

Title: The Dedicated Life
Date: April 30, 2017
Subject: Being sent to do God's will even as Christ was sent by the Father
Scripture: Hebrews 10:5-10

As we think of a child dedication, really of parents dedicating themselves, it is appropriate to think of our dedication to the One who dedicated his life in service to the Father and by extension to us.

We're going to look at the words of Jesus. We'll start in Hebrews 10. It might surprise you that Jesus spoke in that book. They're not even in red lettering. The author of Hebrews quotes Jesus as quoting from Psalm 40. There David expressed his commitment to do the will of God. He was concerned for inward rather than external obedience as seen in the offering of animal sacrifices.

READ Hebrews 10:5-10.

The author doubles down in repeating Jesus' words. Christ came to do the will of God. By accomplishing it he makes it possible for people to become holy by giving them new life and a right relationship with God. Hebrews directly connects the insufficiency of the Old Testament sacrificial system to Christ's full and complete sacrifice for sins...for all time, for all sins, for all people. It's not automatic that all people will get to heaven. They have to respond to Christ's offer and receive his gift of eternal life. This is the culmination of doing the will of God.

We don't have any record in the biblical narrative of Jesus using those exact words about sacrifice and offering. However, we do have Jesus speaking about being sent by God and his desire to do God's will.

The one that probably pops into our minds is in the garden of Gethsemane during the concluding hours of Christ's life. He asked the disciples to pray with and for him. They failed miserably. Jesus separated about a stone's throw from them so he could pray privately. "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus remained resolute in living out the will of God even though it meant his death.

We'll come back to the end of Christ's life. Let's go to the beginning of his ministry as we seek to catch a flavor of Christ's life. All of the references will be in John's Gospel. Begin with John 4:34.

READ 4:34.

Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman at the well. He engaged in evangelism and led her to himself as the Savior. The disciples had gone into the village to get food. They were surprised when they returned to see Jesus talking with a woman but didn't ask him about it. They urged Jesus to eat but he declined. "I have

food to eat that you know nothing about.” They thought someone else brought him food. That’s when he said that his food is to do the will of the Father and to finish his work. We’ll come back to the word “finish.”

Did we really hear what Jesus said? Doing the will of the Father was his food, his sustenance, his nutrition, the thing that brought the capacity for energy and life to his being. Jesus was content to not eat because he found service to the father fulfilling. He wanted his closest followers to understand his motivation in living.

Go to the next chapter (5). Verse 30 in the NIV talks about pleasing the Father. The English Standard Version frames it in conjunction with the will of God “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.”

Jesus had healed a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. The Jews resented the fact that Jesus healed on the Sabbath and persecuted him. The Savior defended himself. “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” This made the Jews more upset as they understood Jesus was claiming a special and unique relationship of equality and oneness with the Father.

Jesus gives a long answer in which he elaborates on his relationship with the father. “The Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does...For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it” (John 5:19-21). Jesus constantly said that he mirrored the Father -- “What I have heard from him (the Father) I tell the world” (8:26); “Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does” (10:37); “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me...For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken...So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say” (12:44, 45, 49, 50). Jesus states his unequivocal dependence on the Father and that he seeks the will of the Father, not his own. Now he’s informing his enemies about his intent to follow the will of God.

Proceed to the next chapter (6). Jesus had fed the 5000 and was explaining that he was the bread of life. READ v. 38-40. He again states his desire to accomplish the Father’s will, not his will. Then he clarifies that He will bring eternal life to all who place their trust in him and will raise them at the last day to be with him forever in heaven. Because he was raised from the dead, we too will be raised from the dead. Because he lives we also will live. Sounds a lot like Easter.

He was motivated by his love for the Father. He communicated this to the disciples on the night he was betrayed. “The world must learn that I love the father and that I do exactly what my father has commanded

me (14:31)...If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (15:10). Our thoughts often turn to us and how we remain in Christ' love but do we really pay attention to what Christ said about him remaining in the love of the Father? His obedience led to abiding in the love of the Father.

In chapter 17 Jesus prays what is called his High Priestly Prayer. He tells the father, READ 17:4. It's almost time for the last events – the arrest, the mockery of trials, the torture and abuse, the crucifixion, the burial and the resurrection -- to play out. Jesus knew this is the reason he was sent into the world (17:18). Though he hadn't yet breathed his last but he could say that he completed the work given to him.

Completion is a synonym for finish. We've come back in time to near where we first encountered the word "finish" in the garden but there is one more time when it comes into play.

