

Title: Your Will be Done
Text: Matthew 6.10b
Theme: Praying and doing the will of God
Series: Matthew #30
Prop Stmt Praying for the will of God means submitting to the Word of God.

Read Text:

Jesus began his public ministry of teaching by calling for people to repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand (4.17). The King of the earth had come to the earth to call a people unto himself. The people who follow him and are going to be part of his kingdom need to repent of their sin. They must acknowledge that what they have thought about God and themselves is fundamentally wrong. They must acknowledge that the way they have lived is fundamentally wrong and they must go a different direction. It is not just the fact that we sin, but our view of God is wrong. What is it exactly that we believe about God and ourselves that we need to repent of? What is it specifically that we are doing that is sin and that we need to see it as such and confess it to God and stop doing it and replace it with something else? And how do we do that? Is it will power? Is it religion by checklist? Is following Jesus just religion with a checklist of things to do from Jesus instead of a checklist from Buddha, or Mohammed, or the 10 commandments?

No! Jesus is revealing that his kingdom is not founded upon and limited to external things like checklists and organizations. His kingdom starts in our hearts. Christ goes after our hearts. This is why he begins his first publicly recorded sermon by dealing with issues in our hearts such as: humility, mourning over sin, meekness, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, being merciful, being pure in heart, being a peacemaker and being willing to suffer persecution for the sake of the kingdom of God. Following Jesus is not the way to get power, respect, fame, wealth and glory in this life. Following Jesus is a good way to get crucified. Because, even though we are the light of the world, the world does not like what we reveal. So, it wants to punch our light out. Jesus goes on in this sermon to give examples of how people whose lives are characterized by humility, mourning over sin, meekness, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, mercy, purity and peace-making put these things into practice. What does this look like? It affects your anger, it affects your lust, it affects your marriage and your view of marriage, it affects your integrity, it confronts your desire for revenge and calls you instead to really love your enemies. And above all, following Christ is not a religious game of pretending to be spiritual in order to impress people around you. We do not give money to impress others. We give and we are called to be generous givers, but not so that others will think well of us. Neither are we to pray so that others will be impressed with our style and substance. In fact, when we pray, we must not simply repeat words. Praying is not punishment. Many of you grew up in a religious formative setting, where saying the "Our Father" was part of the consequence or part of the punishment that you had to serve in order to attempt to gain the favor of God. Think of that. You sin, and the religious authority tells you that you have to do penance. You have to pray 10 "Our Father's." What kind of a view of God is that? And what if you lose count? Do you see the way that God is presented in that system? Is that how you want your children to communicate with you? They HAVE to talk to you as part of their

punishment? Instead Jesus says, “Pray like this.” And what follows is a pattern for prayer that is actually patterned after the 10 commandments.

The 10 commandments start with commands that deal with our relationship with God and then end with commands that deal with our relationship with others. The same thing is true in this prayer that Jesus taught. There are 6 petitions. The first 3 focus more on God and crying out to him for his kingdom. Therefore, the first 3 focus more on the future, while the last 3 focus more on the present. (3 vertical and 3 horizontal) We have already examined whom we are praying to: Our Father! This is a loaded statement! Jesus is teaching us that we have to start with a right view of and a right relationship with God. We are to pray for God’s name to be esteemed and to be held by us and others in great honor. We are praying for the day when all of creation bows in submission to God. In addition we are to pray for God’s kingdom to come in its fullness, which then means that we should pray for God’s will to be done on the earth as it is in heaven. This is the 3rd petition. I addressed this a little bit in the sermon two weeks ago, but I want to unpack it a little more, because I think that there is so much here that we really need to work through. This is a plea for the will of God to be done on earth like it already is being carried out in heaven. When you stop and think about it, this plea is actually a summary of the first two. In heaven the name of God is hallowed. In heaven, God’s reign is unchallenged and is delightfully accepted; but, not here; not yet anyway. So we are commanded to pray for it. But...

I. Why do we pray for God’s will to be done?

No doubt, most of you have wondered about this. Why do we pray for God’s will to be done when God is sovereign and is going to accomplish his will anyway? What good does it do to pray for God’s will to be done? Isn’t that like praying for the sun to rise in the morning and then thanking God that he answered your prayer? Now, the obvious and rather unsatisfying answer to this question is: we pray for God’s will to be done because we are commanded to. And I am not demeaning that. But, there has to be more to it because God never commands us to do something just because.

