**Surrender**

Chapter: Thy Will – My Will (Simon Ponsonby)

(Luke 22.42) Not my will, but yours be done.

Reading Luke 22.39-45

We’re going to look at the theme of surrender this evening. We’ll be looking at the example of Jesus and how his servant obedience, being our ultimate role model, is so important for us to understand and follow as his disciples.

In the reading from Luke we’ve just heard, Jesus surrenders his own will to that of his Father, in order to fulfil God’s purpose in him.

In this verse we find Jesus praying a little way from his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. He has spent the Last Supper with his disciples, and knows that Judas will soon betray him, leading to his arrest. He agonises in his prayer, and asks God:

“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”

The cup Jesus talks about is the cup of suffering. He knows that he will soon suffer greatly and will die a horrific death, taking upon himself the sins of all people. Even an angel comes to minister to him in his torment. And yet, in prayer, Jesus surrenders to the will of God in total obedience, for our salvation.

Jesus calls us to do the same, to surrender ourselves…

In Mark 8.34-35 we read,

34And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

In James 4.10 we are told,

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

And in Romans 12.2,

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

If as Christians our lives are to be modelled on Jesus’ surrendering his will to God, what does this mean for us today?

Well I think it has a lot to do with trust.

Simon Ponsonby reminds us of the two stages of early life when our human wilful spirit rears its head – the ‘terrible twos’ and the teenage years. An independent powerful will comes up against the will of parents. Thankfully, my two daughters have been fantastic teenagers! But I do remember my eldest (she must have been about 2 or 3) lying on the floor in the hallway, once, rigid and screaming! I can’t remember what she didn’t want to do… but it was most definitely my will she was reacting against!

In the letter of James he points out the tension between God’s good will and the self-assertive independent will of his children.

If we look at James 4.13, for example, when he’s speaking to merchant members of the Church:

‘Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make profit.”

There’s nothing wrong with making plans, but this kind of behaviour would be acting independently of God’s will, asserting our own will instead. We would go where we want, do what we want, when we want and for as long as we want. Life is not like that! We never know what’s round the corner! We can’t always be the driving force in our own lives, always wanting our wishes on our terms.

Instead, James urges us to say. ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’ (James 4.15)

In Victorian times when writing about future plans and decisions, the initials DV were a popular way to sign off letters – the Latin term Deo Volente – if God wills it. Today some people still say ‘God willing’ when talking about something that’s planned to take place.

To will what God wills, we need to trust him with our lives. And this isn’t always easy!

We struggle daily with our human nature and wilfulness, and we need God’s help to bring our will under his will.

How can we do this?

2 years ago I went to the leadership conference at Holy Trinity Brompton, with Gary and others from our benefice. It was the first time I’d been to a large gathering of Christian leaders. It was a fantastic two days of worship, prayer and listening to speakers, like Rick and Kay Warren.

Something happened to me over those two days…

I prayed. People prayed for me. I listened to God’s word and asked him for direction in my life and forgiveness for times in my life I wasn’t proud about. I asked him to help me forgive others.

At the end of the last worship session I responded to the invitation to come up and give my life over to Jesus. I felt a strong surge in my heart and walked up the centre aisle. As I knelt down I felt the Holy Spirit washing over me and I wept… Something changed deep within me that evening.

I came home knowing I wanted to surrender myself to God and his purpose for me. Nothing has been the same ever since!

Through prayer. Through obedience to God’s word. Through listening to God for his direction, and bringing to him the decisions and actions that we make about our lives; and through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit we can learn to trust God and become more willing for what he wills in our lives.

As people of God we need to place our worth in things that God says are worthy, not, as Simon Ponsonby writes ‘the ugly fruits of the independent will’ which make us greedy and proud. James warns us, ‘God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble’ (4.6) and encourages us to walk in the opposite spirit: ‘Submit yourselves, then, to God (4.7).

God has a purpose for each one of us here.

Maybe tonight you would like to ask yourself, am I willing what God wills in my life?

I’d like us to say the Lord’s Prayer together, focusing particularly on the words Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven…

And then I’ll end with a prayer, based on a song by Jesus Culture…

There is no love sweeter than the love you pour on me

There is no song sweeter than the song you sing to me

There is no place that I would rather be

Than here at your feet, laying down everything

All to you, I surrender

Everything, every part of me

All to you, I surrender

All of my dreams, all of me

I surrender

If worship’s like perfume, I’ll pour mine out on you

For there is none deserving of my love, like you

So take my hand and draw me into you

I want to be swept away, lost in love for you

All to you, I surrender

Everything, every part of me

All to you, I surrender

All of my dreams, all of me

I surrender