

This morning I am in the third week of a sermon series on prayer entitled “Lord, teach us to pray.” This title comes from Luke 11:1:

Luke 11:1 - One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Evidently there was something about how Jesus prayed that piqued the disciples' curiosity and led them to ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. And there really are few things more important than knowing how to pray, for it is how we communicate with the God of the universe and access His love, grace, and power. Two weeks ago, we looked at the intro and the first line, “Our Father in heaven.” We talked about how prayer is communication with God, not a show for others, how prayer is not a magic formula or technique. And we talked about how Jesus from the very beginning holds up the need for both reverence and intimacy in our relationship with God. God is the King in heaven, but He is also our Father. He is our Father, but He is also the king. He is concerned about the needs of His children, and He is also all-powerful. That is who we come to when we pray. Last week, we looked at the phrase “Hallowed be your name,” and how when God invites us to praise Him, it is an invitation to enjoy Him. We talked about how beginning our praying with praising God for who He is, what He has done, and what He has promised truly puts everything else in the proper perspective.

This morning, I want to read the entire passage again this morning, and then focus on the phrase “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The goal again is to understand what prayer is all about and become better at praying, that we might know God better.

Matthew 6:5-13 - “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of **their many words**. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

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 Forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from the evil one.'

As I said in the first week of this series, **the great irony of the Lord's prayer is that Jesus tells us that prayer should not be just babbling words, but somehow the Lord's Prayer has been turned into just that.** How many times have you been guilty of saying the words without really knowing what your saying, as if the prayer were some magical formula to get what you want from God? The clearest evidence of this is the phrase we will be looking at this morning: "**your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**" Think about those words. Do you even understand how explosive, how paradigm-shifting, the words of that prayer are? Is that REALLY what you want when you say those words? Or are you just reciting words because you think that's what God wants to hear? I mean, what do you understand the essence of that phrase to be? Is it not saying that what I want, my desires, my dreams, are secondary to God's? Am I not saying that I am willing to give up control of my life and let God be in control, no matter what might happen to me?

Listen to how Richard Alleine in 1755 interpreted this prayer:

*I am not longer my own, but Thine. Put me to what Thou wilt, rank me with whom Thou wilt; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for Thee or laid aside for Thee, exalted for Thee or brought low for Thee; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things; let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to Thy pleasure and disposal.
 And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father; Son and Holy Spirit, Thou are mine, and I am Thine. So be it. And the Covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.*

And so, this is the first thing we learn from this prayer:

- 1) **The purpose of prayer is not to bend God's will to ours, but to submit our will to His**

Once again – the Lord’s prayer is not meant to be a magic formula or technique. It is a model that Jesus has given us for how to pray. Coming to God with both intimacy and reverence as our Father in heaven. Praising Him for who He is, what He has done, and what He has promised to do, and praying that He would receive the glory and honor He deserves, in our life, in the church, and in this world. **And now – before we ask for anything – it is willingly yielding ourselves to Him, submitting our will to His will, our seat on the throne of our life to His.** So, let’s just make that perfectly clear before we go any further. This prayer is dynamite, set to blow up your kingdom, wrestle any semblance of control you had out of your hands, and subdue your dreams and desires to His dreams and desires. Think before you dare mindlessly pray this prayer.

The purpose of prayer is not to bend God’s will to ours, but to submit our will to His. It is to come into God’s presence in order to align ourselves with His priorities, with His heart, with His will. **As we will see, this does not mean that I can not ask for things.** Jesus still tells us that prayer involves asking for things. But, the priority here is to submit, to yield, our will to His. Saying “your will be done” is not a prayer of resignation, as if you’ve just resigned yourself to the fact that God will do whatever he wants. No – “your will be done” is an audacious prayer of submission, signing up for God’s plan for our lives.

And what is God’s will for our lives? Many things, but here are a few:

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

He wants all to be saved.

Matthew 22:34–39 - Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ Jesus replied: **“ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’**

He wants us to love Him and love others.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 - It is God’s will that you should be sanctified

He wants us to be sanctified, to be holy, to be set apart, to be like Jesus.