A. **God has ordained that our prayers influence his decreed will.**

1. God has a decreed will.

God has a decreed will and a desired will. His decreed will is what he has determined will happen. We looked at examples of these 2 weeks ago. God’s decreed will however, does not rob God of the ability to be in the moment, nor to respond in the moment. The fact that God knows what is going to happen and has ordained things to happen, does not rob God of the ability to be all in. For example, if we “know” that something is going to happen, we use that information to brace ourselves. If we know that the Lions are going to lose, then we brace ourselves for the inevitable so that we are protected from disappointment. If this happens year after year after year, we become calloused. Therefore, we presume that God is like us. (Wrong presumption!!!) We presume that the fact that he knows that something is going to happen and that he has determined that it is

going to happen, that he therefore, prepares himself for it and responds based on what is going to happen. But he does not do that. And neither does God treat our prayers as inconsequential or irrelevant. Over and over in the Old Testament God declares what he is going to do in terms of judgment unless of course the people repent. Or he declares what he is going to do in terms of blessing, unless the people rebel. The prayers of the people are never viewed by God as just being a good habit. Let me give you a New Testament example.

In John 11, Jesus is informed that his friend, Lazarus is sick. Lazarus has two sisters, Martha and Mary who love Jesus and Jesus loves them. v.5 tells us that “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. (6) So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.” What?! He did what?! He stayed two days longer! Why? Because he knew what was going to happen. He knew that Lazarus was sick and was going to die and that he was going to use the occasion of Lazarus’ death to bring him back from the dead and demonstrate his authority over death in a public, obvious and undeniable manner. Jesus told his disciples that this whole thing would not end with Lazarus’s death. In fact, Jesus told his disciples (11) that Lazarus was “asleep” and that Jesus was going to awaken him, when Lazarus was dead. Jesus was not lying; he was simply letting them know that the death of Lazarus was going to be different than others. Jesus had determined (decreed) for Lazarus to die so that he could be resurrected, like sleeping and waking up.

So, Jesus and his disciples head to Bethany, but before he gets there, Martha comes out to meet him. She is deeply grieved. Mary also talks with Jesus and both are expressing faith and asking questions. “If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” In other words, we know that you have power to heal. That is faith. But you were not here and we sent for you and you did not come in time and we do not understand. “When Jesus saw her weeping (33), and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. Jesus does not blow her off or dismiss her as being a pawn in his massive game of chess. v.35 simply says, “Jesus wept.” This is God, crying. This is omnipotence and omniscience fully engaged in the moment of weakness, fear of future, grief at loss and all of the questions that come flooding in as a result. Jesus is all in! All the while, Jesus knew that in a moment he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead in a miracle that would completely turn things upside down. But, the fact that Jesus knew what was going to happen and had determined what would happen did not prevent him from fully engaging in the present.

Did Jesus know that Lazarus was sick and was going to die? Yes. Did Jesus know that he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead? Yes. Did Jesus listen to the prayers and appeals of Martha and Mary? Yes. Was Jesus moved by their pleas? Did Jesus ache for these who had experienced loss? Yes. He wept as one with them, even though he was about to turn their weeping into dancing. God’s decreed will does not rob him of the ability to be in the moment, nor does it rob him of the ability to be able to respond to our prayers! Put that thought on a shelf for a minute, but don’t forget where it is because we are going to come back to it a bit later.

2. God has a desired will. (also called his revealed will)

God's decreed will is what he has determined to happen. But, what he has determined to happen is not always what he desires to happen. For example, let's say that you are a parent. Your daughter says one day, "I want to buy these designer jeans." Now, these jeans cost \$130. And you think it is absolutely insane for her to buy those jeans. She is not asking you to buy them. She is simply saying that she is going to buy them with her own money. But, your daughter is not real good at managing her money. She sees something and she wants to buy it and does not think about the long-term consequences of her decisions. Now, you could forbid her from buying those jeans. You may be able to actually prevent her from buying those jeans. However, you may also allow her to buy those jeans, against your desired will, against your counsel because you know that one day she will be living on her own and will be making those decisions on her own and it will not be about jeans, but it will be about a car, about a house, about furniture, about timeshares and a host of other things. So, sure, you could forbid her from spending that kind of money on jeans, but you know that she needs to have opportunities to fail so that she can learn from it. She doesn't know, but she doesn't know that she doesn't know. The problem is, by the time she realizes that she doesn't know is about the time she has a daughter who thinks that she doesn't know. So, you let her know that you do not think that it is wise nor right for her to buy those jeans, but you will permit it. And she buys them. And then, when she has no money for going out with her friends the next few weekends, well, you tell her she can wear her jeans around the house and look at herself in the mirror for a few hours every Saturday night.

