

Sunday, February 6, 2022

## Let Your Will Be Done...

(Series: "Lord, Teach Us to Pray")

(Message Five)

### Scripture:

*<sup>9</sup> "This, then, is how you should pray:  
'Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...  
(Matthew 6:9-10)*

### Message:

**William Goldman wrote a little book entitled, *The Princess Bride*. It became a movie in 1987.**

As the story opens, the heroine, named *Buttercup* is doing the chores on her farm. Then we meet a young man who works on the farm named *Farm Boy*.

Whenever *Buttercup* asks *Farm Boy* to do something for her, he always replies, "*As you wish.*" That's all he ever says to her.

As they grow up (and into their hormones), *Buttercup* seems to develop a crush on *Farm Boy*. One day as he is about to leave the room, she asks him to fetch her a pitcher, which is already easily within her reach. *Farm Boy* walks over, stares into her eyes, picks up the pitcher, and whispers, "*As you wish.*"

In that moment, returning his gaze, *Buttercup* realizes that every time he says, "*As you wish,*" he was really saying, "*I love you.*"

**For centuries, those wisest about the spiritual life have suggested that this one phrase opens a person's heart to the presence of God.** There is no greater expression of love than a **freely submitted will**. *As you wish. Your will be done!*

Jean Pierre de Caussade said, "*Every moment and in respect of everything, we must say like St. Paul, "Lord, what should I do? Let me do everything you wish."*

Brother Lawrence said, "*Let us often remember, dear friend, that our sole occupation in life is to please God.*"

Gary Moon said, “*At the heart of communion with God is the whisper, ‘As you wish.’*”

Jesus said, “*As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. If you keep my commandments (i.e., do as I wish), you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments (i.e., do as He wishes) and abide in His love.*”

Jesus also said, “*This is how you should pray...your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*”

**We’ve looked at the first two petitions (*May Your Name be Holy and Let Your Kingdom Come*); this morning, we’ll look at the third.**

## **MOMENTS**

**There are moments when I remember to pray this request; moments I’m aware of what I’m asking; moments when my prayer actually impacts my behavior.**

Those moments are seldom dramatic, life-transforming, or memorable. When I get my tax refund and it occurs to me, I can be generous with it. A moment. When I’m in a meeting and realize I can set my agenda aside and cheer for someone else’s idea. A moment. When I’ve had a busy week and feel a sudden impulse to open my Bible and ask God to meet me there (He always does). A moment.

There are plenty of times when it doesn’t enter my mind to say, “*As you wish*” or to consciously remind myself that “*His will [is to] be done.*” It’s usually not because I’m defiant; just oblivious, busy and preoccupied. There are times when I’m not sure what God wants me to do, and times I feel like I’m muddling through life all alone. There are times when I simply don’t want to pray it; that is, when I choose consciously not to pray it – those are not my proudest moments.

C.S. Lewis wrote that the day is coming when everyone will have to adopt one of two postures before God: either **joyful surrender** or **defiant separation**. Looked at a bit differently, we’re either praying, “*Your will be done*” or we’re hoping that “*My will be done.*”

Our hearts are always assuming one or the other of those two postures. We’re constantly making choices: What do I do next? How will I treat this person? What will I do with this money? Where will this temptation lead me?

The heart that **learns** to say, “*As you wish...*” from one moment to the next, **opens** itself up to the Creator of the Universe, “*Our Abba, Father, in the heavens...*” The heart that **prefers** to say, “*As I wish*” **closes** itself to God and the work of His Spirit in our lives.

It doesn't matter whether our task is great or small or whether we're famous or have few views or online "friends."

**Our choice of posture is (eternally) significant.** And while our sovereign God will have His Will done, as followers of Jesus we are to open our heart to be used by God: "As you will..."

**Anne Lamott** said, "*The Gulf Stream can pass through a straw, if the straw aligns itself with the Gulf Stream.*" And that is what we pray for every time we recite the Disciple's (Lord's) Prayer – that our will aligns with His Will.

## WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD?

**On the simplest level, the Will of God is his desire for the good of all his people. God desires that good, because, as we've said, he is holy love.**

**And this is where the deep mystery of this petition begins.** If God is God (i.e., if he is **sovereign**) (and he is), and if his nature is holy **love** (and it is), then what God wants to happen is surely going to happen.

There are a few countries in our world that are still ruled by traditional kings (Jordan, Morocco, Bahrain, and Swaziland). A citizen of those countries doesn't say, "*I hope the King's servants will obey the King today.*" They will, or they won't be the King's servants anymore.

