

Your Will be Done

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Preacher: Jonathan de Groot

- [0 : 0 0] How would you like to see the world changed? Over the last couple of weeks, the desire for justice has been strong because we've witnessed racial injustice in America and the world has been shocked by the violent murders of Almond Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd.
- And so we long for an end to racial violence and we want true justice. Isn't that the kind of world that we all want? Heaven on earth.
- And yet despite our longing for justice, it seems impossible to bring about, no matter how hard we try. But God promises a perfect world of justice, peace and unity.
- And so Christianity, far from being dangerous or bad, actually offers the best hope for our world because it tells us humanity is created in God's image. And so every human being has inherent value, dignity and worth.
- And yet Christianity doesn't deny the pervasiveness of sin in our hearts or the evil in our world. But it teaches us that our loving God has a plan to bring about justice and to put everything right.
- [1 : 1 2] And so when Jesus tells us to pray, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, his words couldn't be more relevant.
- This is a phrase that comes from the Lord's Prayer. I'm going to read the Lord's Prayer from Matthew chapter 6 in the Bible now. And today we're going to think about what it means to pray, your will be done.
- So let me read from Matthew chapter 6, verse 9 to 13. These are the words of Jesus. This then is how you should pray.
- Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.
- [2 : 1 8] Amen. So in those words, Jesus is teaching us how to pray. And praying your will be done on earth as it is in heaven has massive implications for our lives and for our world.
- And this is the case whether you'd call yourself a Christian or not, because we're asking for God's will to be done by everyone, in everything, and everywhere. So let's ask three questions of the phrase, your will be done.
- First, what is God's will? Second, why pray for it to be done? Third, how do we do it? What is God's will? Why pray for it to be done?
- How do we do it? What, why, and how? First of all, what is God's will? There are two aspects to God's will. Firstly, there's what we might call the hidden will of God.
- We don't know what it is because it's hidden from us, but it's what God in his sovereignty has decided will happen. And secondly, there's what we call the revealed will of God.

[3 : 23] And we do know it because God has revealed it to us. These two aspects of God's will are spoken of in Deuteronomy chapter 29, verse 29 in the Bible, where we read, the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

So let's think about the hidden will of God and the revealed will of God. So first of all, the hidden will of God or the secret will of God. This describes God's control as he directs everything towards achieving his purposes.

And so we don't always know what God is doing or why he's doing it, but he is accomplishing his will. So Psalm 135, verse 6 says, So God does whatever he wants because he's God.

And so when we pray, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, we accept that God chooses to do whatever he wants to do and whatever he does is right.

And so we're trusting that whatever happens, whether in this world or in our lives, is the will of God. But some might say, hang on a minute, does this mean that God is responsible for sin, suffering and evil?

[4 : 53] Well, no. God is never responsible for sin. God takes no pleasure in suffering and God hates all evil. And yet God still accomplishes his will through it all.

We don't understand how or know why because it's that part of his will that's hidden from us. But through it all, God is achieving his greater purposes.

So we shouldn't forget that God, who is sovereign, is always loving and always good. And so he allows nothing to happen without his permission or his wise and loving direction.

And that's why it's crucial that we know who we're praying to. It's only after Jesus tells us to pray our Father in heaven that he then tells us to pray, your will be done.

Because if we're not convinced that God is our heavenly Father, then we'll find his will hard to accept sometimes. And yet we can trust the hidden will of our loving Father because he always knows what's best.

[5 : 59] And so this leads us to the second aspect of God's will. That's the revealed will of God. This is where God reveals to us what he's doing and what he wants us to do.

And so we find God's revealed will in God's word, the Bible, the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. It's not hidden from us because God has spoken to tell us what he wants us to know.

The scriptures are God-breathed and his words are written down for us. And so there's no excuse for being ignorant of the revealed will of God. In Numbers chapter 23, verse 19, we read, God is not a man that he should lie, not a human being that he should change his mind.

Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? And then in Isaiah chapter 46, verse 11, we read, what I have said, that I will bring about, what I have planned, that I will do.

So the hidden will of God means we don't always know what God is doing, but the revealed will of God has been published for us in the Bible. And so the hidden and revealed aspects of God's will are woven together by him.

