

## Magical Mystery Tour

On Sunday, we studied an obscure Old Testament story filled with wisdom for finding God's will in our lives.

1. Warm-up Question: The inspiration for Sunday's sermon was a dream that Martha Flores' had in which she was told, "You have to read Samuel 9." Have you ever had a dream that offered you great insight or guidance – or otherwise just freaked you out?
2. The story of First Samuel 9 takes place in early Old Testament times when Israel was just a loose confederation of tribes with no central leader, struggling to survive amidst vicious attacks from stronger surrounding nations. As the story begins, we're told there was an Israelite named Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who had a son named Saul. Read First Samuel 9:1-10:1.
  - a. As Saul spent three days looking everywhere for his Dad's donkeys, what do you imagine was going through Saul's head? How do you think he felt? Do you think he had any idea his life was about to change forever?
  - b. Tell us about a time when your life changed unexpectedly on the spur of the moment.
  - c. In verse 6, the boy tells Saul about a prophet and that "whatever he says always comes true." In our own time, do you think God gives certain people the ability to see things most of us can't? Have you ever experienced (or observed) that?
  - d. Before Saul can ask the prophet about the lost donkeys, the prophet says, "As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, give no further thought to them, for they have been found." At this point, what do you think Saul was thinking?
  - e. Then things get even weirder. The prophet says, "And on whom is all Israel's desire fixed, if not on you?" Then he seats Saul at the head of the table, and the next morning anoints him, saying, "You shall reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them from the hand of their enemies all around." So one thing leads to another and before you know it, what began as an annoying effort to find lost donkeys led Saul to life's most important mission as Israel's first king. What do you think God is trying to say to each of us through this story?
3. Jeff suggested that the meaning of the story is that each of us is on a long journey that's supposed to lead somewhere. Much of the journey may trivial or unproductive. "I can't find the stupid donkeys!" In other words, we can't find what we're looking for. Then, somewhere along the way, unexpected opportunities arise and we realize, "I'm exactly where God intended me to be, but never would have guessed."
  - a. How do you feel about the idea that you're probably never going to be able to figure out God's will for your life, but will probably have to stumble across it?

- b. Jeff mentioned the sports concept of “letting the game come to you.” For those who weren’t there, what does the phrase mean and how might it apply to finding God’s will for your life?
  - c. One of the characters in a Wendell Berry novel says, “I can’t look back from where I am now and feel that I’ve been very much in charge of my life. I’ve made plans enough, but I see now that I’ve never lived by plan. Nearly everything that has happened to me has happened by surprise. All the important things have happened by surprise. And whatever has been happening usually has happened before I had time to expect it. And so when I’ve thought I was in my story or in charge of it, I really have been only on the edge of it, carried along. [Maybe] this [is] because we’re in an eternal story that is happening [only] partly in time.” Does this statement resonate with you? Why or why not? Tell us about a time when your plans got interrupted, and you found God’s plans were better.
  - d. Some Christians believe God has mapped out our lives in advance in precise detail (“predestination”). Others believe God places us in a zone of free will and pretty much lets events unfold as they will, rarely intervening. Yet others believe life is a complex mixture of both predestination and free will. What do you believe – and why?
  - e. Romans 8:28 says, “For we know that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to God’s purposes.” What do you think this means? And how do you square it with your view of predestination and free will?
4. On Sunday, Jeff showed us video excerpts of a “Tonight Show” dance-off between Jimmy Fallon and Mike Meyers. They each had to roll a big dice that had phrases on it, then do a dance inspired by whatever phrase turned up. To do this successfully, they had to be “in the moment” and ready to make the most of whatever turned up. Jeff suggested that finding God’s will for our life requires a similar attitude and approach. In this analogy, the dice represent circumstances beyond our control, and the dance represents our response to unexpected circumstances.
- a. Suppose some unexpected circumstance rolls into your life and you freak out, get angry, and resist with all your might. Is it possible to get so far out of God’s will that we can never get back into it?
  - b. Tell us about an unexpected circumstance that has rolled into your life right now. In a phrase or two, what’s the message appearing on the face of the dice? What would it look like for you to dance with the circumstance? In other words, what would an enthusiastic, faith-filled response to the circumstance look like for you? Are you ready to dance?

***Let go of the need to know and go with the flow!***