

“The Fourth Petition: Your Will be Done” (Matthew 6:5-13)
Pastor John Bronson

May 29, 2011

Order of Worship for May 29, 2011,

Pre-service Song
Welcome and Announcements

Ministry Moment (?)

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-13 and Prayer

Songs of Worship:

“Thou Art Worthy”

Song # 100

“All People That on Earth Do Dwell”

Song # 101

“God of Our Fathers”

Song # 809

“Heal Our Land”

Song # 800

“Blessed Be Your Name”

Overhead

Offering and Offertory

Special Music:

Message: “The Fourth Petition: Your Will Be Done” (Matthew 6:5-13)
By Pastor Bronson

Closing Song: “Lord, Be Glorified”

Song # 186

Parting Word of Grace

Vespers
A study in Hebrews 10-11
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm in the Library

“The Prayer Closet”

May 29, 2011

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying for:

1. **Lois McMartin and EFCA ReachGlobal Ministries:** the Spirit will gift Lois with strength for travel and wisdom for counsel as she travels overseas to missionary families; the Lord will raise up both short term and career missionaries for world wide missions
2. **President Obama:** the Spirit will enable him to abandon both ideology and party in order to see what is true and act for the greater good; he will be a faithful husband and father; he will love righteousness and truth
3. **Oroville Christian School:** students and faculty greet the summer with glad and contented hearts after a year of good work; current student families will be committed to return and will encourage other families to send students to OCS; end of the year finances will put the school in the black.
4. **Military Personnel of the Week: Pvt. Casey Brubaker** (son of John and grandson of Larry and Wanda Brubaker):
5. **Young Adult of the Week: Lukas Valadez** (son of Robert and Tori Valadez):

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We continue our study today of the Lord’s Prayer. We come to the third petition which is “Thy will be done.” As I was working on the message, I thought, “How many think I can handle the will of God in a single message?” This petition completes the first section of the Lord’s Prayer, the section in which our focus is primarily on God, His purposes, His will, rather than being primarily on us. I think most of us assume that when we go to prayer that “getting my act together “ means I figure out all the things about me I want to say to God and then say them. But when you look at the Lord’s Prayer which He gave to us as a model, you recognize that He says, “No, no; try to think as clearly as possible about God, the One to whom you are speaking.”

So this is what He said: “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.” We talked about that. We recognized that when you approach God you approach the one who is unique. There is none other like Him. If we are going to approach Him the unique One, what we must do is pay very careful attention to what He has said about Himself so that we approach Him the way He wants us to approach Him. We dare not approach God as the people of the world approach their idols. How do people of the world approach their idols? [With a concentration on] ME! We don’t want to do that. We want to approach God by saying, “You”. In other words in prayer we think first about God.

“...Thy kingdom come...” God’s kingdom in this age is the rule of God by His Word in the hearts of those who believe. That kingdom – and I am just reflecting on all of the parables that we read from Matthew 13 – the kingdom of God at this time, in this age, is not characterized by Jesus sitting on the throne of David in the City of Jerusalem; rather it is characterized by the Word of God ruling in the hearts of those who believe, and if that Word is present and ruling, the life will be fruitful. Just recall the parables: the life will be fruitful. So we ask ourselves, “Am I then in the kingdom?” The answer first is, “Is the Word of God in my heart?” The second part of the answer is, “Is my life fruitful for God?”

That is where we have been so far in looking at the Lord’s Prayer. When we pray that prayer we are adopting and committing ourselves to that approach to the Living God. Now we come to, as I have mentioned, the third petition: “Thy will be done.” The whole thing is “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We are going to get to earth and heaven a little later. We are just going to deal with God’s will right now!

The relationship – I don’t know about you but most of the time when I was growing up [I’m a Presbyterian so we did everything in an orderly manner and I learned the Lord’s Prayer when I was just as little as I could be and I repeated the Lord’s Prayer forever.] I always thought “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done...” was two ways of saying the same thing; but it is not. The relationship between the kingdom and the will of God is the relationship of a part with a much larger whole. The kingdom is a part of the will of God, and the will of God is far greater than the kingdom alone. This will bear some interesting fruit in understanding our prayers and some of the difficulties in praying and understanding God in response to our prayers.

How can we know God’s will? I am occasionally – I will admit this may embarrass some of you and make some of you irritated at me, but I’m always doing that any way – I am always amused when I hear somebody say, “I want know God’s perfect will for my life.” O, really? What do you mean by that? What do you mean by God’s perfect will? Do you want to know God’s imperfect will? So how can we know God’s will? You begin with God: you want to reflect soberly, accurately as best you can on the One to whom we are speaking. Who is God? God is infinite and eternal. We are finite and temporal. Let me just tell you right now, you are not going to get an infinite God inside of your finite head! Not going to happen. Who is God? God is before time and outside of time. We can argue about this, and some of you are very good at arguing; you and I cannot even to think in those terms. We exist entirely within the flow of time. Even when we receive the gift of eternal life, it is still life extended in time, time, time. We don’t exist outside of time. Who is God? God is the source of all things, and He knows all things. You

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and I are finite, we are dependent. How many of you know Karen Newkirk? I am going to let you know that she is presently dying. You should be aware of that. That is a sad thing, but it is not a bad thing. She is a committed believer; she is at peace with her God. Pray for her husband for he doesn't know the Lord. She can't eat. What happens to a human body when it can't eat? Eventually it dies. We are dependent. God is not. Ultimately, beloved, God is incomprehensible to us.

