

## The Lord's Prayer; Your Will be Done

### Scriptures: Micah 6:1-8

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Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.

Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the LORD has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel.

'O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD.'

'With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high?

Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old?

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?'

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

**Matthew 7:21-29** <sup>21</sup>"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup>On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' <sup>23</sup>Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.' <sup>24</sup>"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. <sup>25</sup>The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. <sup>26</sup>And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup>The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!" <sup>28</sup>Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, <sup>29</sup>for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

### Proclamation of the Word

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Several months ago the topic was chosen, Your Will be done on earth as in Heaven. I found a nice little passage from Micah and some words of Jesus which seem to fit the theme. But before you pray this simple prayer phrase, grab your protective gear, hold on tight, Jesus takes us into a conversation about heaven and earth, salvation, the will of God, and eternal damnation. Light topics for a Valentine weekend. When Jesus said enter through the narrow door, he forgot to say watch out for what is on the other side, this adventure of faith. So please strap on your seat belt and place your protective head gear on. Safety equipment may be necessary for the adventure of faith that is neither neat nor safe.

Sometimes worship leaders will lead us into praying the Lord's prayer together, by saying, "We are bold to pray as our Lord taught...Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come..." But the boldest part of the prayer we pray is "Your Will Be Done on earth as in heaven." We are asking God to be God. We are placing God's will above all of our desires. The easiest prayer we pray is for our wants. The hardest, but most obedient may be Your will be done. We are asking God's intentions for this world to be unleashed. And if we are praying it, we are asking God to unleash God's will in and through us! Frederick Buechner writes, "Boldness indeed. To speak these words is to invite the tiger out of the cage, to unleash a power that makes atomic power look like a warm breeze."<sup>1</sup>

Let's face it. Praying this prayer takes guts! And I wonder if we are up to it?

The good news is that we begin the prayer with Our Father. We summons the courage to pray your will be done, only because we approach a loving Creator, parent God who creates us out of love.

As NT Wright states, "As we approach God and hallow God's name, we look into the face of God and begin to see the world as God sees it. We will see the world with the eyes of Love which created it all."<sup>2</sup> We do not approach a God who is a removed, disinterested energy force or power hungry tyrant. We approach the life-giving God who chose out of love to create a wonderful world full of resources for interconnected life. We approach our Father who hopes for all his children to flourish and know grace and peace. So we do not have to be afraid to be bold, even if we do not know what lies on the other side of that door. But we do have to pray it as those willing to live it.

When we pray your will be done, we are praying that God's will be done through us. If God's will is to be on earth as it is in heaven, we admit we are lumps of earth with the capacity for heaven. Now think about that. We were created from earth. Adam "adamah" means earth, dirt, dust. Children of Adam and Eve are little lumps of earth. And by the power of God's breath, we have life. We pray that through us lumps of earth God's will be done as in heaven.

In the Scripture today, the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus concludes don't just say all the right things, do it. Do God's will. According to Peterson's *The Message*, Jesus says "I can see it now- at the Final Judgment- thousands will be strutting up to me and saying, 'Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects had everyone talking.' And do you know what I am going to say? 'You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don't impress me one bit. You are out of here.'" (Peterson, *The Message*, Luke 7:21-23)

Ouch Jesus. That is harsh. You are telling us that hell is separation from you. In fact, hell is a deep loneliness. Hell is self-sufficiency and moral turpitude that depends on right thinking: conservative/liberal, pro-life/pro-abortion, and not on the all-sufficient grace of God.

God intends for us to be in right relationship. Righteousness is not all moral turpitude. Holiness is not piety. God intends for all creation to be in right relationship. And what is that relationship based upon? Not to be too simplistic. But God does not want our empty words, God wants our hearts. God does not want showy success, God wants us to be wholehearted people.

Hell is focused on what is missing. Heaven is focused on what is given by a generous God. It is hell to never be content. Look at the magazines in the checkout line. Everyone focuses on what is missing and what you can get if you follow these simple steps. There are 15 ways to a Better Marriage, the 4 things you can do for the Perfect Job, Reduce Body fat in half with these simple steps. Simple steps sell in the supermarket of our desires. To be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect is to be whole, not perfect in the way we think about it. We are to be wholehearted people who love God, our neighbors and ourselves because God first loved us.

Just as Israel of the Old Testament shows us, the nation always wanted something different than God intended. They placed their hopes on security like that of Syria and Egypt. When everybody else had a powerful king, they wanted a king just their king. Israel wanted a place in the sun, status among her neighbors. So God sent the prophets to remind her of God's will for them. When the prophets got after her, she got after the prophets and ran them out of town. And when God's requirements were too much, Israel took up with other gods, other gods that still get our energies, our vote, and allegiances. But those gods actually cannot care less about God's will. Those gods promise us everything we want and absolutely nothing we need. But we cannot blame ol' Israel for we have feet of clay too.

What is God's will? God desires our love and wants us to love. But to love at all is to be vulnerable, writes C.S. Lewis. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken, just as God's heart is broken by Israel. Lewis writes, "If you want to make sure to keep your heart intact, you must give your heart to no one. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside of heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell."<sup>3</sup> Hence, the need for safety gear. Faith is not safe and neither is love.

