Love God
Love Others
Share the Good News

SUMMIT CHURCH

Being Jesus Christ to the World

Theme: What Is God Thinking?

"The Will of God"

Jeff Huber, October 31-November 1, 2026, at Summit Church, Durango

Weekly Memory Verse:

> ***2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*** – Romans 12:2

SLIDE The Will of God

A young woman brings home her fiancé to meet her parents. After dinner, her mother tells her father to find out about the young man. The father invites the fiancé to his study for a drink.

"So, what are your plans?" the father asks the young man.

"I believe God's will is for me to be a bible scholar," he replies.

"A bible scholar? Hmmm," the father says. "Admirable, but what will you do to provide a nice house for you to live in after your married?"

"I will study," the young man replies, "and since it is God's will, God will provide for us."

"And how will you buy her an engagement ring?" asks the father.

"I will concentrate on my studies," the young man replies, "God will provide for us."

"And children?" asks the father. "How will you support children?"

"Don't worry, sir, God will provide," replies the fiancé.

The conversation proceeds like this, and each time the father questions him, the young idealist insists that God will provide if he is just faithful.

Later, the mother asks, "How did it go, honey?"

The father answers, "The bad news is, he has no job and no prospects, but the good news is he thinks I'm God."

There was a young man who was a mechanic but was struggling with his purpose in life. He went out up on a mountain and he began to pray and ask God what God's will was for his life. He looked up into the sky, and he saw the letters in the clouds, "FC."

He believed this was God calling him to follow Christ and so he sold everything he owned when he went out to tell people about Christ, preaching wherever people would let him and visiting with anyone who would listen up. He was terrible at it and eventually he ran out of money and returned home to live with his parents. He went back to work as a mechanic and a few customers wondered why he was back and what happened to his dream of following Christ.

The young man said, "I realized that the letters FC did not stand for Follow Christ but stood for Fix Cars."

Trying to figure out what God's will is for our lives is not easy and today we're going to wrestle with that question. Does God have everything planned out like a script and are we moved around like pawns on a chess board? What does it look like to understand what God wants from us in our lives? We're going to talk about some

concrete ways we might understand the will of God and how we might understand what God hopes for us.

GRAPHIC John Calvin

John Calvin was the great Protestant reformer who lived from 1509 to 1564. He was born in France and spent the last decades of his life in Geneva, Switzerland. He wrote an important book called "The Institutes of Christian Religion," that I read when I was in Graduate School. He wrote it when he was 27 and then revised it multiple times until just before his death. If you're not familiar with the Protestant Reformation, it happened around 1500 years ago as the printing press gave people the ability to read the Bible for the first time in mass quantities and the population became more literate. I mentioned that because every time there is a change in how humans communicate and use language, there is typically a religious revival and I would argue we are in the midst of that as we continue to move into the digital age and will wrestle with things like artificial intelligence over the next few decades. How people experience God and faith change whenever there is a new invention that changes how people think.

John Calvin was born at the beginning of this reformation and groups of people began to break away from the Roman Catholic Church. His book is still influential today, especially as people wrestle with changes in spiritual formation because of the digital revolution. Most of his book I would agree with and I don't think any of us would take issue with, but a few of the ideas are not ways we as united Methodists who come from a Wesleyan tradition would understand God. What Calvin wrote about the will of God and how God works in the world impacts many people today who have never read his book or know who he is.

I was meeting recently with someone who was struggling because they were dealing with a diagnosis that was painful and upsetting and one of their best friends used one of the phrases that we've talked

about during this series of sermons that are not very helpful. We say things like, “This must be the will of God. Everything happens for a reason. It's all part of God's plan. God must be planning something special for you. Your loved 1 is in a better place. God must have needed another Angel.”

