

## **March 6 – What Am I to Do?**

Colossians 1:9–14

We often wonder why we cannot figure out what is God's will for our lives and even when we do, we often have a hard time knowing what choices we are to make to fit into that plan. I think it is helpful for us to hear Hamilton's conclusion in this chapter before we begin to try and figure this issue out for ourselves.

“Your story is not complete; the remaining chapters are yet to be written. God's plan for your life is not set in stone; you have a chance to shape the story. As you do, this is God's will: “That you lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.” Colossians 1:10

I agree with Hamilton. I believe we are not actors in a grand play. A few times I have dabbled in the actor's craft. I have to admit that I was not very good at it because I had a difficult time memorizing my lines. Now don't get me wrong. I knew the story well. I knew my part but learning something by rote is not my gift. So, I would give an extemporaneous version of my lines and this got all the other actors off who were looking for specific phrases as their cue. Yet over time, people have believed that we are merely actors playing the part assigned. There is no freedom of movement. Predestination was a fixed doctrine of many denominations for years. Hamilton shares that if this were the case it would be pretty boring for God to watch. There would be no tension. All would be determined. We could not claim success for decisions well made but more importantly God would be, at least, partly to blame for our failures. Think about how we mentally boo the writer when our favorite character in a movie, television show or play does something out of character. We don't blame the character; they are only doing what they were told. We blame the writer. Seeing ourselves as actors following a script means that we get to boo God when we get assigned the bad parts. To move away from this view means we have a part in shaping the outcome.

Hamilton invites us to think of ourselves as collaborators with God in writing the story of our life. God, as the author, has developed the plot line for our lives. It is the

same for all of us and it is right there in Colossians. We are to “Lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God” You are allowed free choice. You even have the right to reject totally the plot line God has for your life. This means that your life is not set in stone. The hope of God is that through your choices you will bear fruit and grow in the knowledge of God.

When we think of collaborating in the story of our lives, Hamilton asks us to think about what parents want for their children. When you bring that bundle home from the hospital you want them to grow up to be good, moral, faithful people. You do all you can to make that hope a reality. You provide them with a loving home. You help them to know right from wrong. You take them to church. You provide opportunities for their enrichment and for giving back to society. And you pray a lot. Ultimately you know that what they do with life is in their hands. They can embrace what we, as parents, have provided or they can rebel. We celebrate with them or in our hearts when the choices they make are wonderful. We cry when we see them making poor choices and throwing away opportunities. If we are this way with our children it is not too far of a reach to think that this is how God is with us.

This means then that we have to own what is written in our book of life. We are not following a script from which there is no deviation. But it also means that we are not left to go it alone. We have guidance and direction. Whether you realize it or not this is the major purpose for church and personal devotion. We come together to be reminded of the big picture of faith. We recall how we are to love and forgive one another as Christ forgave us. In worship we are challenged to look at how we have done this week in following those guidelines. Where we have done well, we celebrate, but we also find the message of forgiveness and renewal for those moments when we failed. And, it is so much easier to follow God’s will for our lives when we are trying to do it with a whole bunch of other travelers on the road of life with the same goal. We support one another, forgive one another and learn from one another. And what is true in worship is also true in our daily devotions. When we read the Bible daily, read devotionals as well and

reflect on what God wants us to do it is much easier to pen our part in the great collaborative story of our life in ways that are pleasing to God.

Think again back to children. It is much easier to help a child to learn and make the correct decisions when time is spent together, conversations happen and options weighed. That is why family time is so important. The same is true with God.

The other thing Hamilton reminds us about is that more than one story is being written. I go back to the parent and family idea. When you have several children at home, even though you love them all the same and want the same things for them, their interactions between each other make a huge difference. Many therapists talk about how birth order affects your personality. First born tend to be leaders, middle children crowd pleasers, and last children manipulators, to mention some of the traits. What is true in families is true in society.

You may be doing your very best to collaborate with God in writing your book of life with the best outcome possible. Someone else doing the exact opposite comes across your life and it might all of a sudden cause chapters and chapters of pain and darkness to fill up your life's book. We are not living on an island. Some of the early church fathers went into the wilderness or holed up in a cave because they found it too distracting to be a Christian in the world!

So, realize that others help write your story but even more importantly, you have the opportunity to write on the pages of those you come in contact with. When what we do is of God, Hamilton calls them God nudges. You know what he means, those times where you just get a sense that you need to reach out to someone. In following through on those urgings you often see how God was at work in the situation. Or you have had those times where another has been open to a nudge from God and come along side of you just when you needed it most.

I recall how I came to honor this idea early in my ministry. I was serving the church in Bonners Ferry, Idaho. It had a small hospital. Back then it was before all of the privacy laws so a pastor could show up, look at the census clip board and see if any of their members were in the hospital. I, along with most of the pastors, got into the habit

of stopping by once or twice a week to check and make sure you hadn't missed someone being admitted. One woman's mother was having continuing health issues. It became a bit of a joke that I seemed to show up almost always within a few hours of mom being admitted. One time I was getting the mail and had the nudge to go up and check the hospital records. As I came in, the head nurse informed me that mom was in the emergency room and not going to make it. As I walked down the hall the daughter fell into my arms. She said, "I needed support so I just asked God to send you." This was before cell phones so it was harder to find me when I was away from my office. I was able to be with her and mom as we blessed her to the new and eternal life awaiting.

Even more, remind yourself each day you have the opportunity to write on other's book of life. As you are kind, and courteous and helpful you are making their day brighter. I try to remember to do this, especially to those who have to serve me in some capacity. Just recently I was getting on the ferry. I was running behind, gave them my charge card, took the ticket and was driving away when she said, "Have a nice day." I was and am still stricken. I was so focused on me I forgot about her. I wish I could have backed up and responded. It was a nudging I won't forget for some time. All fare collectors will be greeted with a smile and with thanks no matter how busy I am or close the ferry is.

What is God's will for our life? It is to lead a life pleasing to God and to bear fruit as we grow in knowledge. How that will happen, who knows? What has happened is past and today is a fresh page, a page of opportunity. We are not following a script but a grand idea where our faithfulness and others' actions all collide and together we, with God's help, write out what is happening in our life today and tomorrow, hopefully always improving our lives and making the lives of those we touch better as well. When this is our goal we are following the will of God and we are making decisions pleasing to God.