

Is God's Will in Control?

Sermon Preached At Foundry United Methodist Church

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Revelation 22:1-7

John 9:1-7

Let us pray. Oh God we are here. We are here for you. Oh Jesus we are here. Oh spirit we are here. We are here for you. Amen.

Is God in control of our world. This past summer Jane and I visited the prison camp at ??? near Munich Germany. We saw the gas chambers disguised as shower rooms and stood in front of piles of ashes. Was God in control at ????. At ????. At ????

I have been rereading parts of Philip ??? book. We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our family stories from Rwanda. It's his report of three months - nineteen ninety four when eight hundred thousand ????? . Fifteen percent of the population of the nation of Rwanda were massacred by ??? ? who make up eight-five percent of the population of that country.

In one hundred days eight hundred ?? died mostly killed with machetes. For those three months in nineteen ninety four was God in control in Rwanda? And here is something that's been on my mind most of this year. Last April fifteenth there were three boys; smart curious boys just like the children here at Foundry and they were playing in a vacant lot in a neighborhood in southwest Bagdad.

And they saw something yellow that looked like a soda can or maybe a toy; and the smartest and the most curious of the three boys bent down to pick up what looked to them like a soda can or a toy but it wasn't a soda can or a toy it was an unexploded cluster bomb. Which triggered when he picked it up.

So that last April fifteenth while we here in America were paying out income taxes three bright curious boys playing in a vacant lot in southwest Bagdad were shredded to death by three hundred pieces of steel. Was God in control April fifteenth in that vacant lot in southwest Bagdad?

Is God paying attention? Will God permit anything at all to Happen? Apparently so. Apparently God will permit all sorts of evil to happen in our world. But it also seems to me to be impossible not to believe in a God. It also seems to me impossible not to believe that there's some sort of direction, purpose, and meaning that is driving evolution from the moment of the big bang until today.

It's impossible for me to believe that there's not some intelligence that somehow, somewhere is responsible for the evolution that led to that stain glass window or the dome of the capitol as you can see it walking down Pennsylvania ave. late at night. There's got to be some intelligence somewhere, somehow responsible for all of this . And the really frightening question for me to ask is whether it is possible that there is a God who is responsible for life. But that; that God somehow just doesn't care.

As though God were a scientist doing experiments with fruit flies. During these few Sundays of November and December I am raising questions with you for which I have no real answers. If I were a smarter preacher I wouldn't even ask the questions. I have no neat answers to this question, I have no ??? rabbit that I can pull out of a hat. I have no quick solutions or simply answers. I somehow feel that it is important to sit with these kinds of questions because I find that I for one can not stop asking them.

They're like a sore tooth that you keep poking with your tongue even though you know it's going to hurt. And of course one of the reasons we ask the questions is not so much because of ?????? or because of Rwanda or because of Iraq. We ask the questions also because of cancer, Aids, September the 11th, diabetes, marriages and relationships that don't work no matter how hard we try to make them work.

And because of addictions we can't seem to break, mental illness, crime poverty and children who break our hearts. Is there someone out there in control of all of this? Or are we a car without anyone steering the wheel. Are we just hurling through history and space without anyone taking care. I have no good answers. I've been searching scripture for hints and I have two hints from scripture that I would like to share this morning.

One hint comes from the story about Jesus ,his disciples and a blind man. It happened in a time before braille. It happened in a time before computers could talk. This story happened in a time where to be born blind meant that no matter smart or intelligent you might be that you were relegated to the side lines of life.

In those days everyone assumed that blindness was a curse. That it was some kind of punishment that God bestowed on people for sin and even Jesus disciples assumed this and when they saw a blind man one day they asked Jesus the question; why is this circumstance existing in the world? Why was this man born blind?

Was it because his parents sinned or was it because God knew that he would sin in his life time and preemptively punished him, cursed him by making him blind. And those were the only two options that occurred to the disciples. They assumed that the man's blindness was some sort of curse. Jesus' answer to them was this.

The man wasn't born blind because of sin. Nobody sinned. What looks to you Jesus said to his disciples; like a curse is really an occasion for us to do the work that God is trying to do in situations such as this. God is waiting for us, Jesus told his disciples to be and to do God's will in this situation. You are the will of God, I am the will of God, we are the will of God.