SLIDE God’s Sovereignty

One of the most important ideas that John Calvin wrote about was God's sovereignty. Sovereignty ss a fancy word for talking about God's power, authority and God's rule. It focused on how God works in the world. God is sovereign because God answers to no one and God can do what God wants to do because God is God and we are not. God has the ability to do anything God chooses. All of us believe in the sovereignty of God if we follow Jesus because we believe that God is the highest authority. When I worked through the 12 steps an Alcoholics Anonymous as I was dealing with being an adult child of an alcoholic, we talked about God as our higher power and the highest authority and we recognized that we were powerless on our own to deal with the pain and the woundedness of growing up in an alcoholic home. We believe that God is the ruler of all things, the king of kings, and the Lord of Lords.

Calvin puts the idea of God's sovereignty on steroids when he writes about God's power. He believed that to give the greatest glory to God meant that God is in control of everything. We are like pawns on a chess board and everything that happens is because God wills it to happen. Every breath we take and everything in the cosmos happens because of what God wills at any given moment. He writes these words in book one of the institutes of religion.

GRAPHIC John Calvin Quote 1

> ***If one falls among robbers, or ravenous beasts; If a sudden gust of wind at sea causes shipwreck; If one is struck down by the fall of a house or a tree;… [it should be known that] all events***

whatsoever are governed by the secret counsel of God.

This is how John Calvin viewed God's sovereignty. He also said these words when it comes to inanimate objects.

SLIDE ***With regard to inanimate objects again we must hold that though each is possessed of its peculiar properties, yet all of them exert their force only insofar as directed by the immediate hand of God… nothing happens without his counsel.*** –John Calvin

That kind of makes sense that God is in control of everything, especially when we're small. I told you that when I fell out of my bed after my first earthquake, I figured God was shaking the world. That made the most sense to me as a six-year-old. But as we get older, we ask different questions. If God is directing everything that happens, then we are not. The weather patterns are not dictated by the forces on our planet, but God is directing every storm. It was easier to say that before modern meteorology which helps us predict when it is going to rain even though it's not perfect. We can predict that flooding was coming even though we weren't really prepared for the severity of it these past few weeks. But we also don't believe that our weather people are not prophets of God. They understand how nature works and weather patterns to help them predict as best they can what they think is going to happen.

No one in the 1500s had the sort of scientific information that we have today, so it was easy for people to think that God was directing everything when it comes to things like hurricanes and earthquakes. The problem is when I stand in front of buildings in Mexico City after the great earthquakes in early 1980 and I see a school and a hospital with buildings leveled and bodies inside, I can't believe that God intended that and wanted that to happen. Is God directing every single thing on this earth and in the cosmos? Is God injecting cancer cells into our bodies and giving us viruses that killed millions? Is God willing

everything through a secret council?

Extreme Calvinism would say that the answer to all these questions is, “yes. God has willed each of those catastrophes and illnesses. God controls the people with guns who go into our schools and shoot our children. God controls the car that runs head on into a family of four and kills them instantly. God directs the abuser to mistreat a child or a vulnerable person. God makes people murder and rape and pillage and destroy in such a way that people turn away from God. 6,000,000 Jews and millions of others were killed in the Holocaust and World War 2 because God directed the evil in leader’s hearts.”

When we start attributing these things to God by saying that God directs every single thing that happens, we are accusing God of things that we would arrest people for in today's world. We have tried people for war crimes when they do these atrocities. When we think of God as sovereign in these ways then we in put God on trial for these horrible actions.

One of the great challenges in this line of thinking is that the Bible tells us that God is just and kind and loving. When Jesus arrived to be God in the flesh, he doesn't do any of these things. Jesus is compassionate and he yields and he allows himself to be the victim of abuse. He doesn't commit those things or do those things to others. 1 John tells us that God is love and throughout the scriptures we find one of the defining characteristics of God is sacrificial love let his willing to lay down one's life for others. If God is loving and just and kind, then how could God want these things to happen, let alone direct them.

The other challenge is that now humans are not responsible for their own actions. Hitler's not responsible for the Holocaust because God made him do it. School shooters are not responsible because God made them do that horrible thing. God put it in the rapist’s mind, so they can't be held accountable. As I read Calvin, one of the greatest oxymorons is that even though God put it in our hearts to sin, we are

still responsible for it. If God made me do it, and I had no choice, then why am I held accountable and have to be responsible for that action? How can I be guilty for something I didn't have any choice in doing? The logic of all of this when it comes to the sovereignty of God is challenging when we think of the extreme form of Calvinism.