A King's wishes get carried out or the consequences are dire (We've often said, "You can't say "no" and "Lord" in the same sentence.")

If that is true for an earthly king, it's certainly true for a King *who is in the heavens*. If God is sovereign, his Will will be done in His world, His church and our lives.

We are not praying, "*May we make your will a reality*" (There are no pronouns here; this is not about us!). This petition, like the first two, is thoroughly God-focused.

If God is not sovereign over history and time as it unfolds, then there is no one holding the rudder of the ship of human destiny and life is meaningless.

Jesus taught us to pray, "*Let it be done—your will.*" It may seem like we're longing, hoping, that God's Will might actually happen. We're not. It will happen! God is sovereign. But God does provide the opportunity for us, as human beings, to "**direct**" their lives as they like and to **take** the **responsibility** for what they do (or fail to do). This is known as **free will**.

**That brings up another significant paradox in the Lord's Prayer.**

Remember: a paradox is holding two distinct truths that seem to contradict each other; so, it is not an *either/or*, but a *both/and*. (The train works only if both rails remain present and properly balanced).

So, we acknowledge that God **directs history** (i.e., He is sovereign) AND we acknowledge God **allows** humans to be **free** and responsible (i.e., we have a free will). We affirm the sovereignty of God and human freedom and responsibility. If we ignore or reject either side of this paradox, we run counter to the basic theology of the Lord's Prayer (as well as Jesus' teaching and all of Scripture).

When we pray this prayer, we affirm God's sovereignty (i.e., we confess God has a Will for his world and for us) and we confess our freedom to oppose that Will. We pray that not only will His Will be done, but that we might do it in our own lives.

We live our lives in the creative tension, in this **paradox**, between these two life-affirming realities.

**Those who know the ins and outs of electricity, know there is a significant difference between a conductor and a resistor. Both "receive" electricity (power); neither is a power "source."**

A **conductor** is willing to **let go**. Floating around the periphery of its atoms are electrons that can easily pass from one atom to another. They are more or less *free agents*. A conductor has a "generosity of spirit" (i.e., a sense of detachment) when it comes to electrons.

Spiritually, this sense of detachment is known as indifference. Ignatius of Loyola said we must cultivate this sense of indifference (indifference is not being apathetic about the issue or circumstances). It means our desire for God and His Will; it means a desire to live his kind of life. It means every other desire, idea, opinion, agenda has to take a backseat to this one absolute quest.

A **resistor**, by contrast, does not want to let go. It wants to **hang on** to its little electrons **tightly**. It clings to the status quo; its afraid to let go because it wants to keep its little possessions (electrons) intact, and it does. But it never knows much power.

The secret of the conductor is not that it is generating power (it's not), or that it is particularly strong or clever. It is simply a conduit. (Like a dimmer switch...off, on full resistance, no light; full open, full light).

The secret is, it is open and receptive to allowing the current to **flow through** it so the world can be changed from **darkness** to **light** (often by simply throwing a switch).

While the resistor prays, "*Leave me **alone**,*" the conductor prays, "***As you wish**. Your will be done.*" Each prayer gets answered.

We live in a spiritually charged universe. The flow of the Holy Spirit is all around us. We are not the power source, but the Spirit longs to flow through us. That power is now available to anyone who asks.

Jesus said, *"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him"* (**John 7:38**). (Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit).

We have very little (if any) power in our wills, but we can choose whether we will be resistors or conductors to his Will and power. And our *prayer* will be answered.

It is interesting how often resistors and conductors are paired together in Scripture. It is also interesting how often the people with the greatest human power and/or influence are the ones who resist most, and the less significant (by the world's standards) people end up being the best conduits.

Pharaoh was a resistor; he refused to follow God's instruction. Moses was a conductor. Moses had many inadequacies and shortcomings; but from the burning bush to Mount Pisgah, he learned to say, *"As you wish."*

King Saul was large and in-charge; but he shut his heart off from the flow. David was embarrassingly fallible, but the flow of God's Spirit made him incandescent.

Haman had power, but his hostile heart was a circuit breaker; Esther, considered a pretty ornament by the King, was a jolt of lightning.

Herod was called Great but held tight to his own throne; John the Baptist, although he fled to the desert, provided a power even his beheading could not stop.

