

Sunday Morning Message

January 12, 2020

Following the Will of God

Genesis

Congregational Reading – Genesis 31:1 - 3

Reminder of theme – *All to the Glory of God*

*"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1
Corinthians 10:31)*

The Lord has impressed upon my heart that this year in 2020, we as a church should strive to make sure that everything we do brings the maximum glory to God.

Plug for Blog – (put blog up on the screen)

I have opted this year to develop messages from the daily passages of Scripture we are reading together as a church. If you are following along with us on the morning devotional blog, you know that we have been reading two to three chapters per day from the Book of Genesis. Each morning on pastorerickson.com, I or someone else post thoughts from the particular passage that we are reading that day. Last week, in addition to my posts, we have read devotions from Pastor Stahl and Justin and Sami. In the coming week, we will also see posts from Issan Acosta and Elizabeth Hamilton. There are actually twenty-six new people posting this quarter (January through March). Some of these people are pastors from other churches, but most are from our church. We are hoping to get more of you involved in the coming months. If anyone is interested in getting involved with posting a morning devotion, see me after the service.

This morning's message comes from the passage of Scripture assigned for today – Genesis 31 – 32.

Introduction

It can be a scary thing to follow the will of God. More than twenty-two years ago, God called me to move to Longview, Texas to go to Bible College. We had to leave our home in South Toms River, a good job, lots of extended family and friends, an awesome church, all because God wanted to do something new, something scary with our lives. We were entering into the unknown. I had no job lined up. I was leaving the security of the known to launch out into the deep of the unknown. There were many times that we wanted to turn back. I often wanted to quit and go back home, but in our three years in college, we saw God do some pretty awesome and miraculous things.

The same thing was true about following God's call to move back here to New Jersey, although admittedly it was easier to move back in my case than it was to move out. But it was still a little scary. I was coming here to south Jersey to pastor a church with no promise of a salary. There were a lot of unknowns for my family.

Following the will of God for your life can be a little scary. God does not show you ahead of time all of the things that are going to come your way in the future; how it is all going to work out; but he does assure you that He will be with you; that He will provide for all your needs; that He will give you an abundant life; and that He will use you for His glory. But, it is still scary.

Last summer, after many weeks of prayer, God convinced me that we, as a church, should step out in faith and hire Justin and Wade, at least on a part-time basis. It was scary, because we did not have the money or even the promise of more income in order to do it. But, I believed it was God's will and I asked you as a church to follow me in that belief, and you did. But, it's still scary. We are stepping out in faith. We are trusting God to do something, to supply in a way that He had not done for us in the past.

In our passage this morning, we read about Jacob, the son of Isaac, the grandson of Abraham, and the man who became the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. In Genesis 31, Jacob is living in the land of Padanaram, and had been there living with his wife's family for twenty years. He had left his family and his home in the land of Canaan two decades earlier for two reasons: First, he had to leave because of a dispute with his brother Esau. Back in Genesis 27, we read that Jacob and his conspiring mother, Rebekah, had deceived his father, Isaac, and his brother, Esau, and had cheated his brother out of a tremendous blessing. His brother is naturally very angry and determines to kill Jacob at the first opportunity. Secondly, however, he also needed to go away to find a wife. Isaac did not like the selection of ladies in Canaan, and sent Jacob back to where there family had originally come from in order to find a wife.

In today's passage we fast forward twenty years from the time that Isaac had first arrived in Padanaram. It is important to point out that Jacob probably never intended to stay that long in Padanaram, but in order to get his wife, he had to serve his father-in-law fourteen years. He then agreed to stay on and work for his father-in-law for six more years after his fourteen years were finished. Twenty years is a long time. You kind of get settled after twenty years, and not easy to pick-up and move away. By this time Jacob had a large family with many children, and he had accumulated a lot of possessions – livestock. But as we have seen, God would reveal to Jacob that he wants him to move back to Canaan. Look at verse 3. He doesn't tell him all that will happen; He doesn't tell him how it is going to happen, or how he will meet his needs, but He does promise that He will be with Him.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5)

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matthew 28:20)

The question is this: will Jacob be willing to leave the familiar and comfortable place that he and his family had gotten used to, in order to follow the will of God.