What I have learned is that there are many people for whom this idea is comforting. It's sometimes easier to put it all on God and say that everything happens for a reason and that it must be the will of God. If you find yourself doing that, I'm not going to tell you that you shouldn't do that, but you will need to wrestle with some questions about where we find comfort and hope because many people will simply turn away from God if they believe this is the way God works. While it may work for some people, this idea of understanding the sovereignty of God doesn't work for many.

What I have also discovered is that it might feel good for us to have this way of understanding how God works in the world until it is us who is suffering. I was meeting recently with someone who was walking through a cancer diagnosis, and they had received some of these platitudes from others about this being God's will and everything happening for a reason. I told them that unless they are the person going through the walk with cancer, they don't get a vote. I said this when people said things to me that were painful after the death of our son. If you haven't lost a child, you don't get to tell me how to feel about it or how to make sense of where God is at the moment.

I remind you of something I have shared often which is that while we don't always get to control what happens to us, we do get to control how to respond and how we want to understand God at work in those moments. We must wrestle with those questions for ourselves because our faith must belong to us and not be something forced on us by someone else. Jesus never judged or forced anyone into the Kingdom of God but invited them into our relationship with him that is meant to sustain us even when we don't understand why things are happening

the way they are in our lives. The unintended effect of this extreme Calvinism causes people to turn away from God rather than turning towards God and finding hope and strength.

Calvin also laid out an idea of things being predetermined which is where we get the idea of predestination. He suggested that God had written a script for every human being and everything was predestined and preordained by God. God had a script of everything before creation even began. Before you are born, God has decided everything that will happen in your life and everything is God's will and we can't do anything about it. This also applied to the idea of heaven and hell so whether we choose to follow Christ or not, we have nothing to do with that but instead it is God who makes that determination ahead of time. This idea of predestination comes from this extreme form of Calvinism which claims that God has predestined every soul.

This might sound like a great idea if we are one of the ones going to heaven, but double predestination is the idea that those who are going to hell can do nothing about it. The people who are being saved find God's grace irresistible and so they can't say no. The people who are going to hell can't accept God's grace even if they wanted to. God has predetermined to populate heaven and hell with certain people. There are no options and no way of escaping because it has all been predetermined. Does that sound fair, just, right, or loving? That doesn't even sound like the God that we read about in the scriptures, but Calvin found many scriptures that supported his ideas which you can read about if you want to check out the big book that are referenced.

GRAPHIC Jacob Armenius

As people began to wrestle with this idea of Calvinism, a new theologian emerged who challenged the idea. Jacob Arminius was born in 1559 and took issue with Calvin's teachings. He was known as a theologian of grace and put together five points that disputed the idea of sovereignty as was expressed by John Calvin. Arminius looked at the

bigger picture of scripture and believed it didn't support the idea of Calvinism. The followers of Calvin became known as Calvinists and the followers of Arminius began to be known as Armenians. John Wesley, who is the founder of Methodism, was Armenian and the focus of our theology is on grace, which is the unmerited and undeserved love of God. One of the places Armenians would turn to is John 3:16. I like to read verses 16 and 17 together because they are 1 phrasing in the original Greek.

BIBLE

> 16 **"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.** 17 **God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.**

As I read the scripture, I see a God who gives us choice and free will to believe in him and not perish but have eternal life. It doesn't suggest at all that people have been predestined or predetermined to go one way or another. And if God sent his son not to judge the world but to save it then there is this idea of extreme grace that is offered to anyone who was willing to turn to Christ and receive that gift of grace. We can't do anything to earn it or deserve it, but it is a free gift that is offered to the world and not just to a select few. The apostle Paul writes in his letter 1 Timothy 2 these words.

