

## Thy Will Be Done      Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer

A wealthy woman gains a reputation for her generous contributions to a variety of charities. She asks for nothing in return. When asked what motivates her to give, she says, "God has always taken care of me and still blesses me. I believe I'm doing his will by giving back."

A professional athlete reaches the pinnacle of his or her chosen sport. They earn the most valuable player award for their efforts. A sportscaster asks them what their success is attributed to. The response: "First of all, I'd like to thank God, because it's his will for me to be here."

A cult leader orders his followers to take their own lives. When someone dares to question his command, the reply is, "This is not an option. It is the will of God."

What is the will of God? Jesus teaches us to pray to our Father, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." But how can you tell if God's will is being done?

Today I'd like to share two thoughts with you about praying for God's will to be done: Number One: God's Word allows us to know what God's will is; and Number Two: this phrase "Thy will be done" is the soul of Christian prayer and the goal of Christian prayer. When you let "Thy will be done" become the consistent theme of your conversations with God, you'll experience a deep sense of peace, and we'll talk about why that is in a moment.

But back to Number One. God's Word lets us know what God's will is. Many times we tend to think of seeking God's will as trying to make the right decision. For example, let's say you're having a hard time at work. You realize things just aren't good, you're no longer happy where you are, and a position opens up somewhere else. You may pray, "Show me what to do, Lord. What's your will for me in this situation?" Let me be clear—that is a good and faithful thing to do. Involving God in your decisions is always a good idea. But even then it's not always clear which way to go. There are times when we would like God to send the Big Neon Arrow down from heaven to show us "this is the right way." More often though, he lets us use our brains and our hearts or even our Spirit-led intuition to gather information, pray, make a decision, and see what happens, trusting him to guide us to the right path should our first decision come up short.

What I really want to share with you, though is that there's another way to look at this. What if Jesus has already told us what His Father's will is? What if God's will is very clearly stated in Holy Scripture, just waiting for us to discover it? Well, guess what? That is, in fact, the case. When Jesus was teaching here on earth, he said the following, according to the gospel of John: "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." The will of God is to make eternal life available to everyone through Jesus. This has been the will of God from the beginning, ever since He promised Adam and Eve that He would send Someone to crush the Serpent's head. Elsewhere in

the Bible, the apostle Paul writes to Timothy and says: “God our Savior wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.” So there it is. God wants everyone to come to a knowledge of the truth: the truth that Jesus, truly God, born truly human, lived a perfect life; the truth that he gave that perfect life as a sacrificial gift on the cross; the truth that the tomb could not contain Him, and there were many witnesses to His resurrection; the truth that Jesus went through all that to win you. Again, listen to this wonderful invitation! “My Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life.” Do you see it? God’s Word lets us know what God’s will is.

So let’s make the connection then. If you know what God’s will is, then the way you can know you are doing God’s will is by helping people look to the Son and believe in Him. Simply put, you carry out God’s will when you share Jesus with people. There is an almost endless variety of ways you can do that, and one of the most fulfilling things (and dare I say it? One of the most fun things) you get to do as a follower of Christ is find a unique way to share him. It all starts with asking yourself, what do I love to do, and how can I do it to glorify God?

Now, we also have to acknowledge that the actual living in the will of God isn’t easy—or maybe I should say it doesn’t come naturally. It’s easy to say the words, “Thy will be done,” but if you mean those words, you are giving up control of your life and letting God have the final say. A part of you and me will always resist that. That’s why Jesus teaches us to pray for it. And as you grow and experience more things, you come to realize that letting God have the final say is not oppressive; it is the way to personal freedom. You can move out into the world in strength, knowing you are being navigated by your Father even through the storms of life.

Years ago, a tornado struck the prairies of Minnesota, killing many, injuring hundreds and almost wiping the town of Rochester off the map. An elderly doctor and his two sons worked for days helping the victims, bandaging wounds and setting broken limbs. Their heroic work did not go unnoticed. Financial backing was offered for a large hospital, provided the doctor and his sons took charge. They agreed, and in 1889, a clinic was founded that soon attracted wide attention. People came from all over the place to the Mayo Brothers clinic. When the tornado struck, many people thought, “God has forgotten us!” Yet blessing came out of disaster, and today the prairie city is world famous, having brought healing to millions of people.

Or consider the story of a man from Nazareth, born in Bethlehem. He has spent a few years roaming the countryside from town to town, teaching whomever would listen about the Kingdom of God. He began to attract quite a following as the stories about him spread. He taught with authority. He did miraculous things. His personality was so compelling that twelve men left their old ways behind to learn from him.

There were those who felt threatened by this man. Conspiracies were hatched to silence him once and for all. He was betrayed by one of his own students and was brutally executed by the civil government. His followers felt as if everything had spun completely out of control. Their teacher had been mocked, disgraced and crucified.

But even in this instance, God's will was being done. Jesus's death was not some tragic mistake. It was his mission. Only by dying and enduring the horrors of hell could Jesus cancel the debt of our sin. Father and Son did the unthinkable, because they couldn't bear the thought of losing you.

It was only after Jesus' resurrection that His disciples understood what had happened. It took time for them to see that something good could come from Jesus' death. And it's no different with us. There will be times when we will only be able to sense God working after the fact, sometimes long after the fact. But the Holy Spirit creates something profoundly simple in your heart, and that is trust. Trust that your Holy Father is doing what is best for you. Trust that through the fires of life, your Holy Father is refining you. Trust that enables you to pray, like Jesus Himself, "Nevertheless, not my will, Father, but yours be done." Trust that causes you to rest in His arms.