

“The Third Petition: Thy Will be Done 2” (Matthew 6:5-13)

June 5, 2011

Order of Worship for June 6, 2011, Communion and Promotion Sunday

Pre-service Song

Welcome and Announcements

Ministry Moment: Jennifer Gonzales and Sheryl Jackson!

Call to Worship: Psalm 63:1-11 and Prayer

Songs of Worship:

“Come, Let Us Worship and Bow Down”

Song # 227

“How Great the Father’s Love”

Overhead

“Jesus Saves”

Overhead

Offering and Offertory

Message: “The Third Petition: Your Will Be Done 2” (Matthew 6:5-13)

By Pastor Bronson

Preparing for the Lord’s Supper

Congregational Singing

“Christ Alone”

Overhead

Invitation and Prayers of Confession and Dedication

Consecration and Distribution of the Elements

Closing Song:

“How Deed the Love of Jesus”

Overhead

Parting Word of Grace

Vespers
2011 Baccalaureate honoring our Graduates
Light Refreshments to Follow

“The Prayer Closet”

June 5, 2011

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

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying for:

1. **District and Home Office, EFCA:** the Lord will call and equip those needed for ministry; the Spirit will enable the personnel to sustain faith and love for the Lord and those they serve; both the national and district level ministries will encourage local churches
2. **President Obama:** the Lord will lay the full weight of carrying for the liberties and the well-being on him and then give him the wisdom to carry the burden; he will be protected from temptation and evil; he will hate evil and love justice and righteousness
3. **Trustees:** they will be effective stewards of the material and financial resources of the congregation; they will enjoy the active support and participation of the congregation on work days and for projects; they will work effectively as a team of mutually supportive godly servants
4. **Military Personnel of the Week: TSgt. Pete Gibson** (husband of Marjorie, father of Tim, Tom and Jewel): that a MSgt slot will open up for promotion
5. **Young Adult of the Week: Maggie Conley at Butte College** (daughter of Dave and Barbara Conley): please pray for patience to let God’s plan to show itself

“Our Father in heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but keep us from all evil; keep us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

That is the Lord’s Prayer as it is given to us in Luke’s gospel. If you are familiar with the scriptures you know that on at least two separate occasions Jesus gave that model prayer. The one that we usually think of is the one given in Matthew as a part of the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus was preaching to the multitude. The one I read just now was from Luke chapter 11. That was the prayer as He taught it to His inner circle of disciples. It is good for us to realize that there is not a specific, invariable, always-exactly-like-this-way that we need to pray in following the model prayer that Jesus has given to us.

This is the “Third Petition: Thy will be done” We started it last week; we will finish it this week. The passage that we normally look at is Matthew 6:5-13. We will be looking at a little portion of that later on.

Should I memorize this prayer? Yes, you should. Why should you memorize the prayer? “Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee,” is what David said in Psalm 119. When you memorize the prayer it means that it is always available; it is present at any time when you are meeting with the issues of life and you want to make sure as best you can that you are in touch with God. Your mind is in agreement with His word His purpose and His will. So if you put this stuff away in your heart you have it immediately available to you. The thoughtless repetition of any set of words is a waste of time. Just to go blah, blah, blah: a waste of time. But the thoughtful reviewing, meditating upon, wrestling through a set of terms is immensely valuable, and surely that was the intent of our Lord when He gave this model prayer.

Now by way of reminder, we know that Jesus begins the prayer with a plural pronoun. Jesus did not say, “Pray like this, ‘My Father...’” What He said was, “Pray like this, ‘Our Father...’” There is actually great significance in that small difference. We are wise to approach God in prayer as a family member. But it is not just that we approach Him as a family member, it is that we approach Him with the conscious intention of representing the interests of the family before the Father. It is not the case, you see, that I come in representing only my own personal interests. Faith we emphasize as personal. How many of you were raised in Christian families: most. But not one of you [was] saved by your parent’s faith. That is what [the Children’s Ministries Director] was saying today; she was saying “At this point, if not already, as you receive this particular copy of the Word of God your task is to own the faith; it is to make it yours. You are the one now who personally communes with the living God. You are the one now who understands, ‘My sin is not a sin primarily against my parents; it is against my God.’ So now you have come into that personal relationship with God and you want to pursue that and develop an ongoing communion with Him.” But that communion is not an isolated one; you recognize you are a part of the body of Christ. We pray, therefore, as one of many. And we do not pray simply for our own interests.

