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Pentecost 5

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“The Will of God Is Always Best”

Text: Mark 5:21-43; 2 Cor 8:1-9, 13-15; Lamentations 3:22-33

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

“*The Will of God is Always Best*” (LSB #758). You just sang that. Easy for you to say. Easy for you who are in good health, have a nice home to live in, have a good job, go to a good school, have plenty to eat (including *stuff* like *bacon*), nice clothes to wear, good friends, a car or maybe two, books, magazines, television, computers, internet, ipods, smartphones, games, toys, and more free time than you know what to do with. Yes, *The Will of God is Always Best* is easy to say when you live in such luxury.

But let one - *even one* - of these things go away, or get taken away, or break down, or cause trouble . . . and whose first in line at the heavenly complaint department window? And then when things go seriously wrong, when your world begins crumbling, *The Will of God is Always Best* isn't so easy to say when the will of God doesn't seem good at all.

And so it was with Jairus. His little girl wasn't just sick, she was at the point of death. She was only twelve years old. She had her whole life ahead of her. But she was slipping away. So Jairus finds Jesus, falls at His feet, and begs Him: *Please. Please come. Lay your hands on her. Your divine hands, Your creating hands, Your healing hands. Please.* And there is hope. Jesus begins to go with Him . . . *until this woman shows up.*

Imagine . . . imagine if your child was in the hospital, seriously ill, and the doctors said the next 24 hours were critical and would make the difference between life and death. And you're there, in the room, with her, worrying your head off, when all of a sudden, all those machines, all that medical paraphernalia, starts beeping and buzzing and lights are flashing and alarms are sounding, and you go rushing out into the hallway and yell for the doctors to come. And they begin running toward your child's room . . . but then they stop. They stop because a lady in the hallway needs a new bandage on her wound and they start taking care of her. Her and *her twelve-year-old wound*. It's kind of bloody.

And you're thinking: *The Will of God is Always Best*, right? NO! You're thinking:

*she's had that wound for twelve stinkin' years! She can wait! Help my daughter who may not even have twelve more seconds! Don't you understand? I need help! I need help.*

We're not told what Jairus thought, or if he wanted to complain. Maybe he never got the chance. For while Jesus was still speaking, he got those four little words that every parent dreads: **"Your daughter is dead."** It was too late. *The Will of God is Always Best?*

The story is not over yet, of course, as you heard. But we should pause here for a moment to consider the number **twelve**. This little girl was *twelve* years old. This woman had been bleeding for *twelve* years. Those are facts, but not coincidences.

Some of our youth and I were at the Higher Things conference in North Carolina this week, and the theme of the conference was: *Twelve*. Twelve is the number of the church. It is 4 times 3. Four: the number of the world, of wholeness, the four directions of the compass - east, west, north, and south. And three: the divine number, the trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **The twelve**, then, are those from all over the world, from all times and places, who are in God through Jesus Christ. Twelve is the twelve tribes of Israel. Twelve is the twelve apostles. Twelve is the church. **Twelve is you.**

So put yourself in this "Twelve" story. Have you ever thought God wasn't coming fast enough to help you? That He was delaying too long? That He didn't understand how serious your problem was? Or that He was helping the wrong people at the wrong time when He should have been helping and providing for you? Or maybe you've felt more like the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years - why was God taking so long? Why didn't He help sooner? Why did you have to suffer so much and for so long? *Ever think those ways?*

Well, imagine if Jesus had just walked past that woman. *I'll get back to you when I have the time. I have important work to do now.* A kind of "divine triage" - got to help the most needy first. Well, if that's the case, will He ever get to me and my needs, my problems, my suffering? Twelve years is a long time. It can be like when you kids ask your parents to do something with you or help you with something, and they tell you: *Later. In a little while.* You know what that means, don't you? It usually means no. For "later" never seems to come. Something always comes up. We parents are sinners, too.

