

## Your Will and Our Bread Matt 6:10-11

**Call:** Ps 92:1-4, 15b (ESV)

**Scripture:** John 6:35-40 (ESV)

### I. Introduction

After a week off, we enter back into the Lord's Prayer this morning, the prayer that turns the world right-side up.

The prayer, as found in the Sermon on the Mount, reads like this:

9 *"Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
10 Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
11 Give us this day our daily bread,  
12 and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
13 And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. (ESV)*

Those are words that are very familiar to many of us.

Did you know that in the gospels, the disciples ask Jesus to teach them only one thing? In Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer in chapter 11, the disciples go to Jesus and ask him to teach them to pray. Jesus then teaches them the Lord's Prayer. The disciples do not ask Jesus to teach them how to evangelize or preach or counsel or heal or anything else. Only pray. Why? Perhaps it is because they were watching Jesus closely, and everything Jesus did emerged out of his relationship w/ his father. In other words, everything Jesus did emerged out of prayer. Jesus is the preeminent man of prayer, and prays as God intends us to pray. So, the disciples asked him to teach them how to pray. And, Jesus gives them the Lord's Prayer.

Three weeks ago, I invited you into a journey with me through the Lord's Prayer, the prayer that many people call the "Our Father." The first week, I introduced the prayer by making five observations about the prayer as a whole. The next week we looked at the first two petitions. Today we come to petitions three and four, and next week we will explore petitions five and six. I had someone ask me this week why I'm doing two petitions at a time? It's simply because I didn't have enough Sundays this fall to do them one at a time.

So, petition three: Father, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

## II. Your Will Be Done

### A. The Background

Throughout my life, there were several times when I pleaded with the Lord that my will would be done. The one time that always comes to mind is when my parents moved when I was going into 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I didn't want to move. I had friends, and I didn't want to leave them. Well, we moved. And, it was really, really difficult for me. But, within 6 months, after making some new friends and making the basketball team, I realized that it wasn't so bad. To this day, my mom would tell you that our move was the best thing that ever happened to me and my will was not done.

Looking back on that experience, I think I learned two things, although I couldn't have articulated them then. I learned that I do not know what is best for me. My will, my desires, are not a good gauge for knowing what is the best thing for me. Secondly, I learned that God, who knit me together and knows my innermost thoughts, his will for me is good.

Helmut Thielicke, the German Preacher during the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war said this, "In the last analysis we know very little about our real needs, about what we lack and what we need. So we often pray for foolish things, when what we need is something totally different. We are naked, and instead of praying for clothing we pray for bonbons. We are imprisoned by certain passions . . . and instead of praying for freedom we pray for a Persian rug for our cell. So often we pray for senseless things that have no relation to our needs. And the reason is that we do not know the deepest wants and necessities of our life at all." (Thielicke, loc 302).

Father, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

As I said two weeks ago, this petition is related to the first two. Where the king's name is honored and glorified, his kingdom comes and his sovereign will is done. All three petitions are interrelated, which may be why Luke does not record this petition in his version of the Lord's Prayer.

### B. The Reason for this Petition

Why does Jesus add this petition? Probably because he wants his disciples to pray as he prays and do as he does. And, he was all about doing his father's will. He lived the Father's will.

His first recorded words in Scripture are when he is was a middle schooler, 12 years old. He gets left behind in Jerusalem as his parent's caravan leaves the Passover Festival. After three exasperating days of searching for him in all the normal places teenagers would hang out, they finally checked the Temple, and, surprise, surprise, there he was. Mary scolds him for treating them this way, and Jesus replies, "*Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be about the things of my Father, my Father's business, my Father's will*" (Lk 2:49).

In the middle of his ministry, in John 6, from our Scripture reading today, Jesus says, *“38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me”* (John 6:38).

And, as he is heading to the cross, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prays, *“42 saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will, but Yours be done”* (Lk 22:42).

Jesus is absolutely the bearer of the Father’s will. And these last words demonstrate clearly what we are praying in this petition. We are praying not that God would do our will, but that our will would be brought into line with his will. This petition is a prayer of denying myself and following Jesus, which means it is a hard petition to pray. Most of the time, we want to do our own thing, our own will. This petition is an invitation for God to deliver us from ourselves.

