
God's Will Be Done

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 13 April 2025 • Palm Sunday

Isaiah 50:4-9a • Luke 19:28-40 • Matthew 21:8-11



May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

We hear today from Luke's Gospel about Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Here he comes, the Lord of all, riding in humble fashion, on a donkey. The crowds around are excited to be there with him, and they shout out blessings on him. They throw their coats and branches they've cut from trees onto the road, to make smooth his path, as they would do for an ordinary king. But this is of course no ordinary king, but the King of kings.

This is a great story — and when I say story, I don't mean fiction. It is a true story, as all the Bible stories are. But it is still a great story! The Bible is full of great stories. Think of Daniel's three friends being thrown in the furnace and walking around in the flames without getting hurt at all. Or Lot's wife turning around to look, when she was told not to, and turning into a pillar of salt. Or the peoples of the world building a tower so tall it almost reached heaven! Thanks be to God that the Bible both teaches us and entertains us! But it's not so

surprising that it does. After all, the Bible stories are about people, just like us. We can understand them and how they feel and how they react. And the stories show us how to live in God's world.

But back to Jerusalem. Nearby some Pharisees are standing, watching all that is happening. But they aren't taking part in the cheering and the celebrating. No — they complain to Jesus. His disciples are making too much noise. Can't he quiet them down?

And Jesus replies, "I tell you that if they keep quiet, the stones themselves will start shouting." Seems like an odd thing to say, but Jesus is telling us something important. God's will *will* be done.

The entire Gospel story is an execution or a playing out of the will of God. Jesus once said:

I tell you the truth: the Son can do nothing on his own; he does only what he sees his Father doing. What the Father does, the Son also does.
(John 5:19)

In Jesus, God is acting. And nothing, and no one, will stop God's plan about Jesus and his death and resurrection from happening. We see this so many times in the Gospel. Different forces try to stop Jesus:

- ❖ Satan tries to stop Jesus' ministry before it begins, by tempting Jesus to turn away from his duty. But Jesus stays strong in the face of the wealth and power Satan offers him.
- ❖ The Pharisees try to stop him, first by trying to control with all their rules, and then ultimately by arresting him and having him condemned to death.
- ❖ His own people try to stop him. Peter rebukes Jesus for saying he will be killed, and Jesus accuses him of working with Satan — "Get behind me, Satan!" he says (Matt 16:23).
- ❖ Even Jesus tries to stop himself, through self-doubt. He prays that his task might be taken away from him: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me," but he immediately follows this with: "yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

There it is. God's will, God's plan. God's plan will not be stopped. And we are infinitely blessed that it is not stopped, because we are the beneficiaries. We are the ones for whom heaven's doors are opened.

And we should take comfort from this. As Paul says in Romans, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). God is for us — God loves us and wants the best for us. Since God is for us and his will will prevail, then what have we to fear? How much more blessed could we be than to have the all-powerful God of the universe on our side?

I woke up at about 2.30 the other night and couldn't get back to sleep right away. Thoughts and worries went 'round and 'round in my head, as they sometimes do, in the small hours of the morning. I was thinking about the services to come that I needed to plan; ideas for growing the parish; a few personal things; etc., etc. Although my bed was perfectly comfortable, Melissa was asleep beside me, and the cat was curled up at the foot of the bed, I couldn't get back to sleep. (Don't you envy cats sometimes? They're so relaxed and they sleep so luxuriously.) Anyway, I couldn't seem to stop my brain from its cycle of worries and concerns.

Finally I asked myself: why are you worrying? Has not God blessed you abundantly? Does not God care for you? Does not God love you? And — will not God's will be done, no matter what we do? So I prayed, asking for calm and an end to worry, and God did soothe me, so that I was able to get to sleep again.

The world is pretty messy in many places right now. Truth be told, the world has always been pretty messy in places. But God has always been, is now, and will always be in control. We pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done," and in the long run, it is. The people who are cheering Jesus today will be calling for his execution tomorrow, but three days later, God will raise up his Son once again, in accordance with his will, and we and all the rest of God's people will once again be blessed abundantly. Thanks be to God.