But every once in awhile, the people of God get it right with God's help. We pray your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. We stop wishing for the mansion built on the sand, the one that we won't really make us happy. And we catch a glimpse of a carpenter Jesus busy at work, measuring twice and cutting once. We see the solid house built on rock. We open the doors of our hearts to God and to love. Heaven is that narrow door that leads to abundant life!

According to Shirley Guthrie in the book *Christian Doctrine* heaven is “the life originally willed for us by God the creator of heaven and earth, lived for us by Jesus Christ (true God and true human being), and promised and worked in us by God’s life renewing Holy Spirit...eternal life of self-fulfillment that comes in loving, praising, and serving God, and living in peace with fellow human beings...being free to be your truest self in community with others.”<sup>4</sup>

I read once that somewhere along the way Christians gave up on following Jesus and just started worshipping him. Maybe they were too tired to haul rock, too unwilling, or too caught up in their own desires to take out a trowel and start building. They wanted something soft and easy like a beach made of sand. But the wise person builds a life upon rock. If we hear his words and listen, we will live wisely.

According to NT Wright, in his book, *The Lord and His Prayer*, when we pray Your will be done “We are praying, as Jesus was praying and acting for the redemption of the world; for the radical defeat and uprooting of evil; and for heaven and earth to be married at last, for God to be all in all. If we pray this way, we must be willing to live this way.”<sup>5</sup>

Faith is not just saying the right things, like “Lord, Lord.” It is not doing things to appear faithful like having fancy marketing, attracting a crowd, or having awesome church programs.

Faith is trusting in God with all your heart.

It is not asking what would Jesus do, but what would Jesus want me to do? Us to do?

Not asking what is God’s will, but asking how can our lives reflect God’s will?

If you want a life that matters, build a life on a sure, solid foundation.

We will build our house on the foundation of doing justice not just thinking and talking about it. We will build our life on the foundation of loving kindness. We will walk humbly with God. We will do as God intends. Faith is a verb- do, love, walk. The PSA sticker sums it up, “Do, Love, Walk.”

We know people of faith who have the minds and hearts of an architect. They see things that had not yet been built. They are filled with the Spirit of God and follow a carpenter named Jesus.

Think about the names our ancestors chose for new towns in our nation. Every area in South Carolina settled by Presbyterian Christians has a church named Hopewell just like the Old Stone Church was originally the Hopewell-Keowee Presbyterian Church. We built churches on the hope we have in God’s vision and dream for humanity. Settlers named their towns, plantations, churches, their new homes things like New Haven, Providence, Salem, which is a derivative of Jerusalem. The new Jerusalem would be manifest among a new people. And that place would be built in Salem, literally *Shalom*. *Shalom* is God’s kingdom based on justice, mercy and love. *Shalom* means wholeness, all things made right. We hoped to be a people whose cities are built on strong foundations of verbs. We desired a place where people pinned their hopes on doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. They were people who messed up at times and missed the mark. But if you can’t catch the vision of the holy Architect and see his hand in the design, you will always be attracted to what you desire even if it is built on a sandy beach and cannot endure the storm.

But every once and awhile, we get it right.

When we live in God’s house, we can trust in the all-sufficient grace of God who created us in love. When we live in God’s house, we are people without fear.

We pin our hopes on God’s Shalom, God’s kingdom.

We have the eyes of faith and see the holy Architect at work.

And we trust the builder even when we cannot see the blueprint.

We live secure in God’s house. For the Lord is our Shepherd and we will not want.

When we live in God’s house, we are not afraid to open the door to the stranger.

We are not afraid to open our table and sit down together to a meal, sharing our food knowing that God provides daily bread.

We are not afraid to forgive, because we know the freedom of letting go.

We will open our door and love. As the theologian Augustine wrote: "Love and do what you will" which reminds us that faith is not following the letter of the law but following Jesus the carpenter.

When we open the door, we discover that when we take the time to hear beyond the words, we are listening. And maybe through and in between us, God's house will be built.

When we open the door, we share our money like drunken sailors on things that matter like the well-being, health and education of our neighbors because we know the generous grace of God.

When we open the door, we remember that the names Salem, Hopewell, Providence are not just the names of our oldest cities, but our holiest of dreams, which is not as much threatened by the madness of our enemies outside, but by the fear and madness within its own walls.

We open the door to love and find that God has walked in. God sits down in a comfy chair, and eats with us. We know rest and peace at last. God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. The windows are all flung open and the winds of the Spirit are blowing through. Light is cast upon all the walls in the household of God.

May God's will, God's shalom, be built in you.

May it be built in me.

May it be built in us for the sake of the world God loved into being and for the sake of the world which through Jesus the Christ is being redeemed!

All power, dominion and praise be yours, O Lord. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Buechner, *Listening to Your Life* in the *Epigraph* of Hauerwas, Willimon Lord, Teach Us (Nashville; Abingdon, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>NT Wright, *The Lord and his Prayer* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1997) 31.

<sup>3</sup>C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1960) 169.

<sup>4</sup>Shirley Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994) 395-396.

<sup>5</sup>Wright, *IBID*, 31.