Chapter 19 details the crucifixion. The narrative moves toward the last words from the cross in verse 50. In order for Jesus to speak them he needed some assistance, a drink to soothe his throat and give full measure to his voice. The last words weren't a quiet whisper "It is finished." It was a loud cry "IT IS FINISHED!!!" (Matthew 27:50, Mark 15:37). Then Jesus bowed his as he submitted to the will of the Father. The cry from the cross had immediate physical effects. It caused or was accompanied by the tearing the temple curtain and an earthquake shaking the earth and splitting rocks. There were also immediate spiritual effects. The centurion and the other watchers at the cross were terrified yet the centurion was able to exclaim "Surely this man was the Son of God!" The spiritual effects continue.

To recap. Jesus was sent by the Father. He mirrored who the father is and what the Father does. He was dependent on the Father to do his will. He was motivated by his love for the Father. Jesus completed the Father's mission. It so captured and inspired him that it was his food. He repeatedly stated and reaffirmed his commitment to that mission. We praise him for his devotion to the will of the Father.

Here's how one person summarized Christ's life – "He was never for one moment unmindful of His Father's will, and was ready in obedience to it to drink the cup of suffering and endure a penal death for man's salvation. In his own life of constant victory over every temptation to follow any other course; in His abandonment of all temporal security and earthbound hopes; in His refusal to settle down and live His life in His own way, he had come to know the divine peace, the peace of inward quiet which no distress of mind or body was able to destroy. And now He would bequeath that same peace to those who, refusing to compromise with the world, are willing to accept the sacrifice He is making on their behalf; to enjoy the assurance of forgiveness that of necessity accompanies such acceptance; and to follow Him along the same road of loving obedience and service" (R.V. G. Tasker, Tyndale Commentary on John, pp. 168, 169).

The application is made to those who are followers of Christ. The writer later adds in connection with Christ's prayer in John 17 – "Jesus therefore prays the Father that the disciples may be so dedicated to their task and so sanctified by the truth about God that He has taught them, that they may be able to fulfill their vocation as His apostles, as completely as He has fulfilled His vocation as the Apostle of God. The Father sent Jesus into the world to re-unite sinful man to Himself, and in so doing to reveal to them God's love for sinners; the apostles are sent by Jesus to proclaim the good news of this reconciliation, and to reflect the divine love in their personal conduct" (ibid, p. 190).

This same charge is given to all followers of Christ. Jesus said that he was sending his followers in the same way that he had been sent (John 17:18, 20:21). The apostle Paul writes extensively about the mission, duty and responsibilities of being a follower of Jesus. He uses the terminology of being ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). He stresses that we are sent on behalf of another, of God, with the message of reconciliation. God makes his appeal to be reconciled to him through his people.

In the same passage Paul provides the attitude we should have for acting as God's messengers. "He (Christ) died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:15). And just a little earlier he had written of the preference to be in heaven with the Lord rather than be on earth, but if we have to be on earth "we make it our goal to please him" (2 Corinthians 5:9).

Part of pleasing him is being the right kind of people. "Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). The Lord wants our believing, our thinking and our acting. Our lives are to be in keeping with our profession?????

We can call it commitment, dedication, consecration, devotion, recommitment, re-dedication. It should be an ongoing process. Jesus kept reaffirming that he was going to do God's will. He set a good example of being submissive to the will of the Father and continually keeping his submission in view.

We're to remember and reaffirm that we are people who have been sent. Constantly recall that we are to seek to do his will. Express our dependence on the Father. Seek to complete the work. Motivated by our love for him. Be engaged in it so that it provides nutrition for the soul. Keep on restating our intent even as Jesus did. Write notes in our Bibles. Write down our intent. Print a verse and post it. Reminder on phone.

When a husband and wife have kids, they no longer exist for themselves. They've acquired new bosses, masters, who order their lives and make the decisions. They tell them when to wake up, when it's time to eat, when it's time to do laundry. Parents exist for the children. It's similar when people get married, get a job, join a sports team, enlist in the military. There's someone who becomes the master and has a will to be completed.

Since we have so many bosses/masters, it shouldn't surprise us that when we become a Christian, we have a new master who tells us how to live.

John Henry Jowett, "The Lord wants my body. He needs its members as ministers of righteousness. He works in the world through my brain, and eyes, and ears, and lips, and hands and feet. And the Lord wants my body as a 'living sacrifice.' He asks for it when it is thoroughly alive! We so often deny the Lord our bodies until they are infirm and sickly, and sometimes we do not offer them to Him until they are quite worn out. It is best to offer our bodies to the Lord when they are strong and vigorous and serviceable, and when they can be used in the strenuous places of the field. And so let me have a daily consecration service, and let me every morning present my body a living sacrifice to God. Let me regard it as a most holy possession, and let me keep it clean. Let me recoil from all abuse of it. Let me look upon my body as a temple, and let the service of consecration continue all day long" (Closer Walk, March 25/26, 1989).