Father, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

### **C. The Goodness of His Will**

But, because this is so hard, I think many of us pray this petition in resignation or with gritted teeth or even with resentment. We pray this with a grumbling spirit.

Father, I would love it if you didn’t move me to a new school – don’t move me to a new school father – but, oy vey, your will be done. As I’ve been working through this petition over these last few weeks, I realized that I pray this petition many times in resignation.

But, this is the wrong way to pray this petition, because behind this word for *will* is a nuance of goodness and delight (“thelema,” Johnson, loc 817). Isaiah’s words capture this nuance, *‘My purpose will be established,*

*And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’* (Isa 46:10, NASB)

In Ephesians 1, in Paul’s amazing hymn of praise, he says in verse 5, *“5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will”* (NASB). And, in verse 9, *“He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Him.”* (NASB). Paul wants us to see the goodness of our Father and the goodness of his will. Our father is a good, good father, and he only gives good gifts to his children as Jesus will say later in the sermon. And, so, we shouldn’t pray this petition in resignation, but with “joyful anticipation” (Johnson, loc 817).

So, the Father’s will is good. But, what is the Father’s will?

### **D. The Father’s Will**

The story of the Bible is ultimately the unfolding of God’s will. God has revealed his good will to all humanity, from the beginning in Genesis to the end in Revelation. We, humanity, are simply called to be faithful and obedient to his revealed will in our everyday life, at work, at home, on the fields, middle-schoolers – in the classroom.

Here are some examples:

- God's will is that all of humanity fulfill the cultural mandate in Genesis 1 and 2. What is the cultural mandate? That all of humanity care for creation, live in families and work as God's representatives on earth. In other words, God's will is that humanity would care for his good creation on his behalf.
- God's will is that his image-bearers would bless others. This is from the Abraham story. God tells Abraham that all families on earth will be blessed through him and his offspring. We are Abraham's spiritual offspring, which means God's will is for us to bless others.
- God's will is that we are all set free from bondage. This is the story of the Exodus. The Israelites are in slavery in Egypt, and God delivers them from bondage. God does not will for his people to be in bondage. He wills for them to be set free.
- God's will is that we live right-side up in an upside-down world, that we become Sermon on the Mount people:
  - that we grow more and more into Beatitude people;
  - that we influence our little corner of the world as salt and light;
  - that our hearts would be so transformed that love would characterize our life, even to the point that we love our enemies;
  - that we would relate authentically to our Father, doing the spiritual disciplines with the right motivation;
  - and that the Golden Rule would sum up every area of our life.
- God's will is that his Spirit would live in us, the life of the living God would take up residence within us. Again in Ephesians, Paul says, "[17](#) So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [18](#) And do not get drunk with wine, ..., but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:17-18). That's his will.
- And, ultimately, God's will for all people is found in our scripture reading today. Jesus says, "[40](#) For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:40).

The Father's good will is that we all would look upon his son, trust in him, receive the Spirit which enables us to be faithful and obedient, then live forever and ever with him. The living God's will is for you to be his child, call him abba, Father, and to spend eternity with him. If you don't know this good God, please talk to a pastor today.

Is that good news or what?? His will is good and it is with joyful anticipation that we pray this petition.

Now, onto the next petition, Father, give us this day our daily bread.

### III. Give us this day our daily bread

As we said our first week, this prayer has two halves which becomes evident when you take note of the pronouns. The first three petitions use the pronouns your, your, your (name, kingdom, will). The last three use the pronouns our, our, our. We now cross into the “our” petitions.

And, sometimes we can view these last three petitions as less than, as lower grade petitions. They’re not quite as important as the “your, your, your” petitions. But, that’s not the case. And, particularly with this fourth petition, we cannot begin to participate in the first three petitions without bread. As JI Packer has said, “Those who ignore the needs of their stomach are soon in no condition to care about anything else” (Packer, 187). We are physical creatures living in a physical world, and we need sustenance. We need bread. We don’t need coffee or chocolate or cake, but we need bread (or rice depending on where you live in the world). Even Jesus prayed that *man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God* (Matt 4:4). He doesn’t say that we can live without bread. Without bread, we will die.

#### A. The Background

In the background of this petition is of course the Exodus, where God provided daily bread every day for the Israelites while they were wandering in the wilderness. God, the great provider, feeds his people quail by night and bread, called manna, by day. God instructs his people to gather only as much as they could eat in one day, because God would provide more the next day. It is a one day at a time provision. If they did not trust God and hoarded more than a day’s worth, it rotted and spoiled. And, God, our good father, does this every day for 40 years! Middle schoolers how many days is that? 14,600 days!

