

“Your Will Be Done”

Genesis 50:1-21; James 4:13-17

When we say that “thy kingdom come” it is the same thing as saying “thy will be done”. I want us to think about this... when are praying for God to use us and everything else in creation and the far reaches of the universe to accomplish God’s purposes. This is a BIG ASK. “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” from the *King James Version* of the Lord’s Prayer. It is the second of six petitions in this model prayer Jesus wants each of us to learn and understand. Come to think of it, the Lord’s Prayer is actually 6 prayers in 1, 7 if you count the “amen” at the end!

Learning to pray the Lord’s Prayer is like learning to read. If you were learning to read you would first need to learn the alphabet and then small words and then short sentences. This is what the Lord’s Prayer does for us. It provides us with the ABC’s of praying. It is a place to start...we *focus upon the Father who is in heaven only as a beginning place*. A holy name, a hallowed name, a beautiful name, a trustworthy name, a beloved name, and a mysterious name...

When we move to the second petition or “BIG ASK” *we ask for help but in a way that is NOT SELFISH* and puts us at the center of the Universe. “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done” is not “my kingdom come, my will be done”!

The theologian N.T. Wright says that "heaven" and "earth" are actually the two interlocking arenas of God's good world. Heaven is God's space, where God's writ runs and God's future purposes are waiting in the wings. Earth is our world, our space. At the end of the Book of Revelation it isn't about humans being snatched up from earth to heaven. The holy city, New Jerusalem, *comes down from heaven to earth*. God's space and ours are finally married. That is what we pray for when we pray until "thy kingdom come." The Kingdom of Heaven is closer than we think—God’s presence is closer than you or I know.

Leslie Weatherhead was the Pastor of the City Temple in London, a Methodist church, during WWII. It was during this time that his church building was destroyed during the Blitzkrieg. That day, September 7, 1940, more than nine hundred German aircraft, including bombers and fighter

planes, attacked the city, killing thousands of men, women, and children. After darkness fell, a second wave of bombers attacked, continuing the bombardment for eight hours, ending just after 4:00 a.m. This terrible day began a series of night raids on the city of London that continued for fifty-seven consecutive nights leaving more than thirty thousand Londoners dead and another fifty thousand injured.

In response to this horror Weatherhead wrote a slim little volume in 1944 called *The Will of God* to address the grieving Londoners that stands the test of time even today so many years later. He addressed the confused and loose thinking about the will of God. He said that there is:

1. The *intentional will of God*.
2. The *circumstantial will of God*.
3. The *ultimate will of God*.

Weatherhead said that confusion leading to despair arises because we use the phrase “the will of God” to cover all three, without making any distinction between them.

The *intentional will of God* is that no one should perish. Jesus said in the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel and the fourteenth verse: “It is NOT the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”

God’s intent for us is that wars should cease, diseases be healed, children be educated, people live long productive lives, the hungry are fed, that police officers should not kill citizens, and vigilantes should not kill public safety servants.

The literal Greek word for the Lord’s *will* is *thelo*. It means “God’s delight” for us and in us. God’s will or delight for us is what is good for us and others. It is that simple, but it is sometimes thwarted by the evil that happens to us.

Weatherhead said, “Turning to the Cross as the supreme example, the *intentional will* of God was not that Jesus should be crucified, but that he should be followed. The *circumstantial will* of God, God’s will in the circumstances which evil provided, was that Jesus should accept death.

When I was a teenager I attended a church youth group where one of the favorite teaching and preaching topics was “Knowing and Doing the Will of God”. Somehow the message was that God has a perfect will for each of us got terribly twisted and manipulative to say that if somehow we mess up just once on doing God’s will or miss it by marrying the wrong person, or by choosing the wrong career, or doing something else that messes up God’s intent for us we will miss out on God’s best for our life.

Friends, it is only when things get horribly messed up that we are able to discover or discern what is the will of God. Think of the story of Joseph in Genesis 50. It is the very last chapter of the Book of Genesis. His father Jacob dies. His brothers whom he had already forgiven for selling him into slavery years ago are living with him in luxury in the land of Egypt. Now that their father Jacob is dead, his brothers wonder:

“What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?”

But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.* So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Joseph knew that God had been with him through all the circumstances, the ups and down of his life. It is only a spiritually mature person who can say, *“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”*

The *ultimate will* of God is our total salvation as persons, body and soul, and as a planet. It is the redemption of all things.

In my time as pastor at Jackson FPC I visited many people as part of my pastoral work. I saw folks seeking counseling, couples getting married, attended community meetings, and held denominational responsibilities. One thing that I did with great help from the deacons was the visiting people who were in the hospital as well as those under hospice care.

Those in hospice have been “fighting the good fight” and are running out of energy. For these I would want to say and would pray in my heart, “Let go and let God’s kingdom come. Let His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” In fact, I do say this. I pray this. You should pray this. This is the prayer for the *ultimate will* of God as difficult and as unwanted as it is. Sometimes the best thing for a person and their family is to let God’s will be done. Doctors and modern medicine are gifts from God, but sometimes we abuse these gifts by allowing or pushing a person to hold on longer than they should.

Dr. Paul Tournier was a Swiss physician who wrote at length about psychology and Christianity. He once commented:

We are nearly always longing for an easy religion, easy to understand and easy to follow; a religion with no mystery, no insoluble problems, no snags; a religion that would allow us to escape from our miserable human condition; a religion in which contact with God spares us all strife, all uncertainty, all suffering and all doubt; in short, a religion without a cross.

When we pray “your kingdom come...your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” we are recognizing our limitations and God’s greatness. We are recognizing that our faith has a cross in it, and beyond the cross there is resurrection!

Reverend Dr. James D. Hegedus  
Mason First Presbyterian Church  
October 1, 2023