That is worth thinking about. Ultimately, beloved, if you think about the [model] prayer, it is the Lord’s honor and the Lord’s kingdom that we pray for: “Our Father in heaven...holy...Your kingdom...Your will...” After we have gotten through that, “...and by the way, my [daily] food.” So there is a set of priorities here in terms of what is on our minds and hearts as we come into God’s presence. Jesus has alerted us right at the outset to come as a member of the people of God, a part of the family of God. I don’t come just thinking about me. I come thinking about the kingdom, all of us as we come together.

We approach the God who would have us call Him ‘Father.’ We are, as the scriptures often say, the adopted children of God. That is our standing. We have been adopted through the blood of Jesus Christ. The fatherhood that we claim from Him is not the fatherhood of the Creator – true as that is – rather the fatherhood which we

claim is the fatherhood that is ours in adoption in the blood of Christ. So when we relate to God we relate to Him as the God Who has saved us from sin, not as the God Who has fashioned us from the dust. That is why I so appreciated [the song leader’s] prayer this morning. I am God’s servant through the cross. It is only because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ that I would dare speak a word. It is only as every word is washed clean by that blood and carried by the Spirit of God in the purity of God’s intention into the heart of each one that listens that any good thing can be done. We are indeed the creatures of God, but the place where we stand before Him is at the foot of the cross, those who are saved from their sin.

He is also our heavenly Father: “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” [He is] not to be confused with any earthly authority. We don’t often touch on this, and yet is it an extremely important part of our standing with God which is brought to our attention in the prayer by calling God our Father. If you turn to Matthew 23:8-12, notice what Jesus says. We just don’t look at this because we don’t know what to do about it I think. Jesus was driving home to His disciples an extremely important principle that they needed to have planted deep within them if they were going to survive the challenges of carrying the gospel to everyplace around the world. What happens if you want to take the gospel to Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia? What will happen to you? You will die. And if you are going to carry the gospel to Riyadh, what is the relationship you are going to have with the ruling authority of that kingdom? You will be disobedient, because the king is going to say, “Don’t”, and you are going to say, “Must!” Notice Matthew 23:8-12, “*But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*” It is a dangerous thing for any man to claim authority over another. It is especially dangerous to claim spiritual authority. As we contemplate what Jesus said we should recognize that Jesus’ intention is not designed to make children disobedient to their parents or to make students not respect or pay no attention to their teachers; that is not His intention at all. Rather what He is doing is reminding all of us of what both the Pharisees and the Jews of Jesus’ day forgot, and that is there is ultimately only one source of authority, and that one source is the Father, our heavenly Father.

Nothing that contradicts God and His Word will stand. Therefore you have to be able to stand against whatever contradicts God’s Word. You follow the connection? All of us are under authority. I am under the authority of the elders in this congregation. But if the elders came to me and they said, “John, we don’t like the way you are preaching; you are taking way too much time in the Bible. We think you need to spend more time dealing with social issues.” Being a quiet and passive person such as I am. . . I have said to you many, many times, if you are listening and you hear me say something that is off centered and not in agreement with the word of God, what is your job? It is your obligation. It is not something where you say, “Well, maybe I will talk to the pastor and maybe I won’t talk to the pastor.” By the way, what is the name, the proper biblical name for ‘indifference’, the “I don’t care what will happen to you” [attitude]? It is called “hate”. It is also insubordination. You are not being obedient to God when you let another man speak with authority against the Word of God. This is a matter of prayer. Every week I draft some statement about our president, asking God’s people to pray for him. Really, every week I could write the same thing, because it is the same thing ultimately that I want: “Dear God, please break that man’s heart and cause him to bow before you as the one true God. All the rest of it is just different ways of approaching that same thing. I appeal to you to pray for our president.

That is what Paul said to Timothy if you look at I Timothy 2:1-2. This is the foundation for Paul’s appeal. He didn’t say, “I want you to pray for the emperor and everybody else because I think it is a good idea and I wish they would change their mind about things. He said “I want you to pray for them because they need to know that they are under the authority of God. They need to know that, because until they do, they will not do well. So he said, “*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly, and dignified in every*

way.” In your bulletin you will find that we have once again this year placed [an advertisement for] the Call2Fall; this is a great call to the Christian body in America to come together in this case on the third of July and pray for our nation. I hope we will do that. Something to take note of: if you are looking at what Paul wrote to Timothy that bears very much on the way in which we conduct our lives together and the values that we have lifted up and exalted as a nation. If you were to ask most people and look at most ads, what is the premier value that we celebrate as Americans? “Freedom!” But what is the objective of this prayer? He doesn’t say, “I pray that I can have freedom.” What he is saying is that we pray that we might be able to be godly and dignified. In all honesty, beloved, there are very few people in the world who can carry the burden of freedom. Overwhelmingly we make fools of ourselves. What we need is to understand the authority of God that rests upon us, and guides us.