Father, give us this day our daily bread just like you gave it to the Israelites for 14,600 days!

To explore this petition, I want to ask two questions of it.

1. What exactly are we praying for with this petition?
2. What kinds of attitudes will form in us by praying this petition?

#### B. What exactly are we praying for with this petition?

Well, the word behind “daily” is only used here in all of Greek literature. So, it is a very rare word, but it is generally agreed upon by theologians to refer to our immediate needs, our needs for the next 24 hours. And, just to highlight again - we are praying for our needs, not for luxuries. As Proverbs says, “*Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread*” (Prov 30:8).

So, what exactly are we praying for here? At least two things: physical and spiritual needs for the next 24 hours.

- **Daily physical needs.** Jesus is teaching us to pray for physical nourishment for the next day. Jesus cares about our physical needs. Jesus is not a gnostic as many Greek

philosophers were. The Greek philosophers thought the physical world was bad, and we need to escape from it. Not Jesus. Jesus affirms and dignifies our physicality. Creation is good. Matter is good. Our bodies are good. The incarnation is God's great yes to physicality, and his resurrection into a material body is God's great amen to physicality. So, Jesus teaches us to pray for physical nourishment.

And, of course, this follows from his ministry. Jesus is always healing physical bodies, like Jehaan taught last week with Blind Bartimaeus. Jesus is also always feeding people. The only miracle recorded in all four gospels is the feeding of the 5000. There is a feeding of the 4000 as well. Who knows how many other feedings that weren't recorded? And, when he's not feeding people, he's having meals with people, usually the wrong people. And, of course, his last meal, feasting with his friends in an upper room, where the bread and wine, *material things*, take on much more significance. Communion celebrates both our physical nourishment, but also our spiritual nourishment as we remember our Lord and his sacrifice. We'll come back to this in a moment.

In praying for our daily physical nourishment, we are also praying for every step of the supplying of our physical needs, every step from field to table. We are praying that God would sustain the entire process. That God would give rain for the crops, that God would give wisdom and strength to the farmers, that God would grant safety to the truck drivers. That God would provide packers, deliverers, grocery store clerks, etc. That God would provide moms and dads to cook and serve the meals. This petition encompasses every step in the nourishment process, that our good father would sustain every step. But, then, this petition casts an even larger net than just food, since food requires money and money requires work and work requires good government, etc. Luther said this, in praying for bread, "we are praying for everything necessary for the preservation of this life, like food, a healthy body, good weather, house, home, wife, children, good government, and peace – and that [God] may preserve us from all sorts of calamities, sickness, pestilence, hard times, war, revolution and the like" (Bruner, 306). I bet you didn't know how big this petition was! This causes Dale Bruner to say, "this petition is the great politico-economic petition" (Bruner, 306).

- **Daily spiritual needs:** In addition to praying for physical needs, in this petition, Jesus is teaching us to pray for our spiritual needs, for we have deeper needs than just physical. "*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*" In this petition, we are praying for daily feeding on His words, the words of life. For where else can we go to find the words of life (John 6:68)? And, for this, we have devotionals and reading plans to help us soak in his word daily, and we pray that he would keep his words fresh in our minds each day.

But, this also covers the Word, Jesus, himself. Jesus says, "*I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*" (John 6:35). In that statement, Jesus is saying that we need him more than we need our

next meal. We need meals, but we need him more. Jesus is God's ultimate provision for our spiritual lives, and "we need thee every hour" as the old hymn said. So, in this petition, we are reminded of our daily need to be cleansed by Jesus (the next petition as well), our daily need for his empowering presence to enable us to be faithful and obedient and our daily need to find satisfaction in him alone. He is enough. He is enough in the face of a difficult week. He is enough in the face of anxiety. He is enough in the face of cancer. He is enough in the face of death. Christ is enough. And, that's what we proclaim when we take the bread in communion, Jesus the bread of life is all I spiritually need.

So, in praying this petition, we are praying for both our physical and spiritual needs.

**C. Question #2: What attitudes will form in us by praying this petition?**

I think three key attitudes will form in us as we continually pray this petition.