I got carried away last Sunday and let it slip during my benediction that we are the will of God. You and I are the will of God whenever we are tempted to ask the question where is the will of God in this. The answer is the will of God is our mouths waiting to be spoken. The will of God is in our hands waiting to be done. The will of God is in our feet waiting to walk into the world to make a difference.

We are the will of God. Not the circumstances that we find in the world around us but what God has placed in our hearts, minds and our spirits. The difference; God wants to make in the world through us. God is impatient to get on with it to do God's will in the world through you and through me. We believe that a man who went to the cross was the revelation of who God is.

We believe that wherever there is disease, oppression, and injustice it is God who suffers from those things. And God is waiting for us to be part of the resurrection that brings, healing, freedom and justice into the world. That is will of God and we are slow and sluggish to get on with it. God has entered into a committed relationship with us. God has made vows and promises with us.

And when we enter into committed relationships we give other people enormous power and influence over our lives. When we are in a committed relationship we can bring each other down or we can lift each other up. We can energize each other or we can deplete each other. God has entered into committed relationship with us and we have the capacity to energize God so that all sorts of things begin to happen through us and in the world around us or we have the capacity to deplete God.

And drain God so it is almost impossible for God to move in our world. I believe we almost killed God in ?

??????, ?????? and ?????? we almost drained the life out of God in ?????? and it was only the prayer and worship of those Jews who went to their death reciting the Shema? Saying here oh Israel our God is one. It was only the prayers and the faithfulness of the confessing church in Nazi Germany who kept God alive.

We are what stands in the way of God's will and we are the will of God seeking to move into the world through us. Whenever we ask the question; where is God's will in this. The answer is, the answer that Jesus gave his disciples. God's will is in the work that God will for you to do in this situation.

We are the will of God. The second hint from scripture is this and it's something that I don't talk about much. I find it somewhat difficult and embarrassing to talk about. Revelation 21 and 22 says that there will be a new heaven and a new earth. And the new heaven and the new earth is not something that will merely exist someday in the near future. The new heaven and the new earth will include all of history, all people, all circumstances and all situations.

In the new heaven and new earth the will of God will Triumph and the point is that it will not just triumph someday but it will triumph for everyday. Every disease that ever existed is healed in the new heaven and the new earth. Every injustice is made right and Every oppression is overturned. In the new heaven and the new earth all history will be healed and nothing will be a curse anymore.

I'm a child of modernity I'm a child of this present age and our biggest problem in a time of modernity is our credulity our incredulity. We find it so hard to believe we who are modern people raised in an age of science and logic. We find it so hard to believe and there are things as a child of my age I find difficult to believe and difficult to affirm.

I have a friend who went from pastoring churches with people in it and he went to pastor in a church that consist of mostly people of the generation that they are considered post moderns. He said that for all his years of ministry when he preached he tried to work hard to convince people in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now he says when he preach to post moderns he finds it difficult to persuade them that there was anything particularly special about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He use to try to convince people that there was a resurrection and now he has to try to convince them that there was one resurrection. One of the difficult things about we who are children of modernity is that there are things that we just find hard to believe. But I choose to believe in a new heaven and a new earth.

I choose to believe in life after this life. In life after death. I don't believe in it for my own sake because even if I were to die tomorrow and there was nothing else after this I would have already lived a long, rich and full life with people who love me. I've gotten a chance to travel around the world. I stood at the edge of victoria falls and sung How great thou art and I've gotten to be the pastor of Foundry church.

And to speak in this pulpit Sunday after Sunday and have people seem to pay attention to me. I don't believe in a new heaven or a new earth and life after death in which all of the pain of history is made right for my own sake. I choose to believe in life after death because of three young and curious boys who were playing in a vacant lot last April fifteenth in southwest Bagdad.

I believe that there is a new heaven and a new earth where nothing is a curse. Where something that looks like a soda can is a soda can. Where something that look like a toy is a toy. And in that new heaven and new earth three boys from Bagdad will run and play and nothing will harm them. They will grow up and fall in love. They will know all of the sweetness of life and life abundantly.

And in this world to come the new heaven and the new earth those three boys will be first; and we who without thinking much about it paid out our income taxes last April fifteenth; we will be last but we will be there. Our joy in that day will be to see the three boys run, play and love and it will be enough. It will be the

triumph of the will of God.