This begins to affect our prayers because if you go and look in Hebrews 1:3, this is what the author there writes about Jesus: *“He is the radiance of the glory of God, and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds all things by the Word of His power.”* Let me ask you a question: what is included in all things? All things! Now, here is where we run into problems. Each thing that continues to be because God sustains it in being. That is a philosophical statement. All that is, is by God's will, and all that comes to pass is by God's will. That, beloved, is tough territory. Karen Newkirk's cancer is by the will of God. It has to be. He is all powerful, he is all knowing, and he sustains all things by His word of power.

This sort of thing can make you dizzy; it is like trying to answer this question: “What is outside the universe?” You know what Albert Einstein figured out? Mathematically he says if you go in a straight line, where will you end up? You end up at your own back. Mathematically the universe is described as a self-contained circle. You can't get out of it. Figure that out! We don't know what is outside of the universe, and we can't know what is outside of the universe because we are incapable of thinking about such things. We can say the words, but they don't make any sense.

There is, however, one thing we can know in this regard. The third petition of the Lord's Prayer makes little sense to this aspect of the expression of the will of God. “Thy will be done. . .” is beyond my comprehension, except in this regard, except in the affirmation that God is not evil: The affirmation of one's personal trust in the ultimate goodness, justice and righteousness of God. God is not evil. More than that, [by saying God is good and not evil] we have faith that, however incomprehensible the acts and ways of God may be in themselves, within the sphere of human life the will of God is such as to undergird and sustain, to both warrant and reward developing and living by the findings of practical reason and moral conscience. We affirm that the world that God has made is suited to us and we are suited to live in it. Now you may think, “What is the pastor talking about?” I am talking about the outrageous behavior of every person who commits suicide. The person who commits suicide says, “This is a world I do not want to live in. My sense of justice, my sense of righteousness, my sense of personhood is so violated by this world, I choose out!” What that amounts to is an individual human being looking in the face of God and saying, “I quit.” I am also speaking to every single person who allows themselves to drop into a life of sin, every single person who allows their self to become overwhelmed and engulfed in a life of addictive behavior: “I am not willing to live in this world according to its principles and its rules and its laws. I prefer to drop out of reality, hide inside of my sensible person, doing the very best I can to ignore a God that I don't like.”

God is not evil. God is good. Practical knowledge is possible. Every single person who denies the reality of reason and who says that life is absurd, denies their own denial when they get into a car, turn on the ignition and use the steering wheel. Life is not absurd. Every engineer knows it. The God who made the universe is the God who made all things that can work, and He made you, and you can work, according to the rules. Just as an engineer can learn the laws that govern material reality, that same God who created all things made us with the laws of moral reasoning. If you exercise practical moral reasoning, you will live a good life. But if you decide not to, the laws of God will get you.

In the book of Deuteronomy Moses wrote this in 29:29, *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”* What

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did it say? We know what we know as has been revealed to us in order – what? – to keep all the words of the law. We are expected by our God to know the law.

Beloved, there is a fairly obvious distinction between the will of God manifested in the existence of stars and galaxies, fire water and earth and all the rest on the one hand, and the instruction that God has given that we might live peaceably, righteously on the other. Both are expressions of God’s will. But whereas the first elicits our wonder – you look at the stars; how many of you noticed that we had a few storms over the last few days? Glorious! Wonderful flashes of lightning and wind. Last night Nini and I walked out on our porch and we noticed that it was dead still; there was not a breath of wind. I turned to her and I said, “If we were still in the Mid-West we would be really, really nervous right now. Usually that is what happens right before a tornado hits. The skies were dark and big flashes ripped across the sky. This is great! This is wonderful! That is one way in which the will of God is manifest. It elicits our wonder, our awe. The other way calls for our obedience.

Now, obedience is what is called for in the other expression of God’s will. You see this in I Thessalonians 4:1-8. The third verse drives home the point.

“Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passions of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you.”

In these verses as you probably recognize if you are familiar with scripture at all, Paul is expanding on the eighth commandment of the Law, [which Jesus had already commented on,] it is part of the Sermon on the Mount. You will find it in Matthew 5:27-30. Jesus said, *“You have heard it said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.”* Beloved, when we pray, following the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done...” we are asking God to enable us to desire and to commit to know and obey the whole law of God, that is what is involved.

I was chatting the other night with an individual and that person said to me it is just so perplexing in talking to individuals today where they seem to feel that they are under no obligation to keep the moral law of God. They seem to feel that God, “God will forgive me. I don’t have to... It isn’t that big a deal, right? I mean, if I fall into sin, God will forgive and we’ll move on.” All I would encourage you to do is to go to the first chapter of the book of Revelation and have a long sober look at the Lord Jesus Christ who is going to interview you at the throne, where it describes Him as having eyes of fire that will burn through your soul in order to purge all remainder of sin within. You see we are of the mind that the most important thing on the earth is this physical self, but the most important thing on the heart is the eternal soul within, and when that it is contaminated with sin God will burn it clean if we have not washed it clean with the blood of Christ. But we have a hard time understanding this.

