



By Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Matthew 6:10

Subject: Part 35 - The Disciples Prayer - Part 2: Defining the Kingdom

Your kingdom come, Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

You will find this disciples prayer also in Luke 11. So it is recorded twice, which makes it very important to the disciples of Jesus and throughout the bible we find many types of prayers. Years ago, the president of the Baptist Convention got into trouble for telling the world that even though God hears all prayers, he's under no obligation to answer anyone's prayer who's not a Christian. *Does God hear the prayers of unbelievers?* The reoccurring testimony in the scripture is that God from time to time, for reasons that we don't always understand, will sometimes respond to the prayers of unbelievers but God clearly is under no obligation to respond to an unbeliever's prayer. The only effective prayer that unbelievers can pray is that of repentance which they are led by the Spirit of God to pray. *Why do you suppose that is?* The Bible says that sin separates us from God. If prayer is speaking to God then it would seem to me that prayer becomes the necessity of individuals who have a right relationship with God who have experienced grace and mercy and hope and forgiveness. Prayer is more than speaking to God. Prayer is a way of life not simply the emergency communications in times of distress. Prayer is about having a relationship with God and prayer is not just simply psychological, self-fulfilment or trying to manipulate God.

Last time we look at how this prayer begins, and it begins where all true prayer must start, with the spirit of adoption '*Our Father*'. There is no acceptable prayer until we can say with the prodigal son '*I will arise and go unto my father*'. This childlike spirit soon perceives the grandeur of the Father in heaven and rises to devout adoration '*hallowed be thy name*'.

Now here in this verse, verse 10, it focuses on the Lord and His kingdom, and to this great thought of God's plan, "*Thy will be done.*"

When the Lord closed the carpenters shop and went off preaching, His first message was one He kept repeating, *“The Kingdom of Heaven is near”* Matthew 4:17. The kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, was at the heart of Jesus’ message. He stated *“I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent”* (Luke 4:43). There is no other gospel but the good news of the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Always and everywhere He went, Jesus preached the message of salvation as entrance to the kingdom. For the forty days that Jesus remained on earth between His resurrection and ascension, He spoke to His disciples *“of the things concerning the kingdom of God”* (Acts 1:3). *Did you know that the Rabbis taught that a prayer in which the kingdom is not mentioned is not a true prayer?* Bible teacher A.M. Hunt explained,

“Every pious Jew in Jesus’ day prayed the words of the Kaddish. It was always meant to be that of praise to God. In the 7th century however, it was introduced to the burial service and remained there, but it is still praise to God. One of the prayers was ‘May His kingdom be established in your lifetime.’”

A bit late for the deceased! The Jewish people longingly looked for the coming of their Messiah and His peace. When He did come, they rejected Him, and crucified Him. Surly for the believer, that’s the longing of their heart, that His kingdom will come soon and that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The glorious reign of our Lord and Saviour.

The word for kingdom used here is *‘basileia’*. While the word is translated here as *“kingdom”* it literally means to rule or reign. If they had translated it *“reign,”* it would have read *“Thy reign come”*. It’s the rule of Christ, it’s the reign of Christ, it is the sovereignty of Christ for which we are to pray. And then the verb *‘to come’* literally means in the Greek *‘let it immediately and suddenly come’*. Let it come and let it come now, and let it come suddenly. Let it come actually, and let it come completely.

To keep our priorities straight Jesus taught us to pray *“Thy Kingdom come.”* In fact in Matthew 13 that saying is mentioned 10 times alone. *What is the kingdom?* In John 18:36, Jesus said, *“My kingdom is not of this world”*, keep that in mind.

The kingdom in this verse in general refers to the sovereign rule of God breaking into human history, especially into the gentile world as the Jews knew who the true and living God is. But the gentiles did not have the redemption story or the promises that God gives to His

people, or the mighty divine declarations of God in relation to His Person, found in the Old Testament. The gentiles knew nothing of a Messiah, salvation, or God, nothing. So this was good news. This was a light shining in the darkness to those who sat in the shadow of death (*Matthew 4:15 and 16 which is a reference to Isaiah 42:7*). It was also a wakeup call to those who had fallen asleep and failed to be the light bearers that they were meant to be. Israel's Messiah had come, walked, preached, and done mighty deeds among them. (*John 1:10-13*).

