**MAN PROPOSES – GOD DISPOSES**

Pop Quiz.
***“Can you name a common thread that connects all these verses?”***

 “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.”
(Psalm 37:4)

“Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us,
 And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands.”
(Psalm 90:17)

 “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”
(Proverbs 3:5-6)

“Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established.”
(Proverbs 16:3)

“And David had success in all his undertakings, for the Lord was with him.”
(I Samuel 18:14)

I think I can safely assume that you will make an A+ on this pop quiz. If you answered “*in the Lord*,” “*of the Lord*,” “*to the Lord*,” and “*for the Lord*” you would be graded as a scholar in my class.

Let me give you a couple of more before I tell you where this is going:

“*A man’s heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps*.” (Proverbs 16:9)

“*There are many plans in a man’s heart, Nevertheless the LORD’s counsel — that will stand*.” (Proverbs 19:21)

The Living Bible translates that verse: “***Man proposes, God disposes***.” That’s succinct. And very accurate as to meaning.

What I want to say in this devotional today is this: GOD IS IN CHARGE!

This is not to say that I cannot plan and dream and work hard to achieve success in life. There are plenty of scriptures to inspire us to becoming all that we can be. From childhood we all have been asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” That answer usually changes from one stage of life to another, from “fireman” (except Mr. Wiley) to “garbage man” (except Mr. Odorizzi) to “doctor” (except Mr. Wineinger), for none of us know our life’s river-like twists and turns.

As a little southern boy who loved sports and hated school in Tennessee I never for a moment dreamed I would become a preacher, especially one who lived in the frozen tundra of Minnesota for half my life! Who knew? Not me. But ask that of God and you would get a different answer, with a twinkle in His eye and smile on His face.

God’s providence and predestination are topics that demand scuba gear in the ocean, not arm floaties in the kiddie pool. We have to go deep to discover the workings of God in the lives of His people.

Like the stories of Joseph, Job, John and Jesus we only see “*the end from the beginning*” after their life on earth is finished. For example, Joseph at 17 could not have possibly foreseen how his favored life in Canaan would unfold to the life of a prisoner-turned-prince in Egypt. It was not until he was an old man that he could say to his fearful brothers upon the death of Jacob:

“*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*.” (Genesis 50:19)

How could Job have possibly seen how his journey would turn out? From riches-to-rags-to-riches, he could not have known that 2,000 years later a half-brother of Jesus would write:

*“Indeed, we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord — that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful*.” (James 5:11)

Job sure couldn’t see “*the end intended by the Lord*.” How could he? Yet God had a plan. When he was sitting in the deepest, darkest depression any man could ever experience he would never have believed the last verse of his life would read like this:

“*After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations. So Job died, old and full of days*.” (Job 42:16-17)

**Application:**

Do you know how your life will turn out? Will it end as happily as Joseph’s and Job’s? Or will it end on a chopping block like Paul’s (2 Timothy 4:6-7)? Will it end in old age, surrounded by loved one’s singing *When All Of God’s Singers Get Home*? Or will it end in loneliness, racked by pain and disease? We just don’t know our future except to say, “*If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that*” (James 4:15).

The fact is, my “success” in life is only defined by how God judges me, not man. I cannot, and must not, worry about the future days, allowing that God has already told me, “*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”* (Matthew 6:34).

A month ago who among us could have foreseen our portfolios downsized, our social lives in quarantine, and even our worship to God severely altered to a new format? Not me. Not you. But God could. And like Joseph and Job, we can use moments like this to rethink the meaning of success and allow God to hold the reins of our life and lead us into the way He would have us go. Yes, it’s true, man proposes but God disposes. Make your plans, but hold them lightly. “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths*.” That’s the best description of God’s providence I know of.

Until tomorrow… I love you.

Rick