

# “Your Will Be Done...”



A contentious political debate came down to two candidates, and during

the course of one of their debates, one candidate said to the other, “The difference between you and me is that I have a set of values based on my faith, and you don’t.” The other candidate objected to this saying, “I have a faith; I have so much faith. I pray everyday.” “No, you don’t,” the first candidate snapped back. “Do to!” the candidate defended himself, “I pray the Lord’s prayer every day, and I’ll prove it to you.” The first candidate said, “You go ahead. In fact, I’ll give you \$20 if you can recite the Lord’s Prayer right here on this debate stage.” So, the second candidate started to say, “Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep.” The first candidate pulled out his wallet with \$20, and said, “Man, I didn’t think you’d really be able to do that.”



Most of us know the Lord’s Prayer probably better than these two

politicians. We probably don’t even need to prove it since we just said it together. But there’s a deeper meaning to the prayer that we sometimes miss. Jesus gave this to us as a pattern of prayer: “Pray like this....” he’s said. It’s a pattern, a starting point, and we’re meant to unpack it further. This is what we’re trying to do over the next few weeks because the Lord’s prayer can develop our faith as we pray it not just by rote and ritual, but rather really marinate and focus on the words of this beloved prayer.

Two weeks ago, we talked about the portion of the prayer focused on hallowing God’s name: “hallowed be thy name.” As we talked about, hallowed means to make holy, to revere and recognize as awesome. When we pray, “Hallowed by your name,” we aren’t asking God to act in a way that is contrary to God’s nature. What we’re doing in asking God to uphold the holiness of the divine name (as it says in the Common English Bible)

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is reminding ourselves that when we begin to pray, we're shaping our own heart around this idea that God's name should be hallowed, made holy, and proclaimed.



Today, we turn our attention to the second phrase: “Your kingdom come;

your will be done.” Father Daniel Harrington, a Jesuit scholar says that this one statement is the central concern of the Lord's Prayer. And it's really the central concern of Jesus' life and by extension our life that we live in Jesus' name. If we understand this phrase, I Jesus' deepest desire would be that God's kingdom would come and that we would become agents of making that happen and that God's will would be done and that we would join Jesus in making that the desire of our hearts and lives.

I mentioned this two weeks ago when we talked about “hallowed be YOUR name” but the “thy” or “your” in these two phrases is important. It stands against our kingdom coming and our will being done. Whether we want to admit it or not, we have a kingdom: we have things that are in our control, and some of us want more things to be in our control... And we have a will. We have a vision for what we want the world to look like and how we want the world to operate. But the Lord's prayer offers us the inherent choice between making the world look more like what \*we\* want or making the world look more like what \*GOD\* wants the world to look like. By praying “Your kingdom come; your will be done” we are giving up our desire for “My kingdom and my will” to be done. And really, the ideal would be that these two things would be aligned. That our spirits would be shaped around the idea that God's kingdom and God's will are more important than mine. That it would be as John the Baptist said as Jesus burst onto the scene: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:18).

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This is why Jesus taught the Lord's prayer the way that he did in Matthew's gospel. During the course of his teaching that we now call the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins teaching the crowd to pray in a way that isn't flashy or showy but personal and passionate. He says that there are those who love to stand on the street corners and have their prayers heard or pray elaborate prayers "so God can hear them." Jesus then says, "They have their reward." That's a "my will be done" prayer. They want their attention and people to think highly of them. And that's all they're getting. But what Jesus is interested in and calls us to be interested in is a "Your will be done" type prayer where the focus is rightly on God and not on us. Jesus says, "Instead of praying like that, like how I've just told you not to, pray instead this way..." And the prayer Jesus taught is simple, concise, passionate, and profound. We're acknowledging that God is the one who is hallowed even if we are not. We're asking that God would align our hearts and minds to God's kingdom rather than ours and that accomplishing God's will be more important than any will we could possibly have.



**Because God has a will. God has a vision for what the world could and** should look like, and it's expressed in the last phrase that we look at

today: "on earth as it is in heaven." It is God's desire for God's paradise of heaven to be a present and active reality on earth. It's God's will that life on earth would pattern itself after God's ideal, the life granted in heaven. In John's Revelation, he is granted a vision of what life in heaven looks like, and he describes it this way: "Look! God's dwelling is here with humankind. He will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples. God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things

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have passed away” (Rev. 21:3b-4). God’s will, God’s vision for the world, is a world with no pain, no injustice, no hate. The problem is, however, that we humans possess the ability to pray in a way that’s flashy and focused on ourself. We have what Francis Spufford calls, “the human propensity to [foul] things up.” People steal. People manipulate. People espouse beliefs about others that have no bearing in reality. People look out for their own interests without regard for what it means for another person or group of persons. And sometimes it’s not people who do that; it’s you and me.



But when we pray, earnestly and fervently pray, “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we express our desire and ask for

God’s help to live in a way where this comes to pass. I’ve seen it in the past few weeks.

I’ve seen it before then, too, obviously but especially in this season of clean up after the tornado. Neighbors helping neighbors. Perfect strangers helping neighbors. Groups signing up feeding people working ten-hour shifts cleaning up the school. School superintendents meeting with every teacher for ten minutes just to ask if the teacher is doing okay. This is how God’s kingdom comes. This is how God’s will is done. Amen.