It is the consistent presentation of the Word of God that God Himself has absolute and indisputable right of rule over all the things that He has made. The consequence of this, because He is in fact the Creator and we are His creatures, the consequence is that nothing but God’s own attributes govern what God does. If anyone of us were to walk into the presence of God and say, “I want to have your attention please!” Excuse me? What? Did something talk? This is the God who created the entire universe, and he is the God that created us. We have no say, none! That is before sin. After sin...

So if you look at Romans 9:20-21, you have to read those verses with this understanding, with this perspective. “...who are you,” Paul says, “O man to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Has the potter no right over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable? He is absolute.” Nobody can call him to account. If you want the full flavor and impact of that fact, read the book of Job. When we pray, therefore, if we would pray effectively, we should pray according to the attributes, and the purposes of God which we find flow out of those attributes. That is what we should do. That is why you want to study the Word, reflect upon it, know who God is, to know what His character is, to know what His purposes are, so that your prayers are an expression of what He wants to have done. [You want to be] in perfect harmony.

Some of those attributes are known simply through the study and contemplation of the creation itself, as we know. If you were to go and look in Romans 1:19-21, this is what Paul writes, “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” How many of you have seen “The Truth Project” [by Focus on the Family]? All of you who haven’t ought to. It is the most eloquent and persuasive support to what Paul has just said here. Modern science, I would observe, is pathetic and laughable in its stubborn refusal to admit what every shred of evidence in front of it says, and that is that the universe was created by an intelligence that was so great that our minds cannot begin to comprehend it. But again and again they will say, “No, no, no; that cannot be!” And they will come up with the most outlandish theories to explain what is inexplicable.

However, you and I should both know – and I am sure we do – that in this matter of the arrogant rejection of God, it is not only scientist in our day who practice foolishness. The following testimony [is] by Kirk Cameron; anybody know who he is? I spend time on the internet trying to become aware of the world around me: it is a painful experience. He played Mike Seaver in “Growing Pains”. Did anybody ever see that? I never heard of it until two days ago. It’s OK, you know; I like living in a box – my own. What his point does is to point to the imprint of God’s truth and therefore His moral will on the human heart. This is what Paul talked about in Romans 2:14: “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law [meaning they hadn’t received it from Moses]. They show that the word of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even

excuse them.” How many of you know that he became a Christian? He was not a Christian when he was in the series, I guess, but mid-point he became a Christian and proceeded to offend everybody on the set. He said he offended them; he was a fool in how he attempted to carry out his witness; it wasn’t just the foolishness of Christ. He was a fool in what he did, and so he has rethought that and thought about having a better way of witnessing. This is what he said:

“I pulled over to the curb and turned off the engine. If there is a God and a heaven, there’s no reason He should let me in, I told myself. I had gotten past the intellectual barrier to God, but I knew there was a bigger stumbling block that stood between me and my Maker. It was not intellectual, but moral.

I know that because of my prideful attitude and the way I had intentionally ignored – even denied God – especially in light of the good things He had given me, I wouldn’t go to heaven. Instead of loving God, I had mocked the Giver of all that was precious to me. Deep in my gut, I knew my arrogance and selfishness were an offense to God. Without ever having read the Bible, I intuitively knew that I was a walking violation of the first and greatest commandment: I had failed to give the Creator due honor and respect.” (Taken from Tim Challies’ blog, 6;1;11)

When Jesus introduced the Lord’s Prayer to the multitude, as recorded in Matthew 6:5-8, He made a critically important observation for our understanding, an observation which reminds us of the supernatural attributes of God. This is what He said, “...*for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*” Clearly Jesus did not say that in order to say, therefore don’t bother taking time to pray. But by the same token He said it so we would think about it and it would influence the way we pray. I ask you to do that. In the course of my pastoral ministry I have had plenty of opportunities to listen to people pray, and to ask the question, “Do they know that God already knows? What exactly are they doing?” There are some understandings we need to always carry with us into prayer, based on this model and Jesus’ explanation of it. God knows our situation better than we do. He knows the answer to our situation better than we do. Characteristically, God acts through our actions. God will set us to doing what will accomplish His will both for others and in our own lives. Do we realize how important it is to obey God if you want your prayers answered? The most important thing we can learn and do is whatever it is that God wills for us to do. Indeed, here is the governing purpose of prayer: The governing purpose of prayer is that we would be reminded and refreshed in the fact that He is God: “Thy will be done.” That is what it is about. And, we want Him to clarify our thinking and give us direction so we can move forward in life. You will pray for a multitude of things, but fundamentally, that is what is needed. We should be mindful of it.