Micah 6:8 - He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

The purpose of prayer is not to bend God's will to ours, but to submit our will to His. And while our will is usually about our lives and the lives of those we love, His will is about more than just our individual lives and needs. Jesus tells us to pray "your kingdom come." We do not live in the time of kings, but I think the simplest definition of God's kingdom is that it is wherever God is king. Wherever God rules. It is not a place, and it is not a matter of earthly politics or government. As Jesus said to Pilate:

John 18:36 - Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

The kingdom of God is a matter of being in a right relationship with God the King. Wherever people have rejected God in order to be their own rulers, to be in control of their own lives, the kingdom of God, the rule and reign of God, is not present. But wherever a man or woman have bent the knee to God and enthroned Him as Lord of their lives, that is where the kingdom of God is. To pray that God's kingdom would come, therefore, is a prayer for more people to come to faith in Jesus, to enthrone Him as Lord of their lives. It is a prayer for evangelism, for missions, a prayer that all would be saved. And it is a prayer for justice and righteousness to reign, for wherever God is Lord, there is justice. And wherever there is injustice and unrighteousness in this world, it is because people have rejected God and His will and decided to pursue their own will. Your kingdom come is a prayer for mission and for justice and for righteousness. May you reign in my heart, having your way in my life. May you reign over the hearts of men and women, that all might bend the knee to you and enthrone you as Lord. May you reign over this world, that evil empires and terrorists and greed and wars and abuse might end, and that justice and righteousness might be the way we all live with each other.

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- 2) Do not pray "your will be done" unless you are willing to find out what His will is and submit to it

Some of you might remember that at this time last year I preached through Philippians. This letter, written by Paul, begins with these words: *Philippians 1:1-2 - Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus.*

The word translated servant is the word “doulos,” which also means slave. Think about the characteristics of a slave. A slave belongs to another person. They are not free, but are the property of a master. A slave’s schedule is dictated by the master. And a slave has no rights, only responsibilities, duties to perform. To pray “your kingdom come, your will be done” is to offer yourself to God as His servant, to submit your will to His will. It means you willingly give up your rights and responsibilities in order to discover His will, His direction for your life, and to yield yourself to it like a slave to a master.

Among other things, it means:

Seek Him in the morning and return to Him throughout the day

If you truly believe that Jesus is not only your Savior but Lord, seek him in the morning, like a slave reporting to the master for duty. Return to him throughout your day to check in with what His will is for your life. This is where we have a lot to learn from some of the ancient practices of the church like the Daily Office. The Daily Office is not a calendar of quotes from your favorite NBC sitcom, but is the ancient practice of turning to God at set times throughout the day to be with Him. Setting aside times to check in. In many monasteries, there will be a schedule like this:

Vigils – 3:45 am

Lauds – 6:00 am

Prime: 6:25 am

Sext – 12:15 pm

None – 2:00 pm

Vespers – 5:40 pm

Compline – 7:40 pm

At these times, monks would stop their work and gather for silence and worship and recentering themselves on God. What would a daily rhythm look like for you? Morning. Lunch time. When you get home from work. When the kids go to sleep. How can you check in with Him regularly throughout the day?

The most important work is to be with Him, to be filled up by His Spirit, to be centered on Him and align your will once again to His. Everything else flows out of that.

John 15:4-5 - *Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

Know His Word

When we talk about seeking the Lord's will, we're not talking about asking what kind of cereal to eat. I'm not talking about looking for signs and impressions. He has told you His will in His Word. If you want Him to be Lord, then you need to know His Word. This is where He will speak to you the most regularly.

Romans 12:2 - *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Obey Him

Don't just seek His will, but submit to Him. Do what He says.

James 1:22-25 - *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

Do not pray "your will be done" unless you are willing to find out what His will is and submit to it. To belong to Jesus and know Him and have His Spiritual life empower and flow through you. To let Jesus dictate your life and schedule and decisions. To lay down your rights, pick up your responsibilities, and fulfill the duties that Jesus gives him to do. What will it look like for you to live with Jesus as Lord, and what step can you take today towards seeking Him in the morning and returning to Him throughout the day, to knowing His word, and obeying Him?