The ultimate conductor is **Jesus** Himself. Frank Laubach notes that 47 times in John's gospel alone Jesus said he was under God's orders and that everything he did His Father commanded him to do: *"As you wish, Father, as you wish."*

## **ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

**In heaven, where God sits on his throne**, the will of God flows like a great river that has no **barriers** to halt its progress; on earth, however, our **sin interrupts** the flow of God's Will for the good of all his people.

God Wills that his name be hallowed, that his kingdom takes root, that his perfect Will is done. We ask that here on earth we may experience the same holiness of God, the rule of his kingdom, and his perfect Will as they experience and enjoy it in heaven.

Praying “*On earth as it is in heaven*” is critically important but its implications are often forgotten and/or ignored. This petition **obligates** Jesus’ disciples to **care** about this earth and those who live on it – ecology, stewardship of resources, justice, economics, racial reconciliation, shalom, jubilee. That is, we cannot become so heavenly minded we are of no earthly good.

**The Christian faith is not just a methodology for preparing our disembodied souls for the next world but to bring God’s Will from heaven to earth...**

We sing the Christmas song, *Away in a Manger*: “*Be near me Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay; Close by me forever, and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in thy tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.*”

We spent this past Advent and Christmas talking about the inaccuracies in our Christmas stories. Now here this song suggests the primary [sole?] purpose of our Christian faith is to “*fit us for heaven.*” That is simply wrong! (Our singing profoundly and sublimely influences our theology).

Jesus’ statement to Pilate, “*My Kingdom is not of this world,*” is better translated “*My kingdom is not from this world, if my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting.* (John 18:36 NRSV)

The central goal of the Christian faith is not just preparing people for heaven when they die - although that is a noble endeavor. In this petition, Jesus says we should pray for and prioritize His kingdom coming on earth because it **already** is in **heaven**.

Peace among people and nations, refugees, land rights, hunger, health care are all issues that have to do with this world. What happens in Ukraine, the Supreme Court, on our streets, in our schools are all issues followers of Jesus must take seriously. The origins and inner dynamics of God’s Kingdom do not evolve out of the culture, the politics, or the wisdom of this world; we are to transform this world God’s way – from His power source.

God’s kingdom is in heaven AND on earth so believers must be deeply concerned for the **earth** and all that happens to the **people** who live on it— even though we have no abiding city here (**Hebrews 13:14**).

## SUMMARY

**So back to the basics. This petition is about **surrender** (a nasty word for most people today).**

Sometimes we forget to surrender to God’s Will, but often, we just refuse. Our refusal – otherwise known as disobedience - cuts us off from God, and then our sense of guilt and inadequacy often keep us from God’s presence.

The way back requires surrendering our failures; for even if we have failed, the flow of His Spirit can be restored at any moment. All we need to do is ask.

God has an inexhaustible supply of forgiveness; he never runs out. The Bible's word for that is grace; it is God's promise that our failures never have to be the last word. If we say, "God, I am sorry. I don't want to live that kind of life. I don't want to be that kind of person. Forgive me, help me try again." he offers a fresh start.

The flow of the Spirit's power is not limited to spiritual giants like Mother Teresa and Billy Graham. God, throughout history, uses the most **unlikely people**: a prostitute named Rahab, a con man named Jacob, a cheat like Zacchaeus, ordinary and imperfect people.

He does that in his Church as well. As early believers met for prayer, "*the place where they met was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit*" (**Acts 4:31**). That's power. The **ordinary** becomes **extraordinary** when filled with the power of God.

God sends His Spirit's power; we decide if we'll be conductors or resistors; if we'll say, "*As you wish*" or "*As I wish*." It's a decision-by-decision decision. The Spirit prompts us toward the fruit of the Spirit, expressing love, celebrations of inner joy, the conviction we are at peace, etc. Our work is to offer the **surrender** of a **conductor**: *As you wish*. It is the only response that conveys our love to the Father.

**In this petition, Jesus teaches us to pray the (very) words he himself used as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. They are words not even death can stop.**

They are the same words by which the *Princess Bride* finally recognizes her true love; the same words that can align a straw to the Gulf Stream; the **same words** we pray every time we pray the prayer Jesus taught us...

*Our Abba, Father, in the heavens,*

*Holy be your Name.*

*Let your Kingdom come,*

*Let your will be done...here on earth as it is in heaven...*

*As you wish, Father, as you wish.*

Dr. Douglas Kamstra  
Covenant CRC  
7171 Willard Ave. SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49548