Will you be willing to leave your comfort zone and launch out into the deep of doing the scary thing, the unknown thing, and follow God's will for your life?

Transition

There are three considerations that I am sure Jacob and his family thought about before He followed God's will. Jesus did say that we are to count the cost. I believe before you sign on to do something for the Lord, you should consider the consequences and at least be prepared for them:

1. Jacob, and especially his family, would be leaving the familiar behind.

Jacob knew a little something about where he was going because he had grown up there. However, his family knew nothing about it. It was completely foreign to them. They had no friends in Canaan. Everything they knew was back in Padanaram. They would be leaving behind family and friends, probably to never see them again. That's not easy.

When I left New Jersey to go to Texas, I was one of the bosses at my dad's company. I had security. If I ever needed anything, I could just pick up the phone and call my dad or my brothers and it would be taken care of. We had a wonderful church family and many friends that we would be leaving behind. My kids were leaving behind the only life that they knew. That's not easy.

2. Jacob would have opposition from people that wanted him to stay.

Jacob's father-in-law and in-laws had been mightily blessed since Jacob had joined the family business. Laban knew that his business was much better since Jacob came to work for him, and he didn't want to lose him.

The extended family in Padanaram were also very upset about Jacob's family leaving, and no doubt they would try to talk them out of it.

Illustrate – When we left for Texas, it was not easy. My family did not want us to go, and they really didn't understand why we were leaving. I was a big part of our family's candy business, and they were certainly going to suffer a little as a result of my leaving. We were a big part of the church we attended also. They were going to have to find a people to do what we had done.

People who love you and need you are naturally going to resist your leaving them.

Illustration – I resisted Phil Jr.'s leaving.

You have to choose whether you are going to yield to the people in your life, or follow the will of God.

3. Jacob had no idea of what challenges were facing him in Canaan.

There were problems when Jacob left. His brother was very angry with him and wanted to kill him. Jacob was very afraid of his brother. His brother was tough; he was a hunter, a man's man. Jacob was not looking forward to facing him and getting things right with him.

Illustration – when I got closer to leaving for Bible college, I started to get a little nervous about all of the unknowns that were ahead for me. What was Bible college going to be like? Where would I work? Would we like it down there?

With all of these negative considerations working against the will of God, why would Jacob choose to go.

1. God began to make Jacob uncomfortable where he was.

Notice verses 1 – 2, Laban and his sons were beginning to get a little jealous over God's blessings on Jacob's family. God was all over Jacob, and he was prospering him more than he was prospering the rest of the family, and there began to be friction. Read also verses 4 – 9.

Often before God moves you on his will, there will be a divine set of circumstances that will funnel you in the direction that he will call you to go. In Jacob's case, it was this increasing friction between him and his in-laws.

Illustrate – before I went to Texas, I became increasingly unhappy and dissatisfied with working in our family business. I knew that God was bringing me somewhere; he was doing something. I just did not know right away where it was or what it was.

Illustrate – Phil Jr. had the same thing happen to him. He began to struggle here. Then there were three job promises that all fell through the cracks.

2. God's clearly revealed His will (v. 3).

There was no uncertainty about what God wanted Jacob to do. Don't move unless you know for sure what God wants you to do. Read also verses 10 – 13. **(Note – God reveals His will today through the Word of God, prayer, and godly counsel.)**

3. God's assurance of provision and protection (v. 3).

If God is calling you to do something, you have His promise that He will be with you.

David shared this promise with his son, Solomon:

"And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD." (1 Chronicles 28:20)

Conclusion

The passage that we have looked at today as well as many of the personal illustrations that I have given were about following God's will regarding a geographical move, but many of the principles that we have gleaned from this passage can apply to anything the Lord is calling you to do.

Maybe the Lord wants you to get a new job or a change in careers – maybe even a call to the ministry.

Maybe the Lord wants you to start or take over a new ministry within the church.

Our church made a scary decision to follow the Lord's leadership to build a very expensive addition through a very complicated process.

If you are God's child and you are walking closely to Him, He is eventually going to call you to do something for Him.

Will you do the scary thing and follow the will of God.