William Barclay, commenting on this, tells us that one of the most common characteristics of Hebrew style is what is technically known as parallelism. He said -

“The Hebrews tended to say everything twice. He said it one way, and then he said it another way which repeats or amplifies or explains the first way. We then have the perfect definition of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is a society upon earth where God’s will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven.”

On earth, it is the Lord's word being fulfilled generally, which it is, but more specifically, it is that God's will be done in us, His children, His disciples, especially. We know that the disciples of Jesus had various jobs but the Lord had called them, warts and all, to do His will. Like them, He calls us to do His will. God has never saved anyone for no reason, but for His purposes so that His will be done, in them and through them.

*So when we pray **Thy will be done** this is where we see the Lordship of Christ in the disciples' life. It is a far cry from some prayers to the Lord, “my will be done by You”. Praying ‘**Thy will be done**’ really goes against our human nature, doesn't it? Have you noticed how much your prayers are filled with yourself and perhaps your suggestions of how to work out the issues? Have you noticed how we rush into God's presence to unload on Him our needs, our causes, our concerns, (which he calls us to do), but how much time do we pause or listen, how much do we seek God's will, how many times do we say I have this situation God, how do you want me to pray or what do you want me to do? What a challenge to pray ‘**Thy will be done**’.*

In verse 10 Jesus is revealing His desire for His disciples to seek God's will and not their own. God has a program for us and for the world, which has an ending as 2 Peter 3:10-13 tells us.

The Father's program is to exalt Christ on an appointed day in the consummation of history when the Son rules and reigns in His kingdom.

That is His cause, and His program, and His plan is our preoccupation, hence we pray *‘Thy will be done’*. Our greatest desire should be to see our Lord ruling and reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords in our lives as well as overall. The greatest opposition to Christ’s kingdom, and the greatest opposition to Christian living, is of course the kingdom of this present world. The essence of Satan’s kingdom is opposition to God’s kingdom and God’s people.

To pray *“Thy Kingdom come”* is to pray for God’s kingdom, the kingdom over which He, and He alone, is Lord and King. It will be a kingdom on earth (v. 10a), but it will not be a kingdom of this world—that is, of this present world’s system. Remember Jesus told Pilate as I’ve already mentioned *“My kingdom is not of this world,”*.

God, now and always, has ruled the kingdom of the universe. He created it, and He controls it, orders it, and holds it together. As James Orr commented,

“There is therefore recognized in Scripture a natural and universal kingdom or dominion of God embracing all objects, persons, and events, all doings of individuals and nations, all operations and changes of nature and history, absolutely without exception.”

No human kingdom could ever compare with God’s kingdom, not even partially. Man can not be part of a divine reign apart from the righteousness God gives the repentant sinner. This is why trying to improve human society can not advance God’s kingdom. While there are many good and worthy causes that deserve the support of Christians, these practical outworkings of our faith can not build the earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ alone. It is only the gospel that can bring people to Christ and so in a way, in the present and limited, but real and miraculous way, God’s kingdom is coming to earth each time a new soul is brought into the kingdom. The kingdom comes in this way by conversion (*Matthew 18:1-4*). So prayer should be evangelistic and missionary, in other words, praying for new converts, new children of God, new kingdom citizens. Conversion to the kingdom involves an invitation (*Matthew 22:1-14*), repentance (*Mark 1:14-15*), and a willing response (*Mark 12:28-34; Luke 9:61-62*).

The present existence of the kingdom on earth is internal, in the hearts and minds of those who belong to Jesus Christ, the King. We should pray for numbers to mightily increase. Praying for the kingdom to come, in this sense, is praying for the salvation of souls. Every

believer should seek others who can sing, *“King of my life, I crown Thee now, Thine shall the glory be”* (Hymn - Lead Me to Calvary). The kingdom for which we are to pray, and of which we now have a taste, is of infinite value. *“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field”* or a *“pearl of great value”* which a person sells all his possessions to buy (*Matthew 13:44-46*). Its value is so great that each of those parables emphasizes that the procurer sold all he had to purchase salvation (*Matthew 10:37*).

