

**Sermon Notes**  
**For**  
**Sunday, October 4, 2018**

**Broken and Blessed**  
**(Discerning God's Will)**

Job 1:1, 2:1–10 ... Does God really play with our lives?  
Psalm 26 ... the challenge to remain faithful to who we really are.  
Hebrews 1:1–4, 2:5–12 ... suggests that God perfects us through our imperfections.  
Mark 10.2-16 ... God's will and the marriage relationship

This week's readings can serve as examples and invitations concerning our response to God's call upon our life.

### **Mark 10.2-16**

**Verses 2-12** ... God's will and the marriage relationship

Synod this year is debating the sequel to last year's decision by our nation to permit same sex marriage. Bishop Jeremy is preaching this morning in the cathedral and his sermon is based upon this text. I await with interest reports on both the debate and the text of Bishop Jeremy's sermon.

In the context in which these words were first shared, allow me to state the obvious ... The first part of the text has often been used as a strong affirmation of heterosexuality, and as a blunt statement that divorce is wrong and not to be tolerated.

For those who are gay or lesbian, and for those who for any number of reasons are divorced (and possibly remarried) this passage can cause untold pain; beyond that, it is doubtful that that would be the point of the passage.

The reason given for the dialogue here has nothing to do with divorce. The question is asked simply to test Jesus, and probably (being asked by the Pharisees) is to coax Jesus into making a statement that would offend either them or their opponents, the Sadducees

Yet legal questions abound, and people have often inserted modern understandings and additional text in and amongst the verses.

Jesus points out that Moses permitted divorce because of people's "hardness of heart"

In other words, we are not the ideals that God had intended and hoped for, and there are times that relationships simply fail.

While Jesus states that "whatever God has joined together no one should separate" begs the further question, "If a relationship breaks down, was it in fact joined by God in the first place?"

**Verses 13-16** ... The importance of approaching faith – and life – with the joy, openness, and understanding

the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **2 Peter 3:9**

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

### **1 John 1:9**

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

### **1 Timothy 2:4**

who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

### **Micah 6:8**

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

### **Proverbs 16:4**

The LORD works out everything to its proper end— even the wicked for a day of disaster.

### **Hebrews 10:36**

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

### **Final comment**

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

Therefore, we may well consider that if we miss God's will and make bad decisions, God retains the right to finish our story His way.

**Proverbs 16:9** – "In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps"

... further supports such a premise.

### **Jeremiah 29:11**

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

### **1 Timothy 2:3-4**

This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:18**

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

### **1 Thessalonians 4:3**

It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality

### **Hebrews 13:20-21**

20 Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Luke 9:23**

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

### **Psalms 119:105**

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

### **James 1:5**

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

### **Proverbs 3:5-6**

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

### **1 Peter 2:15**

For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.

### **Matthew 6:10**

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

### **Ephesians 5:15-20**

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to

## **Broken and Blessed ... Discerning God’s Will**

### **Seven steps will help you discern God’s will in difficult situations**

#### **1. Recall what brought you here.**

When facing a decision that doesn’t look the way you expect, take time to reflect on whether this fits your passion and prayers.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that we should walk in them,” Ephesians 2:10

Before you were even born, God created you with a passion and a purpose, and he will prepare you.

#### **2. Set aside time to pray and seek God’s will rather than your own.**

To discern God’s will, designate a specific period of time to pray.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men liberally without criticism, and it will be given to him,” James 1:5.

#### **3. Search for confirmation in God’s Word.**

Use God’s word as a guide when seeking God’s purpose. Do your plans line up with his? Then proceed to the next step.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path,” Psalm 119:105.

#### **4. Pursue wise council.**

While we don’t rely on man’s wisdom alone, God often uses people to increase our wisdom. These might be prayer warriors, ministry leaders, or others with experience in the area about which you are seeking to make a decision.

“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety,” Proverbs 11:14.

#### **5. Seek unity.**

While we may feel the way will not be easy, we know that God is guiding us together.

“I ask you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all speak in agreement and that there be no divisions among you. But be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement,” I Corinthians 1:10

#### **6. Rely on the Holy Spirit to reveal what your natural understanding cannot.**

We need to walk through all the other steps of discernment, but we can do so with greater confidence.

God faithfully directs his children. He does not leave us wandering about in doubt and confusion. “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth, ... He will tell you things that are to come.” John 16:13

#### **7. Walk in faith.**

All the other steps are pointless if we don’t follow up with action.