1. First of all, **solidarity**. We have already noted that in this prayer, we are praying with plural pronouns: Give us this day our daily bread. It is significant that we are not praying for me, myself or I. This is an intercessory petition. We are praying with and for all people who have placed their trust in Jesus. To pray this petition is to affirm solidarity with believers all over the world. Give us today our daily bread is to pray for our family at PBCC, but also our neighbors down the street, our friends in King City, our friends in Romania, our friends in Liberia, Robert and Sam and the teachers at our program 3 school, for our missionaries all over the world. See how big this petition is. Instead of worrying about our individual needs (it's not about me), we are brought into an awareness of our brothers and sisters needs around the world. And, of course, praying this petition raises the uncomfortable realization of the disparity in basic life provisions between us in the west, who have much more than we could ever use, while our brothers and sisters around the world are starving. To pray this petition with integrity is to voice solidarity with the whole family of God, and petition him to show us how we can care for our brothers and sisters around the world.
2. Secondly, **dependence**. By praying this petition for our daily bread, an attitude of dependence forms in us, radical dependence on the Father. Beatitude number one was blessed are the poor in spirit, right-side up are the poor in spirit. The poor in spirit are those who are completely dependent on God, who know they can't make it without them, who know they have no hope without him. This petition reaffirms this radical dependence. This is how we are designed, to be dependent on God, completely dependent on his goodness. And, it's not weekly or monthly, it's daily. Jesus is teaching us to "live one day at a time sweet Jesus." Is it a coincidence that hymns like this are not being written anymore? I don't think so. Could it be that we don't feel this need anymore? Of course, in the first century, one day at a time was the only way to live. They didn't have refrigerators back then. In our time, we do not feel this need, so we delude ourselves into an attitude of self-sufficiency. We are the captains of the ship. We are the providers. We don't need God. Until an earthquake hits or a hurricane or a

tsunami so something out of my control. If we are not aware, self-sufficiency is what our culture will form in us six days a week. And, so, we pray this petition repeatedly to remind us that we were designed to be dependent on our good father. Father give us today our daily bread.

3. Thirdly, **gratitude**. By praying this petition, an attitude of gratitude is formed in us. “Every time we take bread into our hands, we are handling an answered prayer” (Johnson, loc 1191). Somebody prayed for this bread or this apple or this carrot or this bowl of rice and God answered the prayer. Every time a trucker makes it to a warehouse is an answer to prayer. Every time a grocery store shelf is stocked is an answer to prayer. Every time a mom or dad (or middle-schooler) cooks a meal is an answer to prayer. The only appropriate response is thank-you. Thank-you Father for once again being good and faithful.

And, ultimately, every day, we are thankful for the bread of life, Jesus, himself. Thank-you good, good father for loving us so much that you sent your only begotten son, the bread of life, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

Praying this petition with integrity will form in us attitudes of solidarity, dependence and gratitude.

Father, give us this day our daily bread. Amen.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

As our reflection today, I want to lead us in a guided prayer exercise. Someone has said, “the only way to pray is to pray; and the only way to pray well is to pray much” (Howell, 72). So, we are going to spend some time in prayer.

This is how we will do it: I will give you a line, then some silence for you to pray on your own. Feel free to repeat my line or go in a different direction as you feel led.

Father, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Father, break down any walls in our lives where we doubt your goodness.

<silence>

Father, we want to see your good will fulfilled in this world, and teach us this day and beyond to be faithful and obedient to your will as revealed in scripture.

<silence>

Father, we thank you for your provision in our lives. Thank you especially for your Son.

<silence>

Father, grant us dependency on your Words of life and your Son, the bread of life.  
<silence>

Father, we pray for our brothers and sisters around the world and show us how to share your bread with others this day and beyond.  
<silence>

Amen.

### **Benediction**

Now, receive this benediction, adapted from Luke 12:

Do not be afraid little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you all you need to be faithful and obedient and sustained each day.

Go in peace and watch what your good father does each day.

Amen.

### **Resources**

Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook: Matthew 1-12*

David Crump, *A New Testament Theology of Petitionary Prayer*

James Howell, *Servants, Misfits and Martyrs: Saints and Their Stories*

Darrell Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words that Change the World*

NIDNTT = *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*

Jl Packer, *Growing in Christ*

Helmut Thielicke, *The Prayer that Spans the World*