The kingdom comes now through commitment. The desire of those already converted should be to respond to the rule of the Lord in their lives now so that He rules in them as He rules in heaven. When we pray as Jesus teaches, we will continually pray that our lives will honour and glorify our Father in heaven.

While the present existence of the kingdom on earth is internal, God’s kingdom is also past, in the sense that it embodied Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (*Matthew 8:11*). It was present in the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry, in the sense that the true divine King was present *“in the midst of you”* (*Luke 17:21*).

But the particular focus of our prayers is for the kingdom that is yet to come. The Lord’s Kingdom is an *“everlasting kingdom”* (*Psalms 145:13*), and even now *“His sovereignty rules over all”* (*Psalms 103:19; Psalms 29:10; 1 Chronicles 29:11-12*).

God is not ruling on earth in Person as He rules in heaven now, so our prayer should be for Christ to return and to establish His earthly kingdom, to put down sin and enforce obedience to God’s will. As mentioned before this verse could be translated from the Greek as *“Let Thy reign come now.”* The call for the kingdom to come is related to the second coming of the Lord. The Lord will then *“rule them with a rod of iron”* (*Revelation 2:27; Isaiah 30:14; Jeremiah 19:11*).

John says in the last chapter of Revelation: *“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus”* (*Revelation 22:20*). On that day, our prayers will finally be answered. Paul emphasizes that waiting for the kingdom to come in its final form is not so much looking for an event as for a person - the King Himself (*1 Thessalonians 1:10*). There is therefore a sense in which we pray for God’s kingdom to come presently. Some might not like to pray that on account of the fact they have their own agenda and want to see that out.

Jesus places before us a challenge in the words of *Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*. *Have you ever given this much thought? Have you considered what the implications might be?* We all make mistakes at one time or another and even hold thoughts that are not correct concerning God. Let's consider for a moment some of the misconceptions people have in understanding this part of the Disciples Prayer.

Some see God's sovereignty simply as the absolute imposition of a dictator's will, and hence why even some believers are resentful. When, or if, they pray for His will to be done, they pray out of a feeling of compulsion. God's will has to be done, and He is too strong to resist; they've accepted the fact that they can't possibly say anything else; what would be the point of praying otherwise? The logical conclusion of these people who look at God in that way is that there is no point to prayer, certainly not to petitions. *Why ask for the inevitable?*

On the other side of the same coin, other people are more charitable in their feelings about God. But they pray out of passive resignation because they also believe His will is inevitable. They pray for God's will to be done simply because that is what the Lord tells them to do. They do not pray so much out of faith as out of capitulation. They do not try to put their wills into accord with the divine will, but rather shift their own wills into neutral, letting God's will run its course.

It is easy for Christians to fall into praying that way. Even in the very early days of the church, when faith generally was strong and vital, prayer could be passive and unexpectant. If you turn to Acts 12 - you read of a group of concerned disciples who were praying in the house of Mary, John Mark's mother, for the release of Peter from prison. While they were praying, Peter was freed by an angel, came to the house and knocked on the door. When a servant girl named Rhoda came to the door and recognized Peter's voice, she rushed back inside to tell the others, forgetting to let Peter in. But the praying group did not believe her, and thought she had heard an angel. When Peter was finally admitted, *"they saw him and were amazed"* (Acts 12:16). They apparently had been praying for what they did not really believe would happen.

It reminds me of a story I heard, about an atheist who owned a brewery and a local church beside it publically prayed and earnestly prayed that God would somehow do away with the brewery. It was a well known prayer in the community. One day the brewery was struck by

lightning and it burned to the ground. The atheists sued the church but the church denied all responsibility. The judge said that it was the strangest case he ever encountered; an atheist who believed in answered prayer and a church that took no responsibility for prayer.

