



Sermon, October 9, 2016
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Coburg and Junction City United Methodist Churches

The Prayer That Changes Us #6: “Thy Will Be Done”

Matthew 6:9-13

New International Version (NIV)

9 “This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

10 your kingdom come, **your will be done**, on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation,^[a] but deliver us from the evil one.^[b]”

Footnotes:

- a. [Matthew 6:13](#) The Greek for *temptation* can also mean *testing*.
- b. [Matthew 6:13](#) Or *from evil*; some late manuscripts *one, / for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Review of Sermon Series So Far

We are now about halfway through this sermon series on ***The Prayer That Changes Us***. When we began the series, I talked about how prayer affects us by operating at the level of conscious thought. Repeated prayers start to affect what it is we think about, and consequently, what we set our hearts on. The Prayer of Jesus focuses our consciousness and desires upon God, and bringing about God’s will in the world. In order to do this, we begin by cultivating a radical intimacy with God, by opening ourselves to God’s guidance and to the shaping of our lives and characters by the Holy Spirit. Praying “Abba, Father,” is rooted in this intimacy. We then talked about heaven as being that realm or state of being in which God is active. The prayer of Jesus is designed to maintain the activity of God within us. As a means to maintain God’s activity, we shift our perceptions to see God in the things God has created, to find the Creator’s signature everywhere. This is how we hallow God’s name. But not only do we look for God everywhere, we invite God in to be a permanent resident in our lives. “Thy Kingdom come” is an imperative

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invitation for God to move in and set up housekeeping, not only in our individual lives, but in our world as well. Today, I want us to look closely at the next phrase, "Thy will be done," which is really the central core of this prayer.

What do we mean by "God's will?"

Greek word, θέλημα – desire, intention, delight. This word reflects God's deepest desire and delight. This deep delight is to benefit His creation, lift it up, bring it to its fullest completion and potential.

But we need to clear up some confusion concerning the nature of God's will. The first thing we need to understand is that it is not iron hard, not imposed, not capricious. Psalm 103 reminds us of God's mercy, lovingkindness and grace:

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.

He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.

For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.
(Psalm 103:8-14)

The next thing to understand is that not everything that happens is an expression of God's will. I'm particularly thinking here about those things we say when someone young dies tragically: "God wanted her to be with him," or "God never gives us more than we can handle," or "We can't understand it now, but God had a reason." Here is what Jesus says about such things: "your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish." Look it up: Matthew 18:14. Accidents happen, and there is a greater will underlying all things – a will for good,

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benefice, fulfillment and fullness of Life. This will of God is expressed by sending Jesus, who said that this was his mission: "I have come that they might have life and to its fullest." Look it up: John 10:10.

Think of it this way: God's will is the gravity that pulls all things to their goal, fulfillment, completion. We are like the little rivulets of water after a rain, streams, creeks, rivers and then the ocean. God's will is the gravity pulling all these things.

The gravity of God's will that underlies everything is for the full and complete good and blessing of all things. For us human beings, that means that we should grow into the stature of Christ (not doing miracles, but putting on the Large Mind of Christ). This doesn't mean walking on water or being perfect. It means moving from the scattered pulling of all our individual wills in all our self-driven directions into a greater mindfulness of others, and expanding our sense of self into the greater Self. This is what Jesus means in John 15:1-11 where Jesus talks about abiding in God, like the branches abide in the vine. Abiding in God means to hitch our lines to the pull of God's gravity and deepen our spiritual lives the way they are meant to be deepened, and to align the decisions of our lives in accord with the basic outlines of the way of God that Christ came to demonstrate. For Jesus this is summed up simply in terms of loving one another, and actually loving others as part of ourselves or as part of the Greater Self of which we all are a part, and in which we all participate.

Let me offer one example of the effects of aligning our wills and consciousness according to the mind of Christ and to God's will: the national debate about Syria. It is a given that wandering into issues concerning the Middle East is wandering into an ancient and very modern morass. Nobody has a lasting answer. Everybody recognizes it is a mess, some of which we and many other nations have had a hand in creating. But this issue from a spiritual standpoint is this: What spiritual resources do we have to help us as Christians discern a response that reflects the will of God? We have many resources in the Bible regarding this. Injunctions against killing. Injunctions about doing justice. Injunctions

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about seeing your neighbor's need and doing something to help meet that need. But this still remains on the surface, and exhibits a dualistic, separated way of thinking of "us and them." The deeper and bigger mind of Christ suggested by abiding in Christ is that we begin to identify with the Syrians, to see and understand that they are not separate from us. Then we understand that when Jesus says "love your neighbor as yourself," that it means that we are to love our neighbors not just *the same way we love ourselves*, but that we are to love them *as being a part of ourselves*, because we are a part of a greater Self. They are also part of this greater Self. To move into this level of the will of God moves our deliberations deeper. What we do to them we are doing to ourselves as well. What we do to them affects us. Realizing our deep connectedness can open us up to responses that might not occur to us, and might be more beneficial and lasting because we start to perceive things from the standpoint of the Syrian part of our Self.

"Let it be" Beatles, Genesis and Jesus

It is the great loving, gracious, mercifully kind Will of God that we want to happen in the world. Do you remember the song that the Beatles sang shortly before they disbanded in the early 70's, "Let It Be?" Well, that is literally what we are praying here. The "be done" part of "Thy will be done" is a Greek word, γενηθήτω. It is the aorist imperative of γίνομαι (to become, come to pass, be done). The aorist imperative calls for something to come into being. It is the same word used in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) in Genesis 1:3, 6, "Let there be..." Jesus tells us to use the same word that God is quoted as using to create the world! Do you see how radical this prayer is? Do you see how praying it might change you, if you really understand what you are praying?

Hitching our Wagons

In 1862, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote an essay in *The Atlantic* in which he said, "Now that is the wisdom of a man, in every instance of his labor, to hitch his wagon to a star, and see his chore done by the gods themselves... Hitch your wagon to a star. Let us not fag in paltry works

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which serve our pot and bag alone. Let us not lie or steal. No god will help. We shall find all their teams going the other way; every god will leave us. Work rather for those interests which the divinities honor and promote - justice, love, freedom, knowledge, utility." (Ralph Waldo Emerson, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1862/04/american-civilization/306548/> Also found online at <http://www.users.ch/tio.family/page172.html>)

That phrase, "Hitch your wagon to a star" has come to mean hooking ourselves onto a greater purpose and power in the universe. When we pray the words, "Thy Will be done," we are hitching our little wagon-wills onto the Great Star that guides the universe, and loves that universe, and desires and delights deeply in every good, beneficial and beautiful thing that can happen to that universe, and every one of us everywhere across this world.

"Let it be!"

"Let God's will be done!"

Amen!