

WHOSE WILL BE DONE?

The Lord's Prayer Sermon Series, Week 2
A Sermon by the Rev. Joyce L. J. Lawson

Revelation 21:1-5
Matthew 6:9-10, Luke 22:41-42

January 26, 2025

VIDEO

Have you ever thought about why we pray, the purpose of prayer? A couple of weeks ago, I told the 2-3-year-old PMO kids that prayer is talking with God and on a simple level that is true. However, the purpose of prayer is not to talk with, advise and inform of God. **The purpose of prayer is to connect and commune with God.** Even though it's been a while, I remember what it was like communicating with my then teenage children. Typically, it was short, direct and mostly focused on what they needed me to do or find for them. Asking about their school day was rarely informative. But occasionally, not often but occasionally, my children had a conversation with me. I'm referring to those thrilling times when they talked with me, not just at me. My heart was touched by those infrequent and yet precious, joyous times of connection with my children. Our praying is not to inform God of that which God somehow doesn't know or to coax God into doing what we want God to do. Praying is about you and me choosing to connect and commune with God and realizing that God delights in those times with us.

During these six weeks we are focusing on prayer, and specifically, we are focusing on and diving deeper into the important prayer Jesus gave us when he said, "Pray then in this way..." Last week I focused on the opening phrase, **"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name" (Matthew 6:9)**. I shared with you the implications of addressing God with the inclusive word "our" and the relational word "father." As we acknowledged God's dwelling place as "heaven," I invited you to imagine the greatness of a God who created an immense universe, but who is also as close to us as our very breathe. And then I shared with you that "hallowed be thy name" is not an acknowledging of God's holiness, but instead a request that God use you to make known God's holy name in the world.

Today, we consider the statement, **"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10)**. Before we dive deeper into that statement, I want to remind you of something I said last week. Whenever the word "thy" is used in scripture it is meant to contrast the words, "me, my and mine." To illustrate this, I invite you to consider what typically happens when little kids see a toy they want, a toy that another child has. They run over, grab the toy and say, "mine." I can't tell you how many times I've seen this exact thing happen between my grandchildren. Me, my, mine are not just random vocabulary words, they come from hearts and minds that think the world revolves around us. Certainly, adults are often more discrete, but still our actions reveal similar thoughts. But whenever we say the words, "thy" and "thine" we have an opportunity to reshape our hearts and refocus our minds away from

ourselves. Whenever you say the Lord's Prayer, I encourage you to make a point of emphasizing the words "thy" and "thine." "Hallowed be THY name. THY kingdom come, THY will be done..." and "THINE is the kingdom, and THINE is the power and THINE is the glory..."

To pray, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," is to acknowledge and embrace the central focus of Jesus' ministry, which is the Kingdom of God. Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God more than any other topic. So, what is the kingdom of God? Scripturally, God's Kingdom is described by way of two dimensions – the already and the not yet. We see the "**not yet**" described by Old Testament prophets who talked about a future day when "*they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks...*" (Isaiah 2:4). When "*The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid...*" (Isaiah 11:6). We see the "not yet" in the New Testament when the book of Revelation talks about a day when God says, "no more," and everything is transformed... "*death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more*" (vs. 4). In these scriptural images of the "not yet," we see the end of violence, war, suffering, pain, and death. We see a world of love and peace, of joy and hope – it's the world as it is meant to be and will be someday.

But at the same time, there is also the "**already**" dimension to God's Kingdom. These already times are when heaven breaks into earth. We see heaven coming to earth most clearly in Jesus. Jesus not only announced God's heavenly kingdom coming near, but we believe he literally embodied God's heavenly kingdom; he embodied God's love. He healed the sick, forgave sinners, fed the hungry, and raised the dead. In doing all this, he not only gave us a glimpse of God's heavenly kingdom, but he also gave us a glimpse of what heaven can look like here on earth. Jesus told his disciples, "**Go, proclaim the good news, the kingdom of heaven has come near. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons...**" (**Matthew 10:7-8**). Whereas some Christians seem to fixate on getting people to heaven, Jesus focused on unleashing heaven here on earth, and he made it clear that his followers should do the same.