BIBLE

> **3 This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. 5 For,**
>
> **There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. 6 He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone.**
>
> **This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time.**

There is a clear message in this letter that God wants everyone to

be saved and that Christ came for everyone and not just a select few. I suppose God could be hyper controlling and make everything happen just the way God wanted, but I don't think that's the way God acts because of the way we read about him and everything from the creation story until the final resurrection of Christ when Jesus returns to give the Great Commission to his first disciples that is meant to be carried on by us.

God gives us the great commandments in scripture and the Great Commission and then gives us freedom and choice an agency. God gives us the ability to create life or to destroy it. Why would God tell us the right things to do in scripture and the things he wants us to stay away from if we cannot avoid it either way? If everything is predetermined, then why tell us not to murder or commit adultery or lie or judge?

I was thinking about this when it comes to things like our workplace and our businesses and even our families. There are two kinds of extremes when it comes to living and leading in different places in our lives. One extreme is to be a micromanager. We have power and authority and we love to use it. A micromanager wants to manage everything and want everyone to do exactly what we want them to do. I know none of you are like that. We want to make every final decision. We can be quick to be critical when we play this role and want to control the people in our family and the people in our workplace. Politicians can seek to be micromanagers who wield their power over others like a bludgeon. People are expendable from this perspective and they become objects. We don't see the humanity when we rule like this because it's all about the leader.

We may have worked for someone like this or grew up in a family like this that never adjusted as we became an adolescent or an adult. While it's OK to micromanage our children at times, we all know that we can't control them forever. Do any of us enjoy being micromanaged? Do any of us really enjoy having a control freak try to

make every decision for us? Are we very productive if we live in a world like this where every decision is made for us? Most of us don't like this at all and we don't respond well. We end up living our lives in fear of what the person in charge is going to do next. We can give up trying to be creative or come up with new ideas to solve problems. We stopped learning and growing. We typically end up stuck or we end up rebelling and acting out.

Think about another kind of boss or parent or politician who collaborates with the people around them. Yes, the buck does stop with them and they are responsible and accountable, but they also understand that one of their roles is to be a public servant and to help the people in their orbit become better and even be the persons that take over for them one day. We all know great leaders who constantly give praise to others but take responsibility for mistakes on themselves. They are constantly building others up. They don't hold on to power but they give it away so that others could make great decisions and things can grow exponentially in a business or in a family. They want people to enjoy coming to work and to enjoy coming home because the people in their care have agency and they're not always being told what to do.

Employees who work in places like that tend to stay for longer because they love their bosses and have respect for them. Children who grew up in homes like this tend to stay connected to those parents and give them the respect that they were given as children. People tend to stay in marriages where each person treats each other this way. This is the way we saw Jesus treat others and his disciples and I believe it's the way God looks at each one of us.

It's important to know that modern Calvinism is not as extreme as this but if we're not careful, we end up with phrases like the ones we have talked about over the past few weeks. “Everything happens for a reason. This must be the will of God. God won't give you more than you can handle. It's all part of God's plan.” To be fair, we also must be careful not to buy into hyper Arminianism which can end up saying that

everything and anything is OK because God's grace is so big that we don't need to control ourselves or be responsible for our behavior. We can also end up thinking that God is not doing anything at all which is not helpful because then we have no need for God.

SLIDE What is God' plan for my life?

So how do we determine God's plan for our life? What does God want for us and how does God work in our lives? I have had people ask me this question often and I have struggled with it myself as I have made major decisions at different points in my life. What I have come to experience and what I often tell people is that the decisions we make are not near as important as who we take with us as we are making those decisions and as we are making choices. I was thinking about my decision to go to college after high school and I applied to several and I had no idea if choosing the University of Colorado was going to be the right decision when I made it. What I do remember is taking this book with me, the Bible my mom gave me when I was in high school. I remember finding a college ministry where I learned to read the Bible for really the first time. I took a course on the Bible as literature and I read through the entire Bible for the first time and it was really just because I needed an elective in humanities.