Over and over this sort of thing happens not only between parents and kids, it happens between God and us. But, imagine what it would be like if our kids loved us so much and trusted us so much that every bit of counsel that we gave them, they not only listened to and heeded, but they loved to listen to it and obey it. "Oh dad, you are so wise and so experienced and so right. Thank you for your counsel. I am so blessed to have a dad who will tell me what I need to hear even when I do not want to hear it. I can only hope that I will marry a man one day who is just like you." And then imagine if the counsel that we gave them was absolutely perfect and would never fail them, ever. God has decreed that one day his desired will, will be completely trusted and obeyed. We are praying for that day to come. We are to pray knowing that even though God has decreed that to take place he responds in the moment to our prayers because our prayers have an impact upon how he executes his will.

We are praying for the day when God's desired will is being carried out perfectly by his people. That is the day when his kingdom comes in its finality. That is the day when the decreed will of God and the desired will of God merge into one. We pray for God's will to be done on earth because God has ordained that our prayers are part of the means that he uses to bring his kingdom on the earth. I want to give you further evidence of that as I answer the second question.

II. What is God's will?

What exactly are we praying for? We are praying for the revealed, that is the desired will of God to be followed perfectly on earth, like it is being followed in heaven. So, what is the revealed will of God?

A. It is God's will for you to come to faith in Christ. (2 Peter 3.9)

What does God want from your life? He wants you to repent of your sin and trust in Christ as your Savior and King. And God has provided all that you need for faith in Christ. God gave you a conscience that enables you to know that there is such a thing as right and wrong. God gave you the Bible so that you can know the truth about your sin and your guilt and your condemnation. But God also gave you Jesus. Jesus did for you what you could not do for yourself. Jesus lived a perfect life in your place and then died on the cross in order to pay the penalty for your sin. His grace has planned it all. It is mine now, to believe. And God has even provided the faith for you to believe. Your acceptance by God is NOT based on what you can do for God. It is not based on what religious class you attended, what ceremony you participated in, what label you born with, or what church you attended. Your acceptance by God is based on what Christ has done for you, which must be embraced by faith.

By the way, if it is the will of God for people to come to faith in Christ, it is the will of God for us to witness to others about Christ. It is the will of God for churches to preach the gospel. It is the will of God for churches to grow and plant other churches. It is the will of God for churches to support and send missionaries to plant churches and to support church-planting efforts in other countries.

B. It is God's will for you to be sanctified. (1 Thessalonians 4.2-8)

Ok, so a guy, who professes to be a follower of Christ, moves in with his girlfriend and you say, as a friend of mine did the other day, "What are you doing?" And the guy says, "Well we prayed about it and we feel that it is okay. After all, the Lord would not have brought us together if he didn't want us to actually be together." Hold the phone! Ok, what just happened there? What just happened is disastrous, yet pervasive. People look at a situation and they draw their own conclusions from it. Usually, they draw the conclusions that they want. For example, I have heard women say that they do not need to submit to their husbands because they are more spiritual than their husbands. In that case, the girl is saying, based on this circumstance, I am free to disregard the clear instructions of the Lord.

See what I mean? The couple that says, "Well if the Lord didn't want us to be together then he would never have brought us together" are taking their views and superimposing them on the situation instead of accepting the clear, unmistakable, unarguable Word of God. You cannot be in the will of God and be involved in sexual impurity. If you think that the Lord says it is okay, then you are listening to a spirit who is NOT the Holy Spirit.

So, it is God's will for you to come to faith in Christ. It is God's will for you to grow in purity and godliness.

**C. It is God's will for you to be thankful in all circumstances. (1
Thessalonians 5.18)**

Corrie Ten Boom and her sister Betsie were Christians who lived in Holland during W.W. II and were imprisoned by the Nazi's because they hid Jews in their home. Corrie tells the story in her book, *The Hiding Place*. She and Betsie have been moved to Ravensbruck. The horror and utter humiliation of the camp is almost beyond description. 1400 women crammed into living conditions of stench, filth and fleas.

