

Brothers and Sisters Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ...Amen. About 7 years ago after my grandmother in my mom's side passed away, my mom, my Uncle Dave, and I had the task of helping my grandfather move into a new assisted living complex. Now this was one of those places where there was an independent living section, and assisted living section, and a nursing home all in the same facility. And during the 5 years that he lived there on all three levels, we were always very impressed with the care he received. Well, as my mom talked to Grandpa about this move, she was pleasantly surprised with how open he was to this change. It's never easy for one to leave their home, but Grandpa took it in stride. Of course, it may have helped that in all those years as a Pastor, Bishop, and Hospital Chaplain he counseled many families through this transition so my guess was that he was prepared.

Well, as we were moving Grandpa in, my mom started talking to him about all the options there was in this place and what would happen over the next year if he had to transition into the different living areas. And then I heard my Grandpa say something to my mom that I had never heard him say to any one when he said, "Karen would you please Shut Up for a minute and let me say something". Now, I was in the other room with my Uncle Dave unpacking some books and it must of caught his attention as well because we both started inching closer to the door and our movements were a bit quieter as we listened in on what Grandpa was about to say. So as we got closer to the door to the other room, we heard Grandpa said to my mom "Karen, you are my daughter and I love you dearly, but sometimes you plan ahead too much and nothing in this life is predictable." He then went on to say that "I did not plan on your Mom getting sick and passing away when she did, I had never planned out when I was going to move into a place like this, and I am sure as heck not going to try and plan when I'm going to move to the assisted living wing or the nursing home wing if that ever even happens" At this point, my uncle Dave and I quit trying to pretend we were working and were just flat out eavesdropping when we heard Grandpa end that exchange by saying "God has plans for all of us that we will never know, so instead of trying to map out the rest of my life, relax and lets just get through today and tomorrow will take care of itself." After that we got back to work and did our best to hide the fact that we were eavesdropping, though I suspect my mom and Grandpa knew even though they said nothing.

And as I think back to what Grandpa said, it makes more and more sense each time I go back to it. So often we try to plan all the aspects out in our lives so that they will play out in a certain way and more oft than not, something pops up and throws a curve ball into the plans we had. We like to know how things are going to go...we like to plan out how we think things should work, and yet, before you know it things change. And dealing with this change is not always easy. We get stressed out and worry because every little thing we had planned out did not work exactly we had had planned it. Even though, if we paused, took a step back from things we'd realize that sometimes life just happens, and there is nothing we can do about it except just get through things one day at a time.

In our reading today from 1 Kings, we hear the story of the call of Elisha who is to be the prophet of Israel, an in essence, the successor to Elijah. God comes and speaks through the prophet Elijah and tells him of this and then we find Elijah going out to seek out Elisha to reveal to him what God has ordained. Of course, when we catch up with Elisha in verse 19, he's not sitting there waiting around for Elijah to come and get him. In fact, he has no idea that Elijah is coming and what God has planned for him in the future.

You see when we first find Elisha in this story he is out working on the family farm, something he had probably been doing since he was physically able to. To him, this was just another day like any other day and I suspect he felt like he was going to follow in his father's footsteps and run the farm, get married, have a few kids, and then pass the farm onto them just as it seemed his father was going to do for him.

And yet, all of a sudden, God shows up and throws a wrinkle into Elisha's life. As he's working there on the farm, all of a sudden Elijah came up to him and threw his mantle over him. And in doing this, he indicated to Elisha that God had something else in store for him. So now all of a sudden, things in Elisha's life had changed. Those plans that he may have had are now out the window and this is all thanks to God.

So then how does Elisha act? Well, we don't know what was going through his head and how long he took in giving Elijah his answer. My guess is that his head was probably spinning and he probably asked questions of himself of how this would affect his family and what plans they had for him and the farm. And yet, despite all whatever was going through his head, we know is that he accepted the call from God. But before leaving, being the good son that he was, he asked to have a chance to say goodbye to his mother and father before heading off on this new path that God had set before him. And the reading concludes with Elisha, catching up with Elijah and heading out to follow the path that God had laid down before him.

Now, I wonder what any of us would have done if we were in Elisha's shoes? Would we have given up our plans to follow the calling that God had for us? Or would we have fought the call with all our might because it did not fit nice and neatly into the plans we had already set out for ourselves? Not easy questions to answer are they.

You see, so often in our own lives we like to plan things out way in advance, we set these expectations for how everything will play out. And yet more oft than not, God steps and messes up all the plans we had figured out for ourselves. Just when we think we have things all figured out for ourselves and how things are going to go, God shows up and throws a monkey wrench into our plans? We have plans for ourselves and for others that we want to play out in a certain way and the reality is, no matter how much planning we do, nothing in this world is certain and things can change just like that.

This is as true today as it was even back in Jesus time. You see, if you go back and look at the Gospels, especially the Gospel of John, you'll find out that when Jesus came people already had plans for him. There were many who thought he was King David returned to rule over the lands and cast out all who opposed him. There were others who thought Jesus was Elijah returned from heaven and would function in a role similar to the prophets of Israel. And yet, as we know God had different plans than everyone else. Jesus Christ's death on the cross did not necessarily fit in with the plans folks had when he first appeared to them. This was not something they had planned for or prepared for and when he was resurrected, well, that really threw everyone's plans out of whack. And no one was prepared for what was happening and what was going to happen when the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, started to break out.

In fact, if you go back and look throughout scripture, there are all kinds of examples of where God stepped in and changed our plans. Noah never planned on having to build an ark, Moses never planned on leading the Israelites, David never planned on being king, and Paul never planned on being an apostle of Jesus who helped to guide the early church.

In fact Martin Luther himself had planned on being a lawyer and look what happened to him. In fact, if you were to go to any seminary today and talk to students there you will be amazed at how many of them had absolutely no plans on going into the ministry as a career; and yet God stepped in and threw that monkey wrench into their plans.

Of course, those are not the only places where we can look to see where God is jumping in and interrupting our plans. More oft than not, in our daily lives, God is there working through others to reveal his plans for us, plans that don't always mesh nicely with ours. Whether it's reaching out to someone who is in need, volunteering in various ministries in our congregations, or simply taking the time to spend talking with someone about issues in their lives at this point and time when you had planned on doing something else, God is always there interrupting our plans and calling us into service.

Now, I'm not saying that we should never plan anything. In fact, there are many advantages to planning ahead in all kinds of areas. But what we should understand is that no matter how much we plan, no matter how many things we think we have prepared for, and no matter how we think things should

play out over the long run, God is always going to be there to throw a monkey wrench into our plans when we least expect it. And what we need to be open is the fact that this can happen at any time. As children of God who have been saved from Sin, Death, and the Power of the Devil through Christ's death and resurrection, we must be open to the fact that no matter how much we plan, no matter how many details we think we have worked out, we can never plan out what God has planned for us. All we can do is put our trust in the father, lay all of our transgressions, worries, and questions at the feet of Jesus, and simply be open to what the Holy Spirit calls us to be. Amen.