GRAPHIC Jeff's first Bible

While I don't think that God directed each one of those decisions, I do believe that there were nudges along the way and I am grateful I paid attention to them. I also know I didn't listen to God when I kept taking the same calculus class after failing it twice. I thought God wanted me to be an engineer and clearly I was reading the clouds all wrong. I can tell you that I've never seen a calculus equation when I look at the clouds but I have often seen the face of God. That should have been my first clue.

I believe that God wants to lead us every day and that happens best when we are listening to God through the scriptures and through

prayer and through other people who reflect God's love to us. I believe God can step in and tell us we are needed in certain places. I believe that God has hopes and dreams for us just like we have for our children and sometimes for our employees.

I have shared with you the story of my experience when I was in high school and I ended up preaching on a youth Sunday because my best friend got scared to do it. Afterwards, Verma Berry who was around 80 at the time grab my hands and look to be straight in the eye and told me she thought I should be a pastor. I thought that was the dumbest thing I had ever heard but I can tell you that today on All Saints weekend I am remembering her as a St. in my life who gave me this strange encouragement that I didn't understand at the time. My great grandmother who was Grace Berry, no relation to Verma, also told me I should think about being a pastor which I thought was even Dumber because she knew what an idiot, I was! She had been my nanny after all when I was 6 and she was 86. I will also be remembering her as one of my Saints this weekend.

GRAPHIC Jeff with Gil Vieira

Then there was Gil Vieira who was my pastor growing up and who wrote several hymns in our hymnal that we use in our classic service. Whenever I was home from college he would take me to this coffee shop across the street from the church and tell me how much he believed in me and that I should be a pastor. This is me when he turned 99 last year and this past year he died and so I will be remembering him as one of my Saints. I also remember that he told me he hoped I would never be one of those pastors who preached in loafers and a sports coat. He told me I should always wear my robe. Sorry Gil, that one didn't stick. To be fair, his nurse told us on this visit that I wasn't to take him to drink any alcohol or heavy starch foods, but he made me take him to an Italian restaurant where we had pasta and wine. He said he was 99 and if you wanted to have pasta and wine he was going to have it. Well Gil, I'm 63, if I want to wear my shirt untucked to reach more

people with the gospel, I'm going to!

I must be honest and tell you that I wasn't very good at being a pastor when I first started, not that I have it perfected now. But I'm grateful for the people God put in my path who helped me get better and grow and pour my life into something that I now love. I have had several times in life in a ministry where I was discouraged and wanted to give up and I felt like people came alongside of me and encouraged me in a way that I realized that it was not God telling me to give up but the world and sometimes Satan.

I was visiting with someone recently who is new to our church and who moved to Durango last year in the midst of some difficult circumstances. They struggled with whether this was what they should be doing with their life and then they met a couple of you that invited them to church and to a small group. They came up with several excuses to begin with and then you kept asking and then they came when they were in the middle of a personal crisis. They were scared at first but came forward and one of our care ministers prayed with them and for the first time in their life they felt something like the spirit of God pouring out over them. They believed that God had been nudging them towards this moment and towards this place to help them heal from some wounds because someone had said to them in the midst of a crisis that it must be part of God's plan and everything happens for a reason. I have heard that story more than once in my 30 plus years of being a pastor and it's one of the reasons, I'm so proud of you as a congregation. You make a difference.

What I have learned is that God can use any decision that we make if we are willing to open ourselves up to the great commandments and the Great Commission which tell us to love God, love others as we love ourselves, and share the good news. Whether we go to college or trade school or work after high school, God can use us in any of those places. I do believe that some of you got his calling to be a pastor and to serve the church, but I also know that God needs

great people in every profession. I do believe that God is calling some of you in retirement to trade a vacation for a chance to serve others or grow in your faith. People change careers on average five times in their lives and I have no doubt that God can use us in any of those careers or in any of the times in between. I remember a man coming to me who was unemployed for a year and said it was the best year of his life as he served in ways he'd never had been able to while he was working full time. While he didn't enjoy the stress of having less income, he found ways to study the Bible and to pray and to serve that he never would have before if he had just kept his notes to the grindstone without a break in between careers.