3) The one to whom we submit our will knows us better and loves us more than we do ourselves

All of this talk of submitting our will to another has to bring up the “why” question for some of you. After all, **we live in the land of the free**. We belong to a culture that elevates freedom and choice and human rights as three core, essential values. We have forefathers who left the tyranny of the king of England four centuries ago, and men and women who have fought valiantly to protect those freedoms, and other brave men and women who have fought for the rights of every individual. And so, to choose to emphasize submission, servitude, and responsibility, instead of freedom, choice, and rights, is completely counter-cultural and seems so strange. After all, who in their right mind would willingly choose to surrender their rights, their freedom to choose, and their independence to another? How could that be preferable to doing whatever it is we want to do and living however we choose to live? Maybe you’ve even heard people scoff at you or at Christians as people who don’t think for themselves, who need someone to tell them what to do. Is that what is going on here?

But here’s the thing. **We are not just laying down our will and our control. We are giving it to our God.** The God who created us and knows us better than we know ourselves. Who loves us so much that he gave up his life on the cross for our sins.

***Romans 5:6-8** - You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

He is the God who promises to take care of all of our needs:

Romans 8:32 - He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Matthew 6:33 - **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

And He is the God who works all things together for good for us

***Romans 8:28** - And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

And God is the one who has given us power through His Holy Spirit:

John 14:12–17 - Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. “If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

And above all, we are submitting to someone who submitted His will in order to save us:

Jesus prayed these words in the Garden of Gethsemane before He went to the cross to die, in **Matthew 26:39** - Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

When you pray “your kingdom come, your will be done,” you are praying a radical prayer of self-denial, but you are also making the most logical decision a person can make. After all, if someone created you, knows you better than you know yourself, proved their love for you by dying in your place, has power available to help you do anything, then surely the wisest thing you can do is to give them the keys to your life.

When you stop to think about it, this concept of giving up your freedoms and rights in order to follow the lead of another person, is not as foreign as it seems. Think of athletes with coaches, or musicians with their instructors, who submit themselves to another because they believe that their coach or instructor can bring something better out of them than they can bring out of themselves. And there are others who willingly submit themselves to another person because they believe in the mission or purpose of that person, and want to join him or her in their journey, like in the military or in a company or organization.

The bottom line is that ironically, the choice to submit your will to God’s will and to seek His kingdom above your own ends up becoming the most freeing decision you can ever make. You are surrendering your life to the one who will unlock your greatest potential, as His lordship in your life can transform you into the person

you were created to be, empowering you to be and do what you could never be or do on your own.

John 10:9-10 - *I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

And the choice to follow Jesus, to live as His servant, gives your life its greatest possible purpose, the mission of saving people from death and bringing God's kingdom of love, justice, and peace to this broken world.

So what will that look like specifically for you to pray and live out this prayer? I really want to buy that outfit, but Lord, you have told me to live generously, giving to the church and to people in need, so Lord, not my will but yours be done. I really want to sleep around and look at pornography, but Lord, you told me that my sexuality was to be reserved for my spouse, so Lord, not my will but yours be done. I really want to trash this person's reputation who hurt me, but Lord, you told me to forgive and to bless those who persecute me, so Lord, not my will but yours be done. Lord, I really want to stay home on Sunday or maybe have the church service on in the background, but you told me not to forsake gathering together, so Lord, not my will but yours be done. Lord, I really want to divorce my spouse and be with another person, but Lord, you told me that marriage I am to have a marriage that reflects the love between Jesus and His church, so Lord, not my will but yours be done. Lord, I really want to use all my free time watching sports and playing video games, but you told me to use the gifts you have given me to serve others, so Lord, not my will but yours be done. Lord, I really can't stand this person, but you told me that love is patient, kind, gentle, and keeps no record of wrongs, so Lord, not my will but yours be done.

As Jesus put it in **Matthew 10:39** - *Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.*

Not my will but yours be done, Lord. I get off the throne of your life and ask that your kingdom, your reign and rule, would come in my life and in this world as it is in heaven.