

07/29/12 Sermon – Romans 8:28,31–39 – Ascension Batavia

Peace to you through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Romans 8:28 (NKJV) — 28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:31–39 (NKJV) — 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? **33** Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. **34** Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? **36** As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” **37** Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. **38** For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, **39** nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

GOD’S WILL IS GOOD

In Jesus name in whose life is found the love and will of God,

Dear fellow redeemed,

In light of the tragic shootings in Colorado, CNN offered a blog in which readers could comment on the following question: “Where was God in Aurora?” One of their writers summarized the comments into seven categories – included among these were the responses: “There is no God” ... “Don’t blame God, blame us” ... “God was behind the massacre, and it was just” ... “God was present at the massacre but with the victims, not the perpetrator” ... and “who knows? It’s a mystery.”

This has been an ongoing discussion among theologians and philosophers for centuries. How can evil happen in a world that is ruled by an all-powerful benevolent God?

So many of the responses were looking for the most reasonable answer for why this shooting occurred and whether it was God’s will or not. And yet so much of the discussion assumed God’s revealed will is known by His either preventing or allowing evil in this world.

In this weeks Vacation Bible School I posed the following statement to my students: “If things are going well in my life, God must love me. If things go wrong, that means I have done something wrong.” Almost immediately they responded “false.” They recognized that we do not discover God’s good purpose for us by looking to such external, visible events as the Aurora shooting.

For as they recited in their Bible verse for this week: (**v.28**). God’s will is good.

1. IN JOSEPH’S LIFE

As creatures of ritual, we human have to order our lives to some degree around plans for the future. What am I going to be when I grow up? when I finish college? Where are we going on vacation this summer? Where am I going after I leave church today? Yet we can walk right out that door today and have a tree fall on our head and our life is over. Our life is full of changing plans.

The life of Joseph was no different. All the way back to his grandfather, Isaac we see changing plans in the lives of God's people. Isaac planned to give the promised birthright inheritance to Esau, but God allowed it to go to Jacob. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other sons, yet his beloved was taken from him. Reuben, suggesting that they throw Joseph in a pit, planned to return to rescue him, yet his brothers sold Joseph into slavery before he could get there. Joseph's brothers planned to kill Joseph, yet he ended up becoming the second most powerful ruler in Egypt.

Though everything around us might be filled with tragedy, surprise, and ever changing plans, to God there is only one plan – and it never changes. **(v.28,35a)**

In this week's VBS studies Joseph was taken through ADVERSITY and TEMPTATION, in order that God would bring about BLESSINGS, FORGIVENESS, and the FINAL VICTORY. As Joseph sat in the bottom of that bottleneck cistern, looking up to a world he would never see again, how could he imagine God's will was good?

Yet God was working all things together for good. And in Joseph's life, God gave a glimpse into the almighty plan, but by promoting Joseph from slave to king and using him to accomplish His divine rescue mission.

Yet this rescue of Joseph's family during seven trying years of famine was a rescue much bigger than the 11 brothers, father, and relatives. This was a rescue of God's promise. As we heard in our last reading: **Genesis 50:24 (NKJV) – 24 And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."**

God was preserving the promise of a Savior – that in Abraham's "S"eed, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. It was of the line of Judah that would come forth One to be ruler in Israel, to take away the sins of the world. This was the promise of the FINAL VICTORY for Joseph. And God's will never fails to accomplish what He has promised.

(v.37) So even if Joseph was left for dead in that pit, even if he was killed in that prison in Egypt, – even if he was gunned down innocently in a movie theater in Colorado, in Christ he remained a victor. The forgiveness of sins, and resurrection to eternal life cannot be taken away by the wicked acts of this world. **v.35 – Who shall separate us from the love of christ? ... v.38 – neither life nor death will!**

Yet no matter what the evil we see with our eyes, God calls on us to trust His good purpose in the destiny of those who love and believe in Him.

2. IN JESUS' LIFE

Our plans change – for better or for worse. But God doesn't always reveal His purpose in the same way as He did with Joseph. Often, while we still live in this world, we will never know why God allowed seemingly innocent lives to be taken on . As we see the

evil around us in this world, the corruption that sin has waged against a once perfect creation, where is God? Has he lost control? Does He care?

Notice where our text points us for the answer: **(v.31,32)** God's will is most certainly good. But we will never know this by looking to this sinful world for the answers. We will never know this by quoting the wise philosopher or consulting our logical reason. We will only know God's loving purpose by looking to His good will in Jesus' life.

We see the will of God revealed not in what we see with our eyes, but in what God's word speaks to our heart. Our ongoing sins, our visible failures, earn us not just a slap on the wrist, but we deserve to be seated in that theater with all those who died. In fact we deserve more. We deserve to be cast into an eternal separation from God.

However this is where God reveals the unseen love of Christ before our eyes.

Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed, prayed, "Father, not My will but Your's be done." From the perspective of those who rejected the coming of Jesus, they saw this as nothing more than the suppression of an uprising. The religious leaders could not fathom that in this weak, abused, hanging form, would reside the promised Messiah, the Son of God. So they mocked, **Luke 23:35 (NKJV) — 35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God."**

God's will is good. Jesus is the greater Joseph. This crucified slave is the King of Israel, the Son of God. **Philippians 2:6–8 (NKJV) — 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.**

As true man, Jesus did right what we have done wrong. **(v.34)**.

God's good will is revealed in Jesus' life.

3. IN MY LIFE

The will of God in the external events in the course of this world has often been described as a tapestry. If you look to the back of a tapestry you see only a mess of knots and stitches that don't reveal any sort of greater concept. Yet when you turn that tapestry over, you see the great masterpiece that has been carefully woven and united in a work of art.

We see the back of God's tapestry as He stitches it from above. The events of this sin cursed world, whether it is the shootings in Aurora, the oppression in Syria, or the tragic death of a child, reveal only a mess of stitches that for us human beings do not amount to much sense at all. Yet God who both allows and prevents evil, sees these things from the side of heaven and is even now working a masterpiece so great that we can only view it from heaven. God's will is good in your life.

Just like Joseph, through adversity and temptation, God is bringing to you blessings, forgiveness, and the final victory. But things never seem to work out the same way twice. You will likely not become a ruler in Egypt – in fact right now, I don't think you'd

want to. The adversity you face may not result in an opportunity to save your family from starving to death. The temptations you face may not result in you fleeing Potiphar's wife and doing the good that you know you should. In fact, Joseph sinned too and needed God to rescue him from sin just like you and I.

In other words then, God's rescue plan is the same for you as it was for Joseph's brothers. Their real rescue was not from the drought in Canaan. It was from a starvation of the soul. Notice how after Jacob dies, the brothers fear Joseph will not take revenge, to punish them. They still feel guilty. **Genesis 50:19–20 (NKJV) — 19 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? 20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.**

God responds, “you meant it for evil, but I worked it for good.” God has taken our sins of jealousy, envy, and hatred to the victory of the cross. **(v.32)** We have gone from slaves to kings also. Through tribulation, distress, persecution, and especially, the guilt of our own sin, we cling to the riches found in Christ, and inheritance of eternal proportions. God's masterpiece is woven in Christ.

Where was God in Aurora? He was on the cross, dying for the sins of those who were shot, for those who were not shot, and even for the man who pulled the trigger. God is working His plan, a plan so great that can only be grasped in Christ – **John 6:40 (NKJV) — 40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”**

(v.28) – Your will be done. Amen.