How many know the moral law of God? It is so simple! I will give you the first. You give me the second. These are not the greatest commandment and the second which is like it, though that is a good and honest call on the question. These are the Ten Commandments: 1. No other gods before me. 2. No graven images. 3. Honor His name. 4. Sabbath Day of rest. 5. Honor your mother and father. 6. No murder. 7. Notice I have here “no sexual

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sin”. That is the point: go back and read Matthew again. 8. No defrauding. 9. No misrepresenting. 10. No coveting. God says, this is my will, and when we pray, “Thy will be done,” we are saying, “I agree.” “I desire, O God, that You by your Spirit would press in upon my understanding and my desiring heart, and that you would reshape me so that I would desire the holiness that You have prescribed in Your will, so that my thoughts and my actions are an expression of your will and purpose for humanity. That is what I desire. “Thy will be done. . .”

Jesus did sum up the law in those two wonderful statements: love God with your heart, soul, strength and mind; love your neighbor as yourself. But you know, so sick is our age, so twisted and perverted is the thinking of our day, so upside down have we become in our way of estimating things, that one has to clarify what it means when you say “Whatever is done in love fulfills the law.” Let me clarify: true love desires to do what is right, and therefore finds out what is right before it speaks and acts. It is by no means an endorsement of the weird notion that because I do something because I am love-filled [referring to a strong flow of feelings, of affection or desire], that therefore what I have done is correct. God never surrenders His sovereign determination as to what is true, what is righteous and what is just to the opinion of men. Why doesn't he? Am I going to entrust my life to you all? You are a bunch of sinners! Are you going to trust your lives to me? I hope not! You don't entrust the moral well-being and the spiritual health of people to sinners. You seek God, a holy God who doesn't change, and therefore, “Thou shalt have no other gods, no graven images, never take His name in vain, the Sabbath Day you will keep holy. . .” True love seeks the wisdom of God's Law.

In dealing with the will of God we have to understand there are many different forms or modes in which the will of God is known. The absolute or directing, sovereignly directing will of God as the Creator is one thing and the prescriptive will of God as the Law-giver is distinct from that, though not unrelated. God's will, however, is manifested to us in more ways than these two. I will give you one more and then we will stop.

Who of us has not read with longing heart the great affirmation of I Timothy 2:2-4? This is what Paul wrote to Timothy. Paul said we are to pray that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God our savior, who desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. How many of us in this room are praying for family members who are lost, who do not know Jesus Christ? How many of us have work mates, perhaps roommates, friends, people who are dear to us and we long for them to come to know the Lord? And here is the marvelous affirmation; we read right here that God desires that how many people would come to know the truth? All! God's desire – Paul uses the same term as for his will: it is the same word in the Greek. But we realize at once in this case that it is not the absolute will of the Creator. Let me ask: how many have had people die in their sins and you were praying for them to be saved? O yes, o yes indeed. You and I both know this, don't we? Obedience is always a choice. The will of God does not remove the reality of that choice. When we pray the third petition of the Lord's Prayer we are agreeing with the desire of God that all people will choose to obey the Laws of God, including the invitation to personal faith. This, by the way, beloved, is the place in the Lord's Prayer where evangelism and missions come into direct focus. It is the will of God. When we pray, we are saying, “Amen,” to evangelism and missions. We are saying, “I agree, I am 100% for. . .I am willing to give my life and my goods in order that all men in all places would come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what it means to pray, “Thy will be done. . .” It is a promise of God that any man who desires to be saved will be saved. None are refused, for that is the will of God. So as we close this morning let me ask you: do you want to be saved? God will not refuse you. He has promised; it is His will, it is His desire. He wants you to come to Him and receive the gift of forgiveness and life which He has made available in Jesus Christ. That is the will of God. We should not neglect it.

Questions for understanding and application:

1. What sort of situations and events in the world prompt you to wonder about and want to know God’s will?
2. Do you tend to see more good or more evil in the world?
3. How would you answer the question, “What is God’s will for your life?” Do you tend to view the Ten Commandments or the First and Greatest Commandment the Second like it as God’s will for your life?
4. Is the distinction between God’s absolute will as Creator and God’s prescriptive will as lawgiver helpful?
5. “...the Father’s involvement is proportional to the depth or extent of human need...” How much help do people need in coming to faith? Do all need the same degree and kind of help? Do we need the same kind and degree of help to grow in faith after coming to faith?
6. What do you hope from God? How does God’s will relate to these hopes in your understanding?
7. In light of IPeter I:3-5, does it seem to you to be a limitation on our freedom that God’s guards us through faith for our ultimate salvation? How might this work out day by day?
8. Peter 3:13-18 indicates God also wills that we endure suffering. Has suffering been a spiritually meaningful part of your life? Have you seen it as part of God’s will for you?