[7 : 14] So we read in Psalm 33, verse 11, but the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purpose of his heart through all generations.

And so we don't need to concern ourselves with God's hidden will, but God's revealed will is found in his word and it is permanent and always relevant.

And so we read in Ephesians chapter one, God works everything, sorry, God works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

And God's will is ultimately centered on his great salvation plan in Jesus Christ. So again, we read in Ephesians chapter one, he made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment, to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

So God's will is to bring everything together under Jesus Christ. And that's why we can trust God's hidden will. God is God and he knows what he's doing and why we need to know God's revealed will, because his great salvation plan in Jesus Christ has implications for everyone.

[8 : 33] So first question, what is God's will? Second question, why pray for it to be done? So why does Jesus tell us to pray your will be done on earth as it is in heaven?

Isn't God's will always being done? Well, yes, God is accomplishing his will through his great salvation plan in Jesus. He's revealed this to us and nothing can stop what God is doing.

But that doesn't mean that we are resigned to shrugging our shoulders and saying, *que sera, sera*, whatever will be, will be. We're not meant to sit back as victims of fate. We're meant to be on our knees praying to God for his will to be done.

Because it's obvious that God's will isn't being done over all the earth. Our world is full of pain, suffering, hatred, injustice, racism, greed, poverty, and death.

And we know all too well that God's will isn't done in our own hearts and lives. And that's why we need to pray, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[9 : 43] Because the one place where God's will is perfectly done is heaven. Listen to what Psalm 103 verse 20 and 21 say.

Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.

So just as God's will is done in heaven, we are to pray that it would also be done in our lives and in our world. Isn't that what we really want?

Because it's radical, isn't it? Of course, I'm sure we all want God's will done in our world. But do we really want God's will done in our lives? Because we can't just pick and choose the bits of God's will that we like.

Our sinful human nature would rather my will be done. Because what Jesus says here cuts against the grain of our modern Western culture of expressive individualism, where we want to express ourselves however we want.

[10 : 49] It's captured in the phrase, you have to be true to yourself. Express your feelings, enthrone your passions, assert your desires, fulfill your dreams, pursue your will.

There's a great example of this in the Disney movie *Frozen*. Remember Elsa singing, it's time to see what I can do to test the limits and break through.

No right, no wrong, no rules for me. I'm free. Let it go. Let it go. Sounds good, doesn't it? I don't mean my singing. I mean the message that's preached from every source today.

TVs, movies, advertising, books, social media, school, university, casual conversation. It's the unquestioned assumption that to assert your will is best for you.

But pursuing our own will in place of God's will hasn't made us flourish more as human beings. It's made our lives, our society, our world worse instead of better.

[11 : 50] And that's why we need to pray your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The point of praying is not to bend God's will to meet ours but that we would bend our will into God's.

And that's what it means to be a Christian. It's to live in harmony with God's will. Just think of God like a great composer and his will like a symphony.

The symphony is God's extended love song as it plays throughout history. And all of heaven is tuned in to the music accompanying the beautiful song. But on earth, since the fall of humanity, the music has been spoiled because we no longer play along to the composer's tune.

We've ripped up his music and we play our own. And it has resulted in the sound of evil and suffering and every kind of injustice. But God hasn't given up or cancelled the concert.

He still wants the harmonious symphony to play. And so Jesus appeared on the centre stage of history to conduct the music as it should be played.

[13 : 01] And Jesus gets us back into the orchestra. His death on the cross was the minor key, but his resurrection from the dead brought the thunderous crescendo.

And then when Jesus Christ returns, we'll hear the fantastic grand finale. And then it will be followed by a heavenly chorus from every nation, tribe, people, and language.

And so when we pray your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, we're saying that we want our lives to be in tune with God's will until the day that this great symphony drowns out the sound of evil and suffering for good.

So Jesus makes the purpose of prayer very clear. It isn't to persuade God to do my will because I don't know what's best.

It is to bring my will into line with his because he does know what's best. So our first question, what is God's will? Second question, why pray for it to be done?

[14 : 09] And our third question, how do we do it? Because it's one thing to pray your will be done, but it's another thing to do it. Praying for God's will to be done on earth means we're asking for it to be done in and through our lives.