But it is not that way with Jesus. *The Will of God IS Always Best.* Even when it doesn't seem it or feel it. There is no "divine triage" with God. He does what is good and best for all. He does what He does for a reason and with a purpose, even if that reason and purpose is hidden from us. Even if what He does seems the

opposite of best to you and me. It is **faith** that says: *The Will of God is Always Best*. Even when that faith is looking into a very dark future.

And so Jesus says to Jairus: **“Do not fear, only believe.”** *The Will of God is Always Best*. And Jairus gets to see what even nine of Jesus’ regular twelve disciples didn’t get to see: Jesus raise his daughter back to life again. He saw Jesus stare death in the face, and death back down.

That’s a picture of what’s going to happen with you. The world laughs at that, just as those around Jairus’ house laughed at Jesus when He said: ***The child is not dead but sleeping***. But unless Jesus returns first before you die, you will be like this little girl. You will be awoken from your sleep, your death, at the sound of Jesus’ voice. He will take you by the hand and raise you to a life that will never end.

*For that is what happened to Him*. I talked at the beginning about when things or people are taken away from us, but Jesus gave it all up - willingly - for you. St. Paul said: ***For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich***. He gave it all up for you. He didn’t try to hang onto it. He gave it all up for you, becoming not just poor, but the sinner or all sinners, that all your sins, all your grumbling, all your complaining, all your doubting, be forgiven. That all your sin that is killing you and causing you to focus on the wrong things and love and worship what you have instead of the One who gave it - that all your sin be washed away, forgiven in the blood that flowed from Jesus’ cross and onto you in Holy Baptism, and you be raised - here and now - to a new life. *Talitha cumi*. That’s what Jesus says to you in Holy Baptism. ***My child, arise***. *Talitha cumi*. That’s what Jesus is going to say to you on the last day, too.

For Jesus died for your sin, for your forgiveness. And He rose to raise you and give you life . . . just as He did for Jairus, for Jairus’ daughter, for the woman with a bleeding problem, and many, many, more.

That’s why Jeremiah could speak the words that he did, that we heard earlier: ***The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness***. Those words weren’t easy for Jeremiah to speak, to confess. For God’s people had just been defeated in war, hauled off as prisoners, and their land and Jerusalem and the Temple all lay in ruins. *The Will of God is Always Best*? Israel, as a nation, had just died! But Jeremiah knew there would be a resurrection. This dark night would end, in God’s time; and then there would be a morning. A new life. ***The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness***.

*They are new every morning.* Yes, for every morning is like a little resurrection. We lie down in sleep, tired and worn out and maybe beat up by sin, and then we rise in the morning, a little resurrection. The Lord gives us rest, and then a new day. In a way then, each night and each morning is like practice for our death and resurrection! For that day when you and I will sleep the sleep of death, tired and worn out and maybe beat up by sin, but we'll awaken in the morning of eternity, in the new day that will have no end.

Until that day, when you rise each morning - on *this* side of eternity - the love and mercy of God will be with you. Working to help and heal and save you. No triage. No favorites. No limited time and resources. Jesus is big enough to help all. *The Will of God is Always Best.*

Oh, you'll have your moments of doubt and fear and grumbling, as I do. But at those moments, perhaps that is when a Jairus or a bleeding woman will come to you and say *The Will of God is Always Best.* I know. I was there too. ***“Do not fear, only believe.”*** Or maybe you will be that Jairus or bleeding woman to someone else. Confessing the faith, confessing the truth of God's goodness and mercy, and realizing even as you speak those words how true they are.

Finally, did you notice what this little girl needed after Jesus raised her to life? He ***told them to give her something to eat.*** You, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, have been raised with Christ in baptism to a new life, too, and Jesus has provided food for His “Twelve” - for His church, for you - His very Body and Blood. The food of forgiveness, life, and salvation. The food that nourishes you not just for this body and life, but for eternal life. That you live not just now, but live forever. So come, you Twelve - take and eat. And then go - confess, serve, rejoice. *The Will of God is Always Best. Great is His faithfulness.*

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.