"Betsie and I followed a prisoner-guide through the door at the right. Because of the broken windows, the vast room was in semi-twilight. Our noses told us, first, that the place was filthy: somewhere, plumbing had backed up, the bedding was soiled and rancid. "Then as our eyes adjusted to the gloom we saw that there were no individual beds at all, but great square tiers stacked three high, and wedged side by side and end to end with only an occasional narrow aisle slicing through. "We followed our guide single file--the aisle was not wide enough for two--fighting back the claustrophobia of these platforms rising everywhere above us...At last she pointed to a second tier in the center of a large block. "To reach it, we had to stand on the bottom level, haul ourselves up, and then crawl across three other straw-covered platforms to reach the one that we would share with--how many? "The deck above us was too close to let us sit up. We lay back, struggling against the nausea that swept over us from the reeking straw...Suddenly I sat up, striking my head on the cross-slats above. Something had pinched my leg.

"*Fleas!*" I cried. *'Betsie, the place is swarming with them!'* "We scrambled across the intervening platforms, heads low to avoid another bump, dropped down to the aisle and hedged our way to a patch of light. "Here! And here another one!" I wailed. 'Betsie, how can we live in such a place?' "Show us. Show us how.' It was said so matter of factly, it took me a second to realize she was praying. More and more the distinction between prayer and the rest of life seemed to be vanishing for Betsie. "*Corrie!*" she said excitedly. *'He's given us the answer!* Before we asked, as He always does! In the Bible this morning. Where was it? Read that part again!" "I glanced down the long dim aisle to make sure no guard was in sight, then drew the Bible from its pouch. 'It was in First Thessalonians,' I said. We were on our third complete reading of the New Testament since leaving Scheveningen."In the feeble light I turned the pages. 'Here it is: "Comfort the frightened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all..." It seemed written expressly to Ravensbruck."Go on,' said Betsie. 'That wasn't all.' "Oh yes:'..."rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus." "That's it, Corrie! That's His answer. "Give thanks in all circumstances!" That's what we can do. We can start right now to thank God for every single thing about this new barracks!" I stared at her; then around me at the dark, foul-aired room. "Such as?" I said. "Such as being assigned here together.' "I bit my lip.' Oh yes, Lord Jesus!" "Such as what you're holding in your hands.' I looked down at the Bible. "Yes! Thank You, dear Lord, that there was no inspection when we entered here! Thank You for all these women, here in this room, who will meet You in these pages. "Yes,' said Betsie,

'Thank You for the very crowding here. Since we're packed so close, that many more will hear!' She looked at me expectantly. 'Corrie!' she prodded. "'Oh, all right. Thank You for the jammed, crammed, stuffed, packed suffocating crowds.' "'Thank You,' Betsie went on serenely, 'for the fleas and for--' "The fleas! This was too much. 'Betsie, there's no way even God can make me grateful for a flea.' "'Give thanks in all circumstances,' she quoted. It doesn't say, 'in pleasant circumstances.' Fleas are part of this place where God has put us. "And so we stood between tiers of bunks and gave thanks for fleas. But this time I was sure Betsie was wrong."

But Betsie was not wrong. The fleas were an incredible nuisance, but the women were able to have Bible studies in the barracks with a great deal of freedom. They were never bothered by the supervisors coming in and harassing them. They later found out that the fleas kept the supervisors out. (Ambassadors, who happen to be in prison)

D. It is God's will (most likely) for you to suffer. (1 Peter 4.19)

Peter says that we should not be surprised when we are called to go through a fiery trial as if this is something that is strange (v.12). But, we are to rejoice because when we suffer for the sake of Christ, it provides us with an opportunity to put the gospel of Christ on display and the gospel of Christ is the most important message that could ever be broadcast. If our suffering is the means that God uses to broadcast his message to others, then while suffering itself is grievous, we can rejoice that God will use this to bring about the salvation of his people.

"Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."

Conclusion:

Our praying and living of "your will be done" is used by God to hasten the time of the return of Christ. (2 Peter 3.8-13) God has not only ordained that our prayers affect his decreed will, but our living affects it as well.

My understanding of this text is that the Lord's return to deliver us out of persecution and trial may seem slow, but it is not really slow. What you think is slowness is actually patience on the part of God. He is not willing that any of his children to perish. He knows every single one who will trust in him. Now the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night but that day is not going to come until everyone whom God has chosen has come to faith in Christ. So, you want the day of the Lord to come? You want the kingdom of God to come? You want his will to be done on earth like it is in heaven? Then let's get serious about living for the King in holiness and godliness with eyes that are awaiting his return and witnessing to others, which in turn will hasten his coming. Because, when the last one comes home, then, here comes the Groom to get his bride. Here comes the King to get his Kingdom.