And there are two parts to this. One is submission, where we accept God's hidden will, no matter how it works out for us. And the other is obedience, where we will act upon God's revealed will, no matter what he says to us.

And so we will commit ourselves to learning all we can about God's will in God's word to the Bible. And with the Holy Spirit's help, we'll seek to apply it to our lives.

And so it involves adopting God's agenda for life instead of my own. So that I want to do what God wants me to do. I want to love what God loves.

I want to be doing what pleases him. And I want to hate what God hates and flee from what displeases him. Because if my desire is for God's will to be done, then my prayer is also my pledge.

[15 : 21] In other words, I can't just pray this. I've got to use all within my power to do it. And so praying your will be done on earth as it is in heaven will impact our private life and our public life.

God's will revealed in his word will be a rule and a guide for what we do. For example, I'll never forget what a retired minister told me after a lifetime of ministry.

He said that he reckoned around 90% of the pastoral problems that he'd had to deal with came because people had stopped reading their Bibles. In other words, as they drifted away from hearing God's will, they were less likely to do it.

And so praying your will be done will impact our private life. But also our public life. Because we will want God's will to be done across the earth.

And so we will share God's passion for righteousness, justice and mercy. For example, we read in Micah 6, verse 8, He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

[16 : 36] And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. So as well as pray for God's will to be done, we are to become agents of bringing God's will about on earth amidst all the injustice and suffering.

Because God requires that his people act justly and love mercy. That's what's involved in being a Christian. And so praying for God's will to be done means we are committing ourselves to be part of the answer to our prayer.

So we are to accept God's will and we are to act upon God's will. But this moral and practical obligation is impossible to meet.

Just saying the phrase your will be done and trying hard doesn't work. We fail to trust God enough to accept his will whatever it is and we fail to obey God enough to act upon his will whatever he says.

But there is one who did perfectly and fully Jesus Christ. Jesus perfectly acted upon God's will by obeying it completely his whole life.

[17 : 51] And Jesus fully accepted God's will by surrendering himself to it even though it meant his death. And he did this for us in our place.

Jesus alone was perfectly and fully in tune with God's will. He said, I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

So Jesus is the only one who could pray your will be done and do it. In fact, this is the one part of the Lord's prayer we see Jesus pray. Jesus prayed this in the garden of Gethsemane the night before he died.

He fell with his face to the ground and he prayed, my father if it is possible may this cup be taken from me yet not as I will but as you will.

Jesus was overwhelmed by what he had to face on the cross and so he wrestled in prayer about God's will for his life and while Jesus knew what God's will was it didn't make it any easier for him to do it.

[18 : 56] The cup he had to drink was the cup of God's wrath against sin our sin and he was going to drink it on the cross as he faced God's justice and took the punishment for sin and so he prayed that if there was any other way but there was no other way except obey the will of God the Father so Jesus prayed my father if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it may your will be done for God's will to be done Jesus had to surrender himself to death and so the sorrow was intense and the pain was real yet Jesus accepted God's will because that was the only way God's justice could be satisfied and God's salvation plan be accomplished and so when Jesus tells us to pray your will be done he's not asking us to do something that he hasn't already done himself and it cost him his life so can you pray your will be done on earth as it is in heaven if you can't then your life is out of tune with

God but if God has made known to us his will in Jesus Christ then we must surrender our lives to him by turning from our sin and trusting in Jesus because the danger is that if we fail to bow the knee to God in this life one day will be done because pursuing our own will in this life rather than God's will will ultimately be confirmed for all eternity we will eventually get our wish of a life without God by suffering forever in hell so please don't resist the will of God but if you are pursuing God's will in this life remember what Jesus has done for you if Jesus was able to pray your will be done even though it meant his death then surely you can pray your will be done in whatever you face in this life let us pray

I'm going to use a prayer of John Wesley from the 18th century he prayed it all the time apparently and it's an application of your will be done on earth as it is in heaven it goes like this I am no longer my own but yours put me to what you will rank me with whom you will put me to doing put me to suffering let me be employed for you exalted for you or brought low for you let me be full let me be empty let me have all things let me have nothing I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal and now glorious and blessed God Father Son and Holy Spirit you are mine and I am yours and the covenant now made on earth let it be ratified in heaven Amen