern for sure --- take the time to be certain it is indeed God's will and not just laziness ---- or self aggrandizement ----- or personal want --- desire or need.

But once we are certain it is indeed the will of God --- may His great and beautiful plan ----- trump anything else of our own making.

And may we follow Him ----- forming new allegiances --- new communities ----- and new families.

Families of faith ----- like this one right here.

One that grew just a little today as we welcomed new members --- new believers --- new servants and new disciples.

May we follow where ever it is that God's will leads us.

Courageous --- humble ---- unafraid ----- and with joy in our hearts.

Amen.