I believe our God is big enough to have a will for our lives in any career that we choose and, in any circumstance, we might find ourselves. I do believe sometimes God directs our path and our footsteps because God wants us in a certain place. This is why we listen and we pay attention and we pray. While sometimes God's will is very specific, I think God's will is more about what we find in the scriptures that God teaches about what it means to follow him.

I found myself thinking about all the years I was a youth pastor and how I feel about your kids, and how I felt about mine when they were younger. What I wanted most for them was not so much about specific things like where to go to college but more about choosing to serve others, have a good heart, have compassion, love people, learn how to forgive and be forgiven, do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with God. My will for them is not about what job to take. My will for your kids and for mine is to find people who will love them and if they choose to get married to have people who will treat them like they are a child of God and not an object to be used. I don't get specific about who that is, only about what kind of relationship they will have.

While I know it's easy to want to give advice, and I have a habit of doing so far too often myself, I have learned that unsolicited advice is rarely followed and almost never wanted. It's always good to ask if that

person that you care about wants you to listen or to problem solve because otherwise we are telling them we don't believe in them. We don't mean to but that's what we do and I think that God wants us to know that God believes in us. After all, God did make us to love us and not to move us around like pawns on a chess board. I think God delights when we pursue God's will by loving God, loving others as we love ourselves, and sharing the good news regardless of what choices we make specifically in terms of a job or a career or some other decision. The bigger question for us is if we are willing to take God into those decisions with us and allow God to form us and shape us through each moment of our lives.

GRAPHIC Journal

I believe we are meant to wake up every day and, like this journal, ask for God to write in the pages with us and to guide us and to shape us and to form us. We ask God to help us by nudging us and opening our eyes to what we need to see. Each day is another page in a beautiful journal that captures a life that is lived for God. We believe that these scriptures were written by humans, but they were guided by the Holy Spirit and in many ways, I think this is what our lives are meant to look like. We are meant to be living reflections of this book which is a love letter from God and not a weapon to be used against others.

The apostle Paul writes in his letters about this idea in several places. Colossians 1 contains these words for us which I think are really helpful today.

BIBLE

> [9] **So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.** [10] **Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.**

It's helpful to notice that in this text the order is reversed when it comes to this question about doing the will of God. Paul doesn't talk about specific things and then ask if they are the will of God, but instead we asked for God's will, spiritual wisdom and understanding, SO THAT We will live in a way that honor and pleases God but also helps us to grow and learn as we know God better and better. God's will is about staying centered and focused in God and then living out where we can serve God and love God and others. He talks about this in Romans 12 where we find our memory verse for the week.

BIBLE

> [1] **And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.**

Verse 2 is our memory verse for the week so let's say it together.

BIBLE

> [2] **Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.**

When we open our mind and our heart and we are trying to follow God then we can learn God's will which is good and pleasing and perfect. We don't copy the behaviors of this world by simply taking personality tests and job profiles, or thinking it's about how much money we make or how much prestige we will get. We are to invite God to help thus become a new person by changing the way we think and when we do that we feel different and God's will becomes something that we are and not something that we do. Let me say that again.

SLIDE God's will is something that we ARE and not something

that we DO.

God cares more about our character than about our competency. It doesn't matter how good we are what we do or how much money we make or any of those things if we have no character and we are not connected to the one who made us to love us. We are meant to find our peace and our hope and our joy in God. We are not meant to be defined by who the world says we are, or how our children turn out, or how much influence we have. As we talked about earlier, you and I know plenty of people who are wildly successful and they're jerks that in the end no one wants to be around.

I will never forget being asked to go to the hospital on a phone call by someone who said their dad was in Hospice but they and no one in their family wanted to see him because he had been so cruel and so focused on money his whole life. What are the most difficult times of prayer I ever had was watching this man wither away with no family and filled with regrets. It didn't matter that he had been successful by what the world said because in this moment it was clear that he had not been in the center of God's will and he was in great pain. I wish I could tell you there was a good ending to that story but there just isn't.