When God’s plans differ from what you expect, don’t despair. As you begin walking in faith, the path will become clearer—as will your blessings and the ability to see with greater clarity His hand and guidance through our difficult situations.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5,6

**Eight questions you can ask so that discerning God's will becomes less like reaching around in the dark and more like discovering what you've known all along:**

1) How are my attachments, insecurities and addictions influencing my decision? Things like money, the need for affirmation, or a desire for stimulation are powerful motivating factors when it comes to decision-making. Sometimes we can falsely believe we are making a decision that honours God, when in fact, it only feeds these attachments. Discover your attachments and learn to let them go.

**2) Which path benefits my health and character in a positive way?**

Oddly enough, one of the biggest factors in discerning God's will is figuring out what benefits you the most. God wants you to be the best version of yourself possible, so try to identify what affects your life, your job and your character in a positive way and make your decision with that in mind.

**3) How do these choices make sense of my understanding of Scripture?**

The Bible should be our filter for decision-making. If you find that a path doesn't connect with the truths we learn from Scripture, it is most likely outside of God's will.

**4) How do these choices impact my relationship with others?**

If one path impacts your relationships in a negative way, it is clearly not a path worth following. God desires for us to have meaningful friendships that add value to our life. Anything outside of that desire is a path in the wrong direction.

**5) Which path would help others draw nearer to God?**

We are all given the mission to push others closer to God. With that in mind, try to assess which decision will put you in a better position to spread God's love.

**6) Who is someone who knows me that can help me make the best decision?**

Whether it's a close friend, relative, co-worker or spouse, we each have someone we feel comfortable confiding in and trusting for advice. Go to that person whenever you're struggling with finding God's purpose. Oftentimes, they can give you a new perspective and help you see things in a fresh light.

**7) How will these decisions make a difference (or pave the way to making a difference) in the world?**

Some decisions equip us to make an impact on the world more than others. If you see that one decision will keep you stuck and unable to make a change for God's Kingdom, then it's likely that this is not the best decision for you. Instead, seek the path that better helps you fill God's purposes for the world.

**8) Do these decisions have an eternal impact?**

It's possible to choose a path that only allows you to advance in worldly cares—such as money or fame. Taking that big promotion because it benefits you financially is great, but more money or notoriety alone shouldn't be the foundation of any decision-making. The path that leads to a meaningful life is the one that prepares for eternity. Choose the decision with implications that don't end with this world, but rather carry on to the next. I don't believe it's possible to make a decision that causes God to love you any less,

so don't worry about that. These questions are simply here to help you clearly see how God is present in whatever path you choose. You'll know you're safe in His purposes when you see God shine brightly in your decision.

**Here are 5 helpful questions I often ask myself to help discern God's will:**

**Does what I'm doing (or planning to do) conflict with Scripture?**

Always start here, because God's Word will never contradict what He's asking you to do. God is always true to Himself and His Word is always true and relevant. We may differ in interpretation of a passage, but if it's clearly spelled out in Scripture, then we clearly know His will.

**Does what I am doing conflict with the counsel of others?**

God uses others to confirm His will. I am thankful for the people in my life, including my wife and children, who have helped shaped the path of my life. Often they see things I can't see or believe in me when I can't believe in myself. God sends the body of Christ to encourage, challenge and strengthen the body. (Don't be confused, however, with times God calls us to go against the grain of life and walk by faith when everyone is saying we are crazy. See Noah for an example of one of those times.)

**Does what I am doing conflict with the spirit within me?**

God sent the Holy Spirit as a helper. He guides us with an inner peace or a holy unrest. If Christ is in you, He will not leave you to make a decision completely alone. Often God provides a peace or a lack thereof when He is trying to confirm His will.

**Does what I am doing conflict with my life experience?**

God uses our experiences in life to teach and mould us to His will. Often it isn't as unusual of a path when we look back over our life experiences. Again, don't be confused, because He usually stretches us out of our comfort zone also, but consider the life of Joseph. God continually used his past experiences to shape his future.

**Does what I am doing conflict with my passion for life?**

God tends to work with the things which fuel our fire. He loves when we are energized for the tasks He calls us to. When I look at Bible characters like Abraham, David, Peter or Paul it appears their calling matched their wiring. Paul was zealous for whatever he did. God used his passion for good. What's your greatest passion? God may work within it to confirm His will.

Try these questions together and see how they line up to help discern God's will as it relates with the options before you.

God's will for our lives has reason and purpose. It is through scripture, where we can find meaning and principles discerning God's will.

**These Bible verses can help us gain a better understanding.**