I think this is a good place for a quick note about Matthew's usage of "kingdom of heaven" when Mark and Luke use "kingdom of God." The two phrases are the same thing, but it was important for Matthew to repeatedly contrast the two realms of heaven and earth throughout his gospel. In Jesus and those who follow him, the heavenly realm of God breaks into the earthly realm. So, when we pray, "thy kingdom come... on earth as in heaven," we are not telling God to do something, we are asking God to help us see the world as it should be and then help us do something to make it happen. **Heaven comes to earth when you pray for God's Kingdom to come and then you roll up your sleeves and get to work.**

When we pray "thy will be done...", we are intentionally emphasizing, not my will, but Thy will be done. As humans we really struggle with this; we always have. If we look at the story of Adam and Eve, it's not difficult to see it's a story about you and me. God creates and then God tells his human creation to eat and

drink anything we want except for the fruit of one harmful tree. But we want to eat what we are not supposed to eat. When someone says no, we humans have a tendency of doing it anyways. If the speed limit says, 65, how fast do we drive? Many of us drive faster as though 65 is merely a suggestion. We all hear the whisper of the serpent – God didn't really mean it – this delicious looking fruit can't be bad... Excuses and justifications come easy to us. Adam and Eve broke the one rule they had, because what was most on their minds was MY will be done, not THY will be done. This is our sinful human condition!

We want to do what we want, and the more wealth, power, influence we have the more we tend to think, "I know the best way and it's my way!" But when we say, "Thy will be done..." we are asking God to change our hearts so that we desire to do what God want, not what we want. We wouldn't have to pray for God's will if everything that happens is God's will. But clearly, there is a lot that happens in life that is not God's will, and much of it is because we choose to do our will instead of God's will.

Do you remember one of Jesus' last prayers, the one from the Garden of Gethsemane? Jesus prayed, **"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done"** (Luke 22:42). Jesus doesn't want to suffer and die an excruciating death, and yet he is willing to put God's will above his own. God's plan for Jesus included reconciliation and salvation for the world, so despite the personal cost Jesus chose to fulfill God's will. In the Lord's Prayer, we are encouraged to pray like Jesus, "Not my will but yours be done." Jesus' prayer reminds me of John Wesley's "Covenant Prayer" and I am going to invite you to pray that prayer with me at the end of my message, but before that, I want to make another point.

When Jesus said, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" he was making a political statement. I know you don't like to be political in church, but Jesus is the one who brought it up. Politics is about ordering the world, ordering the society in which we live. Today's Lord's Prayer statement is not about the kingdom coming to our hearts, but about it coming to earth – to our community, city, state, nation, and world. As followers of Jesus, should want this world to look like the kingdom of heaven. Jesus showed us that heaven is a place where love, peace, mercy and justice prevail. It is a place where people are not hungry, thirsty, sick, and without clothes and shelter. To pray the Lord's Prayer is to commit ourselves to doing something to change those conditions, to solve those problems, and to bring heaven to earth. To do this is to pledge our allegiance to God's kingdom and to live as citizens of heaven while also being citizens of earth or specifically for us, citizens of the United States.

Of course, people have different solutions to our many earthly problems – Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals have different solutions, but to be a follower of Jesus is to do the things Jesus did. When we pray the Lord's prayer, we are committing ourselves to the common good, and we are praying for God to use each one of us to help make this world look more like heaven. The rhythm of the Christian life is that we pray, and we work.

Do you remember this **simple diagram**? I showed it to you in "The Power of Kindness" sermon during the "Love Your Neighbor" series last fall. The bottom

line is the world as it is, and the line that points up is the world as it is supposed to be, the world as the Kingdom of heaven. To be a citizen of heaven is to be committed to the will of God seen most clearly in the life of Jesus. It is to prioritize the closing of the gap by doing what Jesus did, by bringing heaven to earth through acts of love and mercy, peace and justice. **"The Lord's Prayer is more than a prayer; it is a vision to strive toward, a call to action, and a road map for living a life of character and faith. Each one of us has our part to play in the coming of God's kingdom, and the doing of God's will on earth as it is in heaven"** (The Lord's Prayer by Adam Hamilton, pg. 46).

What are you personally doing to make this world look more like the kingdom of heaven? When was the last time you saw something that wasn't right and said, I can do something about that? I believe that all of us praying "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and then acting on that prayer can make a visible difference in this community, and even beyond. So, I say, "dream big!" I'd love to hear your thoughts about what God might do with you. I'd love to hear your ideas about what God might do with 50 or 100 of us working together to make real God's kingdom. I dare to believe that each one of us as individuals and we as a church can do more than what we are currently doing. Might you also dare to believe this every time you pray the Lord's Prayer!

And now I invite you to help me end today's sermon by joining me in John Wesley's Covenant Prayer, a prayer that focuses on our doing of God's will on earth. Pray with me... ***"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 on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen."***