You might remember last week that I shared with you words from a chaplain who had sat with thousands of people before they died and asked for what they wanted to pray for. The number one request was for peace and #2 was relationships with family and friends. This matches perfectly what Jesus said which was to love God which is where we find peace, and to love others as we love ourselves, because that also brings us a sense of rest and peace and joy and hope.

God's will is that we do unto others as we have them do unto us. God's will is that we love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and we love our neighbor as we love ourselves. If we're trying to choose between two paths and one of them leads us to love God and love others and share God's good news of hope and the other does not

then the choice is pretty easy. If both allow for that, then make the best choice and know that God goes with you. Much of the time we know God's will, but we don't really want to do it because the worldly stuff is very appealing.

We have elections coming up Tuesday and I know that many of you are relieved you will stop getting all those telephone polls and mailers. I'm pretty sure it's not God's will that we spend billions of dollars on those things but that's another question for another day. I do think the words of John Wesley, the founder of methodism, are helpful in this regard. He wrote this to his pastors. Notice how close it is to the vote on independence happening here.

GRAPHIC John Wesley on Voting

"On October 6, 1774, I met those of our society who had votes in the ensuing election, and advised them

1. ***To vote, without fee or reward, for the person they judge most worthy;***
2. ***To speak no evil of the person they voted against, and;***
3. ***To take care their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side."***

I think that captures God's will for voting pretty well and reminds us that nobody we vote for his Lord and savior. Jesus is Lord and Savior, and it would be good for us to remember that in any decision that we make or any time we are trying to figure out God's will. Oftentimes God will comes down to a simple question.

SLIDE What is the most loving thing to do?

I want to be clear that I'm not talking about tough love. When we read the 10 commandments it becomes pretty clear what God's will is and what God's will is not. Don't murder. Don't covet things that aren't yours, including people. Don't lie about others and don't slander. Put God first and not idols of which we have many in today's world. I don't

think God gives us handwriting on the wall or clouds in the sky or loud booming voice most of the time. God has already told us what we should do which is to pursue holiness, kindness, justice, mercy, and love.

GRAPHIC In Thy Will is our Peace

"In his will is our peace," is one of the most famous lines from Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*, specifically from Paradiso, Canto III. The line is spoken by Piccarda Donati, a noblewoman who was forced from a convent against her will to enter a political marriage. Dante encounters her in the lowest, outermost sphere of Heaven (the Heaven of the Moon), where souls who had their vows broken or unfulfilled through no absolute fault of their own reside.

Dante asks Piccarda if she and the other souls desire a higher place or more glory in Heaven. She explains that they feel no envy or desire for anything else, because their personal wills are completely in harmony with God's will. True peace comes from resting in and accepting the divine order rather than striving for self-centered ambition.

There is this idea that God can redeem any mess in which we find ourselves in life. The truth is that we often know the signs, and we even see the signs but we don't stop because we want to do things our way. Sometimes we have too much noise going on in our lives and we miss what's happening right in front of us. Let's get practical and look at some ways that we find in scripture where people discern God's will. The first step is very simple.

SLIDE Yield ourselves to God.

We pray and we use the prayer that Jesus taught us. "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." The early followers of Jesus were taught to pray this three times a day and it's meant to change and reorient our lives towards God's will. We put ourselves in God's hands, or as the psalmist says, we offer ourselves to

be clay in the Potter's hands. John Wesley wrote this covenant prayer that we have taught you here before and we have little book cards with this prayer on them that you can carry with you.

SLIDE

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.

SLIDE

Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure and disposal.

SLIDE

And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

When we are willing to pray prayers like these, we begin to find ourselves looking at the world differently and living life differently. We find ourselves right where we need to be at just the right time.

SLIDE Study Jesus, the Word made flesh.

A second thing we can do is study the words of Jesus who is the word made flesh. We give you the meditation moment so that you might spend time in God's word and I have often told you that if you find yourself anxious or fearful or unsure which way to turn it may be because you're on your phone too much and you need to be in your Bible more. These phones are designed to make us uncertain and to

turn to the world for our purpose whereas loving God, loving others as we love ourselves, and sharing the good news, get lost in the shuffle. We are meant to receive the teachings of Jesus and internalize them so we build our lives upon his words that bring us life, and life to the full. We try to be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world because that is God's will for our lives and it's why we put it above the door as you leave every week.