The process is not always easy. When Jeremiah the prophet went to God to learn what God’s will was for the Jews that were left behind in Judah after Babylon had destroyed kingdom, the Temple, the city, and they had made idiots out of themselves once again [by rebellious actions]. They were terrified. They wanted to go to Egypt and hide behind the walls of Egypt so that Babylon wouldn’t crush them again. They went to Jeremiah. They knew that Jeremiah was a prophet. He had been a prophet of God for almost fifty years. They said, “Jeremiah, you go ask God what we’re supposed to do.” Do you know how long it took for Jeremiah to hear an answer? Ten days! He went out to the edge of the wilderness and waited for ten days before God answered. Are we patient?

God’s will for us is for our good, but that is not something we readily believe. This is what Paul said in Colossians 1:26-17. He writes to those Christians and he said, “*I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” Amen! When we pray the third petition of the Lord’s Prayer, we are praying that all who believe would come to know the whole Word of God, and that they would also know the hope of the glory of the indwelling presence of Christ. That would be y’all. You’re the Colossians. So in you, in your heart, in your understanding, in your approach and experience of life, there should be

an acknowledgement of and an experience of and a rejoicing in and a laying hold of and a celebrating of the hope of the glory of Christ in you! That is the background for the words in [I Peter 3:15], we should always be ready to give an explanation or a defense for the hope that is in us! The question is, are we hope-filled? That becomes the question.

It is this hope, of course, that is to sustain us through the trials and discouragements of constant resistance to sin. Why do I not give way to sin? Because I have hope. Is sin fun and pleasant? Yes. If it wasn't, it wouldn't tempt us. So how do I find the inner strength to say, no, no, no, sorry, not doing it, not going there, turning it off, walking away: I have hope! And how does the man who takes the Gospel to Riyadh have the courage to stand in front of those who will kill him, and say, “I must tell you about Jesus.” It is because he has hope. So you and I should be praying for one another that our souls will be nourished on the hope that is ours in Christ.

John 15:10-11 Jesus says, *“If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”* That is a reality check. That by the way, if you talk to my wife (it's none of your business, don't talk to my wife!), but if you did, you would find out what I have told many of you, that I am a melancholy. My natural inclination: how many of you have read C.S. Lewis's “The Silver Chair”? There is a character in there named Puddleglum. The name is accurate. He has a gift from God of seeing what is wrong, and potentially wrong, and could be wrong and was wrong and will probably be wrong again. That is my gift! So, I read the word of God and it says, “You are to be joyful”. And I say, “right.” It is an insane thing to do; it is impossible. So what you have to do, you have to say to yourself, “Do I believe God, or do I believe the impulses that arise out of my own imagination? I must believe God.”

Let us pray: gracious Father, we are about to celebrate together the Supper that You have prepared for us through the sacrifice of Your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Him You knew, Father, eternally, and in a manner incomprehensible to us, in order that we might be relieved of the guilt of our sin, You and the Son agreed to let the darkness of wrath come between You as He took upon Himself the whole reality of our corruption and sin, and bore the burden of it so that we are free. It is impossible for us to give thanks to You in any meaningful way, except this, which is the way You have asked: believe in Your Son, receive the gift, take to yourself the joy of God's salvation, and live as those who are free of sin and guilt. So may it be true of us, our Father, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions for understanding and application:

1. For what issues facing our local church are you most likely to pray? Do you see your own spiritual well-being as bound up with the well-being of the church as a whole?
2. Do you see any tension between liberty of personal conscience as a matter of civil right and being under the authority of God and His Word as a matter of personal faith? Are people more inclined to accept or to reject authority? Why is authority often abused?
3. Are you more likely to think of God’s attributes or His promises when you pray? Which of God’s attributes are foremost in your thinking as regards prayer?
4. Do you pray more often to discern God’s will or for God’s help in meeting current needs? What might be an example of each of these?
5. Are you a joyful Christian? If not, why not? God promises to answer our prayers, but some answers are quick, others are not. What helps you to be patient in waiting for God’s answer?
6. “...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?
7. What do you hope from God? How do you see God’s will relating to these hopes?
8. In light of 1 Peter 1:3-5, 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?
9. 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?