

"THY WILL BE DONE."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for Sermon: Matthew 6:9-10; John 4:34; 5:19, 30-31

Introduction:

Have you ever had to deal with a strong-willed child? How many of you were that strong-willed child? Any body here want to confess to still being a strong-will child?

It's worse than you think. We actually live on a strong-willed planet. All our trouble started with the words, "I will..." Listen to this description of Satan in Isaiah 14:

Isaiah 14:12 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! ...

13 You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven;

above the stars of God I will set my throne on high;

I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

15 But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.

Five times he says, "I will." Someone has said the definition of hell is, "My will be done."

We live on a strong-willed planet filled with seven billion strong-willed people who are all saying, "I will..." or "My will be done."

Jesus teaches us another way to pray. And the prayer He teaches us is so radical it rocks our world and turns everything upside down. He says, the definition of heaven is, "Thy will be done." "What? Not my will be done? Wait a minute, that isn't what I bargained for. Isn't this my life and don't I know what's best? Doesn't my happiness hinge on me getting what I want?"

If we really understand what we are praying and really mean it, it will be a total paradigm shift. For us to pray the Lord's Prayer and this third petition in particular it's going to be a real struggle, a struggle with principalities and powers, a struggle with flesh and blood and a struggle with our selfish souls.

The Will of God and its two aspects.

The will of God refers to that attribute of God where He is *totally free* to do whatever He pleases to do and has *complete power* to do whatever pleases Him (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 211).

God is God over all the universe. God's will is the final and ultimate reason for everything that happens.

Revelation 4:11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Isaiah 46:10 My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,
... I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.

Ephesians 1:4-5 In love **5** he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

Ephesians 1:11 [God] works all things according to the counsel of his will.

The two wills of God.

At this point it's helpful to make a distinction between two aspects of God's will. When we try to talk about God's will we sometimes distinguish between the *secret will of God* and the *revealed will of God*.

Deuteronomy 29:29 “The *secret things* belong to the Lord our God, but the *things that are revealed* belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

The *secret things or secret will of God* refers to the sovereignly ordained things from before all time. By this will God governs all the universe and determines all things that will happen. We only come to know what those things are when they actually happen. (Because His secret will involves His decrees, this will is sometimes called God's will of decree.)

The *revealed things or the revealed will* of God refers to all of God's commands or precepts for our moral behavior. (God's revealed will is sometimes called His will of precept.) This has to do with what we ought to do, whether we do it or not. We are to love God and our neighbor. We are to honor our parents, obey authorities and not murder, lust or steal.

“The *things that are revealed* belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” The revealed will of God is for us to know and to obey.

Examples of each are easy to find in Scripture.

Matthew 12:50 Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

Which will is that? His eternal decree or His command for people? Revealed, will of command.

What about later in Matthew's gospel when Jesus prays in the garden:

Matthew 26:39 Jesus fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” (Secret).

Several times Paul writes about doing something or going some place and he says:

I Corinthians 4:19 I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills. (Secret).

Or when Paul says:

Ephesians 5:17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Revealed).

Understanding the difference between these two wills is a huge help to us when we try to understand certain Scriptures that otherwise confuse some people.

I Timothy 2:3b-4 God our Savior, 4 ... desires [wills] all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

II Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing [willing] that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Which aspect of God's will is being talked about here? Neither of these verses makes sense if we understand "will" here as secret or decreed. Because we know that not all will be saved and that some will perish. If it were decreed then all would be saved and none would perish. Rather God's revealed will is that all mankind obey Him and do what He says. But just as we don't all do what is in His revealed will, so not all will obey or repent or come to a knowledge of the truth and so many will perish. This understanding clears up what looks like a contradiction.

So when we pray, "Thy will be done" what are we asking, which will are we praying for?

Both. Consider the implications of each kind of request.

First, we are praying the revealed commands of God, the precepts of God will be obeyed.

We are praying that we would grow to have a heart like the psalmist who prayed, "I love your commandments; with my whole heart I seek the treasures of your Word; open my eyes to behold the wonderful things in your law; your precepts are right, more desirable than gold and honey and in keeping them there is great reward" (Psalm 119 and 19).

I John 5:3 This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

That's what we are praying for and that's how we will know when the prayer is starting to be answered in our hearts, when we love God and His Word and the keeping of His commandments don't seem burdensome to us but rather desirable.

Second, we are praying the secret decrees of God will be accepted.

When we pray for the secret decrees or sovereign will of God, we are not praying hoping it will be done, because it will be done. Rather we are praying that it will be accepted in a spirit of humility and meekness without complaining or bitterness. We are praying for a spirit of submission, like Horatio Spafford, who after the tragic death of his four daughters, wrote the words to that much loved hymn:

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Did I say that this petition would rock your world? It's hard. Can we say, "Whatever my lot, it is well with my soul"? Can we say, "If it pleases the Lord it pleases me?" Can we affirm with a sincere heart, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord"?

What about when a child or a spouse dies, when a pink slip comes, when any bad thing happens? A car accident, a cancer diagnosis, a downs baby, a retirement cut short by death.

When we pray this prayer we are praying for the grace and the peace and the patience to receive from God's hand all that He gives knowing that He is infinite and we are finite, He is holy and we are sinful, He is wise and we are foolish, He is good and we can trust Him knowing that He really does know what He is doing and what is best.

