

This transcript was developed using an AI-based speech to text generator. We apologize for any typos or other errors.

. . . . .

“God’s Plan? (Sorry, Drake)” The Rev. Aaron M. G. Zimmerman  
(02/25/2024, Second Sunday in Lent)

. . . . .

Let us pray, Almighty God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be always acceptable in nice strength. Oh Lord, in your name we pray. Amen.

Anyone know who Aubrey Graham is? Aubrey Graham. So you may know him as the Canadian rapper Drake also has had considerable success on this side of the border as well.

In 2018, you had the number one song of the year. It also won a Grammy and that song is called God's Plan.

Can I get a show of hands who has ever heard of this song? Yes, I got some enthusiasm in the back. Praise God, Alan. Yes, yes. Well, Kara Leslie, praise God. Thank you. Kara is the mother of teenagers.

So I think there's something to that. So Drake, I will say this from the pulpit. Great rapper, mediocre singer, terrible theologian. Because in the song God's Plan, he basically says it was God's plan to take him from his rough background on those mean Canadian streets to his massive successful, huge career as a recording artist.

That was God's plan. You know, Drake's success. Maybe. But I understand wanting to know what God's plan is and hoping that God's plan is my success. I mean, wouldn't that be great? I want God's plan to be me winning it life.

Anyone here ever heard the Four Spiritual Laws? Maybe shared it with someone or been on the receiving end.

It's a little booklet that was produced in the 70s and has continued to be used, translated into many, many languages.

And it's a tool used to share the good news of Jesus Christ with people and it's the Four Spiritual Laws.

And the first law, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.

And maybe you haven't heard the Four Spiritual Laws, but you've heard something like that.

There's a tire repair shop on Waco Drive that has Jeremiah 29 on its

sign.

I have a plan to prosper you and not to harm you. It's the same kind of idea.

But the thing about that is that often in life, if what I'm living as God's plan, it doesn't feel so great all the time.

I know folks that live with chronic pain. I know people that have debilitating anxiety.

I know folks that are members of what is called the sandwich generation. Those are the folks that are caring for children and their aging parents.

And the caregiver fatigue and the burnout is quite real.

I know folks that simply feel that if this is God's plan, they don't really want a part of it.

The passages that we heard this morning from the book of Genesis and the book of Mark, Old Testament, New Testament, Abraham, Jesus, all those sorts of things.

They get at people who are dealing with God's plan. I want to talk about that and I want to talk about Florida, man.

So that's where we're going.

In Genesis 17, just keeping you awake. Just seeing if anybody is anybody with me.

In Genesis 17, God shows up to Abraham. Abraham, he renames him in the passage.

And he says, you are 99 years old. Your wife is 90, but you guys are going to have a baby, this child. This is God's plan. This is great. But what the passage doesn't show if you were to read before and you were to after. This is not the first time that God has this conversation with Abraham saying, you're going to have this miracle child.

It had happened 25 years earlier when Abraham was 75, God had appeared and said, you will have this child. This is my plan for you.

It was impossible then. It's even more impossible now.

Because God had shown his plan to Abraham, and Abraham knew there was a child coming, nevertheless, he went to plan B.

Because to be 75 and to have a baby is impossible. And so he went to plan B, which was Ishmael. He went to Sarah. Sarah and he actually kind of had this idea together.

They said, you know, God wants us to have a baby. I don't think that's happening. You and I both know what's going on here. It's a metaphorical promise.

So let's just make it happen on our own. Let's have a plan B. And so Abraham and Sarah cook up this plan and they say, they sent Abraham, he has a date.

He has a date with Hagar, who is the maid servant of Sarah, and a result of that, Ishmael is born, who appears later in Moby Dick.

But that's where he gets his start. And so here what I'm saying, God's plan. You're going to have a baby. Miracle. It's great. Abrams, that sounds great.

So over here, my plan B situation, in case that doesn't work out. And of course, later on in this very chapter, God, Abraham will laugh at

God's idea that this child will be born.

In chapter 8, Jesus tells Peter, his plan, Peter and the disciples. He says that I am going to be rejected by everybody that's powerful and I will die.

Now this is not what Peter thinks the plan should be. Jesus, God incarnate, is here on earth. And everybody knows when God comes incarnate on earth that He is going to make everything great in Israel again.

He's going to kick out the Romans whose taxes are high, get rid of big government, and He'll make everything wonderful again in Israel.

That's the whole point.

I mean, Jesus is called the son of David. He's in that line of monarchs of Israel. He's going to assume political power, sit on the throne, make everything great. That's what Peter wants. That's what the other messiahs who have come before have promised.

Now Jesus is the real one. He's healing. He's doing miracles. He's feeding people with this bread that just appears out of nowhere. He's walking on water.

Clearly, this is going to be the guy who gets it done, gets the Romans out of there, makes life great for everybody. That is the plan for Israel. And Jesus says, actually, everybody who's powerful will reject me.

I will be killed. And then I'll rise again on the third day. Maybe Peter thinks that last part is kind of a metaphorical thing.