SLIDE Listen for nudges from the Holy Spirit

A third thing we can do is listen to the nudges from the Holy Spirit. I have often shared with you this image of when I used to surf as a kid in Santa Cruz in the Pacific Ocean. You learn early that you can't make a wave, but you can pay attention to it so you can ride it when it comes. I have discovered that the Holy Spirit works in the same way. When I'm trying to force a decision, it rarely works out but sometimes it's about waiting patiently on the Lord and listening for a nudge. Sometimes that nudge comes from scripture and sometimes from a friend and sometimes from an enemy!

About a month ago I was planning to play a round of golf in the morning on my day off and several things happened and I ended up having to work in the morning and I was frustrated. I did finish things up in the morning, but I missed my tee time with a group and so I decided I would just go out on my own. I was paired up with a young man, and I try to avoid what I do but eventually he asked and and then he said he had a question. He was in town because his stepfather had killed himself and he was there to take care of his mother and the Funeral arrangements. We talked about suicide, which will be our topic next week, and at the end of our time asked if we could pray together and we did that sitting right there on the golf course on the 18th hole. He looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, “Do you ever feel like something was supposed to happen? I feel like I was supposed to run into you today.”

I told him I feel like that often and I believe that's the Holy Spirit at work when we put ourselves into the center of God's will. I think it's God's will that you are here to care for your mother and we ran into each other and I'm grateful. I think there are moments like that waiting for us around every corner and we simply have to decide if we're going to be open to those nudges. I especially appreciate the words of Frederick Buechner who's one of my favorite authors and where I heard the phrase, "The worst thing is never the last thing the comma" that I say to you every Easter. He put it this way when it comes to God's will.

GRAPHIC Frederick Buechner Quote

The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

We pay attention to what we find joy in the world's and then we see where that can deepest needs. How do the things that bring me joy minister to people? We find deep joy in the middle of God's will when we meet the deep hungers of the world around us.

GRAPHIC Norton Hindley

I found myself thinking this week of Norton Hindley. Norton and his wife Debbie moved to Durango when they retired and he felt a calling from God to do something on the Navajo Nation that began with lighting for literacy and replacing kerosene lanterns that were causing cancer with solar lights that were built by college students and some of our youth. He even approached state and federal legislators about being part of the program and in the midst of that he had a heart attack while doing his swimming workout one day and he was gone. How I know that his vision was more than his alone and was God's will is that some of you picked up the baton and then had a crazy idea during the pandemic that we should expand to home repair and food and firewood. I think of the group of you that, during the pandemic, decided we need to do something on the Navajo Nation. It's become one of our largest ministries, and it happened because one person and

then many others began to follow a nudge from the Holy Spirit and it took off like a wave.

GRAPHICS Native Hope flood relief 1 to 4

We're collecting food and blankets on November 14 because many of you have felt that God's will is for us to do something. This week we begin Operation Christmas Child, or you can make a shoe box for a child that needs encouragement during the Christmas season. Sometimes, God's will is as simple as putting together a shoe box that changes how we think about Christmas as it helps us remember that Christmas is not our birthday, but it's Jesus' birthday.

VIDEO OCC

SLIDE Communion

October 31-November 1 Order

1. Countdown
2. Ryan welcomes people, inviting them to stand in body or spirit.
3. Song – "God So Loved"
4. Jeff welcomes and shares:
    A. QR Code
    B. Connect Card
    C. Communion and ALL SAINTS invitation
    D. Invites people to greet each other
5. Sermon Video Intro
6. Sermon
7. Today I Remember—All Saints Day
8. Communion
9. Song – "Goodness of God"
10. Song – "Do it Again"
11. Prayer and Lord's Prayer
12. Med Moments
13. Offering
14. Care Ministers
15. The Bridge
16. Closing Prayer