Both kinds of prayer for God's will take some praying, some hard praying, some serious praying.

This is a call to ***active obedience*** to God's revealed will and ***patient submission*** to His hidden, secret will. This is an obedience and a submission we are incapable of without prayer and the Holy Spirit. Don't try this without the Holy Spirit.

This is not, "May we do your will." Yes we want that, but we don't have the power. This is a prayer asking God the Father to supply the power that will cause His will to be done. Jesus is once again teaching us to pray something that is bigger than us and beyond us.

To those who desire to do God's will, He delights to give them His power by His Holy Spirit to enable them to do His will. It's God's will to give the ability to do His will to those who desire to do His will. He who does not desire the enabling will never be able.

Third, we are praying that both what God has decreed and what He commands will one day be equally, completely and freely fulfilled on earth among men as it is now among the angels.

On earth as in heaven opens our minds and expands our prayers in two important directions.

First, Jesus is telling us to get our eyes off just ourselves and express some love and concern for the whole world. This is a prayer with global dimensions. God's concerns are way bigger than ours normally are. We are being pressed to pray bigger things than we are used to. Dare with confidence to be so bold as to pray our whole global community glorify God by doing His will.

Second, Jesus is teaching us to get our eyes not only off ourselves and onto the world, but even off the world and lift them all the way to heaven.

The glory and wonder of heaven is its unity, there is one will and it is done. Everyone in heaven are agreed and all do God's will. God's kingdom is a one willed place. All the angels and creatures in heaven are actively obeying God perfectly all the time. To pray for God's will to be done is to pray for God's kingdom to come. What is God's kingdom, but the place where His will is done.

Application and Conclusion:

What about the question of finding God's will for your life or some big decision? You pray and you want to know, is there some secret to discovering God's will?

First of all, with regard to God's hidden or secret will He isn't going to tell you and besides He doesn't have to tell you because it will be done regardless of whether you know it or not.

Second, with regard to God's revealed or commanded will or His precepts, He has already told you in His Word and He doesn't have to tell you again, it's all there for you to know and do. We know what's right, we just don't like it and we want to find a way around it.

Should you take a job at a Front Street retailer or run drugs across the border? Should you wait to marry or marry a person who doesn't love Jesus more than you, who doesn't care about God's will, who says they're a Christian with their mouth but doesn't say it with they're behavior? Should you buy a lottery ticket or work hard and save and invest?

You don't have to pray and seek God, He has already told you the answer.

But should you take a job with Safeway or Starbucks? Should you marry this godly girl or that one or should you even marry or stay single; should you save to pay for college or to buy a house? What do you do when both choices are God-pleasing?

Then the will of God is that you pray for wisdom, seek godly counsel, trust the leading of the Spirit and do what seems best to you. These are areas of Christian liberty where God gives us great freedom to make decisions and choices, don't be paralyzed and don't torture yourself.

What Paul says plainly in his chapter on marriage and singleness applies to lots of other decisions as well, "let each do as he wishes" (I Corinthians 7:36) as long as there is no sin involved.

Second application.

This petition is saying I am not at the center of the universe, I am not even the center of my little part of the universe. It's not all about me, I am not my own, and it's best that way.

My likes and dislikes, my preferences and pleasures, the things I enjoy most or find most convenient or helpful or comfortable, all of these things really are not the ultimate or best measure of what makes life good or perfect to me.

Jesus loves us with a perfect love and that means He only wants and only does the very best for us. His death on the cross for our sins forever proves His love and His desire for our best. When He teaches us what to ask for in prayer, He teaches us to ask for those things that are the best for us. In this petition He is saying our truest happiness and our greatest satisfaction in life will only be found in perfect, complete, ready and unceasing obedience and submission to God's will.

It is utter foolishness to resist the very best His love has to offer us. Our true happiness does not depend on our having our own will and way.

I close with a story Elizabeth Elliot tells of a visit to a shepherd in Northern Scotland:

Mack, a champion Scottish Collie, was in his glory. He came from a long line of working dogs and he had sheep in his blood. This was what he was made for; this was what he had been trained to do. And it was a marvelous thing to see him circling to the right, circling to the left, barking, crouching, racing along, herding a stray sheep here, nipping at a stubborn one there, his eyes always glued to the sheep, his ears listening for the tiny metal whistle from his master, which I couldn't hear.

Do the sheep have any idea what's happening I asked Mari? "Not a clue," she said. "How about Mack," I asked? I can't forget Mari's answer. "The dog doesn't understand the pattern, only obedience."

In that Welsh pasture in the cool of that summer morning, I saw two creatures who were in the fullest sense in their glory--a man who had given his life to sheep, who loved them and loved his dog; and a dog whose trust in that man was absolute, whose obedience was instant and unconditional, and whose very meat and drink was to do the will of his master. "I delight to do Thy will," was what Mack said, "yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8). (From Elizabeth Elliot, "The Glory of God's Will" in *Declare His Glory Among The Nations*, pp.129-131).

To experience the glory of God will mean to will to do what He wills. There will never be any greater joy than to do the will of our master. Pray "Thy will be done" and you will discover the glory and the goodness of the will of our Father who is in heaven.