

Series: Hallowed be your name

Week Commencing 24 October 2022

Notes for next week's sermon on "Your will be done"

The amazing and searching words of the Lord's Prayer were used by Jesus to teach his disciples *how* to pray. By slowing down and taking the Lord's Prayer line by line, our desire is to learn more about praying after the pattern of Jesus' prayer. Next Sunday we will explore what it means to pray "*Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*".

This week, I want you to read some related Bible readings, but please note that on some days, the notes will not comment directly on the set reading but the more general theme of what it means to pray 'your will be done'.

DAY 1: Read Luke 22:39-46

That which Jesus taught people to pray in the Lord's Prayer, he now prays himself in the most challenging and difficult of circumstances imaginable. He is facing death by crucifixion. Ahead of him awaits the bearing of the sin of all mankind on his shoulders. He faces the awful reality of God's righteous anger for mankind's rebellion (the cup of God's wrath). He shares with his Father the desires of his will – *take this cup from me*. And yet he prays as he taught us to pray '*yet not my will, but yours be done*'.

So praying 'your will be done' will not be some tame little prayer we rush through. It means submitting and surrendering to God's perfect will and wisdom. It means trusting that his plans are best. It means waiting for his perfect timing.

May I again quote JI Packer, for there is great wisdom here: *When I pray "thy will be done", I should mean this as a prayer that I along with the rest of God's people, may learn to be obedient. Here more clearly than anywhere else the purpose of prayer become plain: not to make God do my will (which is practising magic), but to bring my will into line with his.*

So understood, 'your will be done' takes some praying!

I cannot sincerely ask for the doing of God's will without denying myself, for when we get down to the business of everyday living, we regularly find that it is our will rather than his that we want to do, or see happening. For God's will to be done in our lives on earth in the way that it is done among the angels will involve us in quite a struggle!

See for example what this petition meant when Jesus voiced it in Gethsemane (Matt 26:42). Jesus – in horror – not only in the death on the cross, but the prospect of being made sin and forsaken by his Father on the cross. His whole being shrank from what he faced – yet his prayer remained – "not as I will but as thou wilt". What it cost him to pray thus we will never know. What it may cost us to accept God's will we cannot say either – which is, perhaps, just as well.

Pray today that you may be increasingly surrendered to God's perfect will for you and pray 'your will be done'.

DAY 2: Read Romans 11:33-12:2

In this wonderful passage from Romans, we see first that God is rich in wisdom and knowledge. He is so way beyond us in that sense, that no one can fully comprehend him, no one can presume to be his advisor, and no one can give him any advice or anything else! As Paul recalls this, it's no wonder he responds with 'to Him be the glory forever!'

The question is, how will we know his will for us? Romans 12:1-2 tell us. The first step is to offer ourselves entirely to him – for his use and in his service – as living sacrifices. This is the essence of worship – of giving God his worth – not to be confused with an hour or so in church on Sundays!

When we offer ourselves in sacrificial service to the Lord, then it will be our increasing desire, not to be conformed to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind. I well recall a preacher explaining this by saying – *either the world will squeeze you into its mould or God will squeeze you into His!* As we resist conforming to the materialism, selfishness and greed of the world, and surrender ourselves to God's transforming work within us, then as our minds are renewed we will increasingly know God's good, please and perfect will.

As you pray today, ask the Lord to inspire and help you offer yourself to him, resist the impact of the word's influence on you, transform you by the renewing of your mind, and by so doing, lead you both to know and *do* his will.

DAY 3: Read Romans 12:3-8

I'm not going to offer too much by way of comment on this reading today, except to say that here is God's will for us – his good, perfect and pleasing will – to humble ourselves and use whatever gifts the Lord has given us, in his service and for his glory.

On a wider note, praying this line from the Lord's Prayer will be a wonderful help in so many areas of life. Do you have an area of struggle? – the way forward is to say *your will be done*. Do you want to make some plans? – the way forward is to say *your will be done*. It may be that you have tension in some moral area – let's say with honesty – and the way forward is to say - *your will be done*. It may be that you have real hopes for your church. The way forward is for you and me to say to the Lord – *your will be done*.

Remember that God's will is also the way of deepest joy. We've been brainwashed to think that the 10 commandments go against the grain. God is no sadist – and the principal of creation is that believe it or not, our *duty* and *delight* completely coincide! That is why the unhappiest person in the world is a Christian who is compromising. The unhappiest person in the world is a disobedient Christian.

But duty and delight go hand in hand in the Christian life and obedience and joy go hand in hand.

So come in prayer today that your life will be completely surrendered in God's will and find the joy and freedom of living God's way.

DAY 4: Read Romans 12:9-21

In our final passage this week, we are clearly faced with God's will for us in so many areas of our behaviour. You will do well to work through the passage quite slowly and with a note pad or device, note down those areas which you feel particularly speak to you.

But let me finish the week with another searching quote from Packer:

To ask for God's will to "be done" – literally means – "happen". God's will is 2 things –

- (1) his purpose for events and*
- (2) his command to his people.*

The first expresses the spirit of meekness, which accepts without complaining whatever God sends or fails to send.

In the second we are asking God to teach us all that we should do and make us both willing and able for the task. Can you pray this from the heart? It is not as easy as it looks.

Then Packer quotes from the Methodist church covenant service. I'm not exactly sure what that is, but I love the sense of surrender and submission contained therein.

"O Lord God, Holy Father who has called us through Christ to be partakers of this gracious covenant, we take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience and engage ourselves for love of Thee to seek and do thy perfect will.

"I am no 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 art mine, and I am Thine. So be it. And the Covenant which I have made in earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven!