

Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 6/11/2020

Mini Series – “Making Disciples -Learning to pray”

Part Five - Matthew 6 v 10 “Submission comes before ‘give me’”

Matthew 26:36-46 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷ And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” ³⁹ And going a little farther he 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.” ⁴⁰ And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ⁴² Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” ⁴³ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

Very often, we pray because we’re unhappy with our external circumstances and imagine that our happiness is dependent on those changing. We might be unhappy in our job and so we ask God for a new job. We might want a better standard of living so we ask God for more money. We use prayer as a means to get our external circumstances changed, imagining that will make us happy. There are at least two issues with that approach:

- What if we pray and everything remains the same?

We can become disappointed in God, thinking he doesn’t love us because he hasn’t answered our prayers. We might even start to think he doesn’t exist.

- Our happiness isn’t ultimately dependent on external circumstances – it is an internal issue

It is possible to be facing extreme external challenges and yet have a heart that is full of joy, as Scripture shows us. The apostle Peter wrote a letter to believers who were

facing persecution because of their belief in Jesus. In it, he reminded them that, even if they have everything taken from them in this life, their inheritance – eternal life with Jesus - can never be taken from them. **1 Peter 1:6** In this you rejoice (that is in their eternal inheritance), though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

It may be that they asked God to remove their trials but obviously he didn't do this. Yet they could still rejoice with a joy that was inexpressible and full of glory. What kind of prayer leads to this kind of joy? It is prayer that begins with God's name, God's glory, God's kingdom and God's will as it is taught to us in **Matthew 6:9-10**: Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

The main point of prayer is not to get God to change our external circumstances, but to get God himself.

Prayer is about putting God at the centre of our thoughts, emotions and plans. When our lives are orientated around the God who made us, then we will be in the place of true happiness. God is concerned about our external circumstances, as we will see next week when we look at **Matthew 6:11**, but before we get to that

we need to be concerned about God's name, God's glory, God's kingdom and God's will.

Jesus taught us to pray: Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (**Matthew 6:10**). Jesus is teaching us that:

Submission to God comes before we say "Give me"

Before we ask for anything, we are to submit ourselves to the will of God. Jesus intended two changes to take place in us when we pray this.

1. A change that will bring us to a place of submission to God.

You may wonder how can the will of a sovereign God not be done? Surely if he wants to do something, he does it.

Psalm 115:3 tells us 'Our God is in the heavens, he does all that he pleases'. However, while all that God **purposes** to do is always done, **not all that he commands is currently done**.

- a) God **purposed** to create a universe to put his glory on display, and to put people on earth to delight in him.

In eternity, he **purposed** to redeem mankind from their failure to honour him as God. He did this through the life, death and resurrection of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. No one can stand in the way of his redemption of all who have been chosen for salvation.

God will do all that he **purposes** to do. To pray **your will be done** means to accept that this season of lockdown is part of God's plan for the world and that he is working out his **purposes** through it. It means that we must accept that Covid might be the means he has **purposed** to take us home to be with him.

We must say your will be done and submit to his purpose for our lives.

- b) As part of his plan of salvation, God has also revealed to us what his **commands** are.

This is his revealed will for how we are to live our lives, as given to us in the Bible. In summary, he **commands** us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. It is clear that not all that he **commands** is done. Even as believers in Christ, we sin against his revealed will, not doing what we are meant to do, and doing what we are not meant to do. We also see this in the world around us, with people ignorant of God and disobeying his **commands**.

To pray **your will be done on earth as it is in heaven** is to go on the offensive against sin, the world, the flesh and the Devil, asking God to:

- bring our lives in line with his **commands**
- stop the moral and spiritual decay in our families and in our world
- bring Satan's schemes to nothing
- cause the world to come to know God and submit to him as king

If we pray this request in faith, and God answers as he has promised, then it will result in us, our families, our church and our world **accepting his sovereign purpose for our lives and obeying his commands in his word**.

2. A change that will bring us to a place of joyful submission to God

Jesus shows us that's God's will is to be done on earth **as it is in heaven** (Matt6:10).

In the Bible, we get glimpses of what heaven is like. **Psalm 103:20-21** Bless the LORD,
O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!

²¹ Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will!

- When angels obey God's will, it seems unlikely that they would do it reluctantly or with any delay! When God commanded his angels to announce the birth of Jesus as Saviour, they couldn't wait to go. They did it with so much joy that the skies were filled with praise.
- **Hebrews 1: 14** tells us that angels are 'all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation'. When God commands one of them to serve us, they all immediately and joyfully obey.

When we carry out God's will as it is carried out in heaven by the angels, we will do it willingly, joyfully, constantly, humbly and reverently.

For God to answer the prayer request **your will be done on earth as it is in heaven** would mean our joyful submission both to his revealed will in the Bible and to his providential government of our lives.

In painful external circumstances, or when coming to a difficult command in scripture, **we will joyfully say to God 'your will be done' before we say give me what I need today.**

It is hard to pray this because sin has disordered our wills, so that we want our own will, not God's will, to be done. The statement **Submission to God comes before 'Give me'** is difficult to accept. We treat prayer as a means of getting **our** will done for the sake of our perceived happiness and the thought of praying for God's will to be done may leave us:

- scared – what if God doesn't give me what I want, or gives me what I don't want?
- angry – who is this God whose will overrides my will?
- resigned – if God's will comes first, what's the point of asking him for anything?

If we are going to have confidence to pray this request then:

- a) **We need to trust the God we pray to**

At the start of this prayer, we see that the God whose will we are asking to be done is our heavenly Father, who:

- loves us with an eternal love, even giving his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to redeem us from sin
- governs our lives with perfect wisdom, so that he gives us everything that is for our eternal good.

God's will for our lives is to redeem us from the penalty of sin and the power of sin. He willed our salvation and our eternal good, so we can rejoice that God's will is done in all our circumstances, because he will never give us anything that results in our eternal harm. We may not understand what he is doing, but he does!

We need to begin our praying with our minds focussed on God, our hearts in love with God, and our wills submitted to God.

b) We need to trust the Saviour who prays this

The will of God for us is always good, acceptable and perfect. That is clearly shown in the life of our Saviour. In **Matthew 26:36-46** (see above), Jesus is under far greater pressure than any of us will have to experience. Soon, he would be nailed to a cross, taking on himself the punishment of our sin so that we can be forgiven. Before he went to the cross, the Father gave him a foretaste of the horrors he would have to endure.

How did he face this overwhelming horror? **Matthew 26:39** shows us that he faced it through prayer.³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" Jesus had come to earth for precisely this, so the fact that he is asking for it to be taken away shows how horrific the punishment for sin must be. Yet we see that he went on to pray "**nevertheless not as I will, but as you will**". Our obedience to the will of God is to be like his. In his darkest hour, he models what it means to pray **your will be done**.

Through prayer our Saviour submits his will to the will of the Father.

As a result, he is glorified to the highest place that heaven affords, to sit on the throne of God, receiving the praise of angels and being worshipped by people redeemed for all eternity from every nation and generation.

- His submission to the Father resulted in eternal joy for millions of human beings, including those of us reading this who are trusting in Jesus alone for our salvation.

It is as we experience the life of Christ in us that we are able to submit to the will of God. Jesus submitted to his Father in the face of far more suffering than we will ever know, and as we walk with him, he strengthens us to submit to the will of the Father.

We are only able to pray “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”, when we are trusting in God as our Father, and trusting Christ as our Saviour.