

Obedience Fulfills God's Will

Matthew 2:13-2

This morning I want to address the question of what obedience does in the context of our scripture reading from Matthew 2.

To begin, when you pray from your mouth the opening words of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven", acknowledging your heavenly Daddy, who by His saving and judging acts in history, as One who has proven himself holy.

When you speak these words in faith, then you are truly believing, open, ready and receptive to hear and know God's will to obey as far as your own part to play goes in seeing the Lord's greater plan and purpose come and be worked out, even fulfilled on earth...

So, is that the true motivation of your heart today or are you more mindful of your own needs, wants and desires and hearing a word that will complement only what your own ears are itching to hear to fit in with your own plans, to meet your own desires?

If this is you then this is not the way to work out your salvation on earth seeking to follow Christ from a selfish perspective. For our father, our Lord, desires our obedience so that he might achieve his saving purposes in the world, so that his holiness is displayed for all people to see and acknowledge, which will only be fulfilled as his kingdom comes, as his good pleasing and perfect will is done on earth as it is in heaven. For our part, this requires obedience, which brings Salvation and Fulfills Gods' Will. We have the example of such obedience fulfilling God's will in the three Dreams of Joseph from our reading today.

In the **First dream** [vv13-14]

The Lord via an angel appears to Joseph one night while he is sleeping in the house in which he was living with Mary and baby Jesus in Bethlehem. This night was up to two years, since the birth, two years and nine months since the first angelic messenger appeared to him in a dream. And he was still primed and ready to listen, hear and obey. He has been in this situation before and responded immediately in obedience. That continued righteous and ready state paid off as he awakens from sleep and arises up from the comfort of his bed, grabs Mary and the baby and flees to Egypt. Once again there is no reviewing the words of the Lord or second-guessing by stopping to question the encounter with the angel in the dream. In faithful obedience he simply acts immediately! And just as well because Herod has ordered his soldiers to kill all infant boys under the age of two in the area of Bethlehem which would have included Jesus, along with Joseph and Mary too if they had remained there and resisted. Jesus, Joseph and Mary were saved. This was God's will.

It was on the other hand the vengeful anger and sheer lunacy of Herod in realising that he had been outwitted by the Magi, resulted in the small village of Bethlehem and its surrounding area having all boys aged two and under brutally murdered by his soldiers on his order. These were violent times and a dozen or so infants lost their lives. To Matthew [v18] the writer of this Gospel this massacre fulfilled the Lord's word proclaimed through the Israelite prophet Jeremiah [31:15] 600 years before.

In its original context Jeremiah depicts Rachel, the wife of Jacob who died giving birth to a son, as crying out from her tomb, which today lies on the road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, because her "children" the descendants of Jacob/Israel were being slaughtered and/or deported from this area to Babylon in 587-586 B.C. effectively putting an end to the nation of Israel. The tears of the exile that began in Jeremiah's day are climaxed now because they are being fulfilled through the tears of the mothers of Bethlehem. Those tears flowed because the heir to David's throne has arrived, the genealogy which is outlined in Matthew 1, who will introduce the new covenant that was also promised by Jeremiah [31:1-34] to the people of Israel, referring to the heir as God's dear son.

In the **Second Dream** [vv19-21]

Joseph was not only obedient in taking Mary and Jesus and fleeing to Egypt, which was a nice and near well-ordered Roman Province just outside Herod's jurisdiction with a population of about a million Jews, but also in that he remained put there until he heard otherwise from the Lord. It is not until Herod dies, which could have been up to a couple of years later that the angel of the Lord appears yet again to Joseph in a dream. No doubt the death of Herod would have brought relief to many. In Egypt it made possible the return of the child, Mary, and Joseph who had obediently awaited a Word from the Lord to do so.

This was God's great plan, His divine purpose to call Jesus his dear son the Messiah out of Egypt [v15] in order to fulfil another prophecy. Matthew makes the point that Jesus' exodus from Egypt fulfilled the Lord's Word proclaimed by the prophet Hosea [11:1] 800 years before. "Out of Egypt I called my son." Just as Pharaoh had to let Israel go because 'Israel' was the 'Lord's son', it is only fitting that, the messianic son of David immaculately conceived by a virgin, also came out of Egypt as God's Son.

Although the whole land of Israel now lay before Joseph on his immediate return there with Jesus and Mary in fulfilment of God's prophecy and harbouring the hope of re-settling in the area of Judea,

maybe even Bethlehem again, he was actually forced to head a lot further north to live in a more despised area of the nation, Galilee.