Sort of my idea is we'll carry on after I die. But he definitely understands what Jesus says about his death. And that is not the plan. And so Peter, in one of the most spectacular sins of all time, I don't know if you feel like you may be a sinner, you know, you've done some things.

You know, there was that time in Cabo. But have you ever pulled Jesus aside and said, your plan for saving the world is all wrong.

That's what Peter does. I don't want to have no Easter. Just cancel it. I want you to be king now.

And so Jesus has to rebuke Peter for rebuking him and says, get behind me, Satan. You have your mind on human things, human plans of success and power and glory, not on divine things.

Both these people, Abraham and Peter think they know what God's plan is. But in both situations, they find out that something very different is happening.

God does have a plan. Neither Abraham nor Peter really want it. And by the way, sidebar, if you've ever asked God to show you his plan for your life and he has not done so, the reason why is because whenever he tells people his plan for their life, they're like, no, thank you. They reject it. People in general, this is what people want God's plan to be. People want God's plan to be like for Drake. They want God's plan to be for their success. And most people have an idea of what that looks like.

They know the goal, they know where they want to be, and they know how to get there. And God's job in that plan is to make it happen.

You are the captain. God is just the wind in your sails. But you know

where to steer the boat.

We want God to get us into the school or job of our choice, the relationship that we want, make life work out, make the housing situation, exactly what we want it to be.

We want to have a king bed with nine throw pillows. We want to have a new car in the driveway. We want to have the stock market always go up. We want to die at the age of 98 in our sleep peacefully and never having experienced any indigestion or joint pain ever before that time.

That's our plan. And we want God to make that happen. That's what we want.

Climb the ladder of excess from obscure Canadian high school football player to global rap superstar.

But the problem with that idea of God's plan, if this is what we think, God is just the best supporting actor.

And we are the boss, the hero. I'm here to climb the ladder of success and God's the one to get me there.

And it's based on this idea that I know what the best plan is and that I'm in control.

There are many, many people and institutions that want you to think that you know what's best and that you're in control.

That you're the master of your fate. That poem Invictus is banned in this church, by the way.

Because you are not the captain of your soul as much as you wish you were.

If you were, you wouldn't have an ulcer, you wouldn't have anxiety, you wouldn't have insomnia, you wouldn't have any broken relationships.

Thanksgiving would be a wonderful gathering on the table with no passive aggressive conversations whatsoever.

If you were the captain of your soul, but you're not.

You have the Florida man problem. Now this man, he's from Dallas.

He's considered one of the great artists to come from Texas, but he grew up in Florida.

And at the age of 16, this man wrote a poem that you all know very well.

If you got a problem, you all solve it. Check out the hook while my DJ revolves it.

Robert Van Winkle, vanilla ice. The 9-10 people knew that.

You guys are, I don't know what's going on here, but that was very funny in the other service.

You clearly are much better Christians, but the problem, what he says is, if there's a problem, you all solve it.

Again, this is the attitude many of us take. I am the one who will get it done.

I will fix it. I will solve it my own life and those around me.

And it's based on the solution that you know what's best and you have control to make it a reality.

You know what's best and you have the control to make it a reality.

Those things are often false.

And in these stories with Abraham and with Peter, both people who think they know what the right way is, Abraham has his plan B. Peter tells Jesus, no, you've got the wrong idea, this whole crucifixion stuff. Both of them think they know the right way to go and in both situations, they do not. And in both situations, God does what God wants to do because that is the thing that actually brings what they really need, which is to rest from the never-ending treadmill of control and to embrace the grace of God, the one who can actually do what is right and good and healing and reconciling and saving. All that is God's work, not ours. Because if you think you are in control and you have to make everything happen, that is exhausting. I don't know if you've ever been around someone who's very much like that, they sort of vibrate with anxiety, just sort of pours off of them, everything has to, you have to leave on time, you have to do this thing, you've got to do the thing and then there's the plan and there's the school and there's the job and there's the relationship and the timing and the grad school and all of it. It has to work out, just right, or whatever your flavor of that is. I've been there, certainly. I am a recovering control freak and I relapse a lot. But what it seems God wants to do is to take people that think they know what the plan is and to free them from that exhausting treadmill of control and to make them people who rest and trust in the grace of God and not their own wisdom or their own plans to make you someone who can hold life with an open hand and trust in the one who loves us and gave himself for us. And I've seen this happen, time it again, I've seen it happen in my life, I've seen it happen in the lives of friends where you go from someone who has sort of got life in a white knuckled control grip and you're not really happy, but you don't know how to stop. And then something breaks you open, a diagnosis, an arrest. Some sort of event shows you that you've never actually been in control ever. And when you're in that place, what I see often happen is that softens people. And they realize that they were never really in control and what they need is not a God who just is the wind in their sails but a God who will save and who will rescue. As Jesus says, it is in losing your life that you find it. But when you find it in Christ, you find one who can save you from the things that you really could never save yourself from. This loving God whose plan is your rest and your wholeness and your

peace. Amen.