

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 28, 2008

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HYMNS: 517, 458: 4, 521, 529, 416.

LESSONS: Ps. 103, Rom. 12: 1-21, Jn. 6: 38-40.

TEXT: Matthew 6: 10b, (KJV) **“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”**

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In the first two petitions we have prayed that God’s name be honored by us, and that His kingdom prevail among us. This pertains to the honor of God and to our salvation, so that we might receive as our own God and all His riches. Now, in this petition, we pray that we not be separated from God.

We might use an analogy from competitive sports. We not only need a good offense, but also a good defense. We have prayed for the Gospel, for faith, and the Holy Ghost, that He may govern us and redeem us from the power of the devil. Those two petitions we might think of in terms of an offense. But for a defense, we must also pray that God’s will be done. With that defense God protects us from the will of the devil and his evil tools. Today let’s look at

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

- 1. God’s will IS good and gracious.**
- 2. God’s will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the “unholy three” – the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh.**
- 3. God’s will is done when he strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and in the faith.**

Today we start again with Luther’s Small Catechism: **Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** *What does this mean? God’s good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also. How is God’s will done? God’s will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, which try to prevent us from keeping God’s name holy and letting his kingdom come. And God’s will is done when he strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and in the faith as long as we live. This is his good and gracious will.*

When you hear the word “will” as a noun, you probably think of someone’s last will. It is what they want to be done, often with their possessions. As an example, graduating school classes would often leave a “last will”. That would be a list of what they wanted to give to the next class to graduate.

God’s will is simply what he wants to be done. In heaven he has ordered and directs all things and wants only what is best for people on earth, and especially for those who believe in him as their Savior from sin.

God’s will is simply what God wants for you and for all mankind. And God only wants what is good for you, both on earth and into eternity. But sin gets in the way and sinners end up doing what they want to do, not what God wants them to do and what God wants for them.

Did you realize that someone is fighting over you? Did you realize that God and the devil are fighting over you and over every human being? Saint Paul writes that ***“God our Savior...wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”*** (1 Timothy 2:3-4) That is what God wants. But Satan, the devil, is fighting against him. The devil wants just the opposite. The devil wants all men to be damned eternally and spend an eternity of suffering with him in hell. In writing about this struggle Scripture is filled with comfort for believers in Christ. God in his word tells us repeatedly how he has chosen, how he has elected believers to eternal life. Such teachings are for our comfort in trials and temptations and tribulations. But we must be on our guard. We must constantly fight against the devil and his allies, which include people in this sinful world and even our own sinful flesh within us, the “old man”, the unregenerate “old Adam” we all have. But never forget that in this epic struggle we have the greatest ally: we have the all-powerful, all-loving God on our side. And it is HIS will that we pray be done.

We could talk for a long time using many scripture passages telling us that God is good and gracious. When he permits pain, or sorrow, or trouble to come upon us, we have the comfort of knowing ***“that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*** (Romans 8:28)

I often share with you scripture passages such as this when visiting with you in the hospital, or in your home when things aren't going well with you. And I want to do this more, especially if and when I know you are having troubles. God gives abundant words of comfort. God gives abundant examples of his good and grace-filled will in the scriptures. He wants only the best for you. And that means he wants eternal life for you. That was earned for you – you don't have to earn it yourself – when Jesus conquered sin, death and the devil by his resurrection from the dead. Don't hesitate to turn to the scriptures or to ask for guidance and prayer when things aren't going well for you. Don't hesitate to ask for guidance and prayer at any time for that matter. I want to and have been called to help you find God's words of comfort, to teach God's will to you and guide you through this life using the scriptures.

But this sermon is about more than just *God's good and gracious will*. It is about how it is done among us.

It is our Father's will which we want to be helped to do. His will is revealed in the Bible. It is useful for ***“training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”*** (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible is adequate, but it is not always specific. What am I to do if my neighbor's son vandalizes my property? Our Father in heaven has given us the law of love and the Golden Rule. In the New International Version we read the Golden Rule from Matthew 7:12: ***“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”*** But it is our responsibility to determine how God's law of love and the Golden Rule are to be applied in a specific situation. So we pray that our Father may help us know and then apply his will. This too is something that he guides us in using our pastor. We all are surrounded by philosophies, theories, movements, causes which call evil good and good evil. We need guidance from the Word of God and godly pastors who explain scripture with scripture; pastors who pray that our Father might make us able correctly to handle the word of truth so that our pastors can discover which portion of God's Word applies in a given situation.

We are praying in this petition: God give me what is good for me. God's will is what God wants for you, for time and for eternity.

Let me paraphrase one Christian writer who talks about the words we might emphasize in this petition. When we place the emphasis upon the word “Thy,” our prayer becomes like the one which our Savior prayed in Gethsemane. It is not hard to pray it when things are going well. But it is hard to pray when dark clouds of adversity enter our lives. But then we need to remind ourselves that we are praying to our heavenly Father.

Without his knowledge and consent not even a sparrow falls from the roof and we are dearer to him than many sparrows. He must be acting in love even when he allows adversity to enter our lives, for he **“demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8). To his will we shall submit patiently. And that is the attitude which we want our Father in heaven to stimulate among us. This is the thrust of the ministry of comfort to the sick and the dying, the shut-ins and to the all the afflicted and troubled.

If we, however, place the emphasis upon the words “be done,” this becomes a prayer to be helped to obey our Father’s will. Christ names the standard or guide for how it is to be done: “as it is in heaven.” Look at the example of the obedience of the angels as you heard in our Old Testament lesson. They do the Lord’s bidding, they obey his word, they do his will. We have a long way to go to honor God like them and ask for God’s help to do it. We want to join his one and only Son in saying: **“I desire to do your will, O my God”** (Psalms 40:8 quoted in Hebrews 10: 7 & 9)

To do your will, O my God, is my desire. We are truly happy when in love for our Savior we are doing our Father’s will. That is also the attitude which we want to show in an increasing measure. It involves crucifying the flesh, incurring the scorn of the world and resisting the devil. But in love for our Savior we will put forth the effort.

*God’s will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, which try to prevent us from keeping God’s name holy and letting his kingdom come. These unholy three are constantly fighting against the child of God and will fight against us as long as we live on earth. Jesus Christ conquered them when he rose from the dead. We have weapons to help us in our fight, of which we read of in Ephesians 6:11-17: **“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”***

And God’s will is done when he strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and in the faith as long as we live. We need God’s weapons. Earthly weapons and weapons from man’s imagination are useless. We must rely on God to keep us safely in his hands. We don’t get stronger to fight when we give in to the enemy.

With the hymn writer we pray:

*Abide with us; with heavenly gladness
Illumine, Lord, our darkest day;
And when we weep in pain and sadness,
Be Thou our Solace, Strength, and Stay.
Tell of Thy woe, Thy victory won,
When Thou didst pray: “Thy will be done.”
(The Lutheran Hymnal, 194:3)*

Amen.