In the **Third Dream** [vv22-23]

Open, receptive and obedient as ever to the word of the Lord brought to him in yet another dream, Joseph heeds both the warning and the specific direction given. Joseph arrives in Israel only to learn that Archelaus now ruled in Judea, Samaria and Idumea in the place of his deceased father King Herod the Great. Archelaus, just like his father was known for his cruel and tyrannical ruthlessness. Joseph guided by this fourth and final dream takes his family and settles in Galilee choosing none other than his and Mary's former hometown of Nazareth.

Nazareth is where obedience to God's word and direction lead Joseph and Mary with their child Jesus. "So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene." [v23]. In Jesus' day "Nazarene" was virtually a synonym for "despised" because Nazareth was a despised place to even other Galileans who in general were considered lowly and backward people by Israel's educational, moral and religious standards. The prophets of the Old Testament didn't specifically foretell that the Messiah would live in Nazareth but what they did say is that the messiah would be despised! [Psalm 22:6-8, 13; 69:8, 20-21; Isaiah 11:1; 49:7; 53:2-3, 8; Daniel 9:26] But it is Matthew without directly quoting the Old Testament who makes the link of Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God being 'despised' because he would be called a Nazerene therefore fulfilling yet another prophecy that has come about through God's will on earth as it is in heaven, because one righteous and faithful man, Joseph, was obedient to following what he knew to be God's voice, God's word and direction. And as a result he would have got to go to the grave knowing in part but not necessarily in full that God's kingdom had come and his had been done on earth because he was obedient to God's Word.

Life Application:

Are you primed and righteously ready to receive a Word or directive from God?

Are you faithfully prepared to immediately obey knowing that such a directive is a part of God's plan for your life that is meant to fulfil God's will of His kingdom coming to earth, to fulfil his purpose in the lives of others alive in the world today?

...And that such plans may not be without cost to us, just as they were to Joseph, Jesus and Mary in their day and the lives of the people around them?

Are you primed and ready to go as a part of God's great plan of redemption in the world today beginning right here in Drury, in your home and neighbourhood, at you club and meeting place?
When the Lord brings you his Word will go where and when he tells you to? It could be as simple as a prompt to call someone on the phone, write, email, text or to actually go and visit someone, or to help someone in a specific way, to share your faith through word or deed with family member, friend or neighbour. Or even maybe a stranger?

Are you willing here and now to pray "Not my will, but thy will be done, according to your will Lord and not the selfish needs and desires of my heart along with the carnal thoughts of my mind"?

When we are obedient to God's Word of direction for us then we are fulfilling God's will, not ours, not my will but thy will be done!
I believe I have a word of encouragement here for anyone who would desire to commit their way to the Lord this morning in order to serve God with a wholehearted devotion otherwise known as a willing faithful and obedient heart.

King Solomon in **Proverbs 3** wrote this

- ⁵Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
⁶in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.[direct your paths]
⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.
⁸ This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones.

A word of encouragement that includes shunning evil. So we should be aware of what the unholy trinity of the world, the flesh and the devil are up to in conspiring to thwart the Word and therefore the Will of God not to mention our inner spiritual health.

Just as God appeared in the form of an angel to bring his word to Joseph, the apostle Paul warns us that Satan himself has the ability to appear as an angel of light to Christians [2 Cor 11:13-15]. Even in the church this is a real possibility for us. So how do you know that the message someone brings you is false or wrong?

Firstly, it is not true when it does not agree or is not consistent with the scriptures written in the Bible- God's Word.

Secondly, A false word will agitate you for the wrong reasons.

It will personally cause you consternation even to the point of making you angry for the wrong reason, the opposite of 'righteous' anger. As a result you will not have the Shalom of God, which is the perfectly secure

inner peace experienced even when there is conflict, suffering or other difficult trying things going on in your life.

Thirdly, such a word will be destructive and cause strife for others. Which is the opposite to a true Word from God that is to encourage us and bring God the glory by building up the church as the body of Christ. It will lead you to not being in a right or righteous relationship with God because you have experienced the likes of 'unrighteous anger' through unrighteous people reproducing in you their own dark and destructive disposition of heart which opposes and grieves God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit whose true fruit reproduces in us the spirit of Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

A false word from a false prophet will not lead you into truth, will not direct you in God's good pleasing and perfect way for your life and fulfil his greater purpose for the world and the church, let alone allow you to pray, act and believe for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done in your own life. So, would you know Jesus or the Lord's true messenger if they came to you? And if so, what then would your response be?

Listen... "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days..."
The Spirit that will inspire obedience within us to fulfil God's will.

To wrap up now, are you bold enough to conclude this message by praying with full trust and belief the Lord's Prayer together?

Let's pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever.
Amen.