But how about our own prayer lives? Our own prayer lives often are weak because we do not pray in faith, James in his epistle speaks about this very matter. We often do not expect prayer to change anything, and get a shock when it does. So we often pray out of a sense of duty and obligation, subconsciously thinking that God is going to do just as He wants to do anyway, or perhaps there are times of doubt and times of frustrations. Jesus gave the parable of the importunate widow— who refused to accept the status quo and persisted in begging, despite receiving no response— for the very purpose of protecting us against that sort of passive and unspiritual resignation. Luke 18:1 tells us :

“Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart”

The very fact that Jesus tells us to pray *‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven’* indicates that God’s will is not always done on earth. Remember in Exodus - God’s will was to bring the children of Israel to the promised land, but because of their rebellious and sinful ways this plan was delayed for 40 years. There are consequences when we do not do His will. This is not just an Old Testament lesson but even we see this in the New Testament for example 1 Corinthians 11:30 tells us some of the consequences - ***“For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”***

God is sovereign, but He is not independently deterministic. Looking at God’s sovereignty in a fatalistic way, thinking *“What will be will be,”* absolutely destroys faithful prayer and faithful obedience of every sort. That is not a *“high”* view of God’s sovereignty, but a destructive and un-biblical view of it. That is not the divine sovereignty the Bible teaches. It is not God’s will that people die, or why would Christ have come to destroy death? It is not God’s will that people go to hell, or *why would His only Son have taken the penalty of sin upon Himself so that men might escape hell?* 2 Peter 3 verse 9 states ***“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”***

Sin that exists on earth and causes such horrible consequences is not evidence of God's will but of His patience in allowing more opportunity for men to turn to Him for salvation.

There are people who overemphasize the importance of man's will, and look at prayer as a means of bending God's will to their own. They think of God's providence as a sort of cosmic vending machine, which they can operate simply by inserting the required claim on one of His promises.

But Jesus challenges that notion throughout His model prayer. True prayer focuses on ***Thy name, Thy kingdom, Thy will***. Amy Carmichael wrote,

“And shall I pray to change Thy will, my Father, until it accord to mine? But no, Lord, no; that shall never be. Rather I pray Thee blend my human will with Thine.”

From our point of view, there is a tension between God's sovereignty and man's will, between God's grace and man's faith, but we dare not try to resolve it by modifying God's truth about either His sovereignty or our will, His grace or our faith. God is sovereign, but He gives us choices. God is sovereign, but He tells us to pray ***Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven***. Why? Because James reminds us that in chapter 5 verse 16 - ***“the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much”***.

We have looked briefly at some of the wrong attitudes now let's look at the right attitudes.

David sang of the angels who did God's will in Psalm Chapter 103 verse 20:

“Bless the Lord, you His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His word, obeying the voice of His word!”

That is how God's will is done in heaven, and that is the way believers are to pray for God's will to be done on earth — unwaveringly, completely, sincerely, willingly, fervently, readily, swiftly, and constantly. Our prayer should be that every person and thing on earth be brought into conformity with God's perfect will.

Part of the right understanding of and also attitude towards God's will is what might be called a righteous rebellion. In the sense, to be dedicated to God's will is, by definition, to be opposed to Satan's. To pray ***‘Thy will be done, on earth as it is heaven’*** is to rebel against the worldly idea that sin is normal and inevitable, and should therefore be complied to or at

least tolerated. To pray *'Thy will be done, on earth as it is heaven'* is to rebel against the world system of ungodliness, those who dishonour and reject Christ, and also against the disobedience of believers. Impotence in prayer leads us, however unwillingly, to strike a truce with wrong. To accept what is, is to abandon a Christian view of God and His plan for redemptive history.

Jesus knew the end from the beginning, but He did not accept the situation as just inevitable. He preached against sin and He acted against sin. When His Father's house was profaned, John 2:14-16 and Matthew 21:12-13 tells us that *"He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, 'Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise'"*.

To pray for God's will to be done on earth is to rebel against the idea heard today even among many evangelicals, that virtually every wicked, corrupt thing that we do or that is done to us is somehow God's holy will and should be accepted from His hand with thanksgiving. Nothing wicked or sinful comes from the hand of God, but only from the hand of Satan. To pray for righteousness is to pray against wickedness. To pray for God's will to be done is to pray for Satan's will to be undone.

To pray for God's will to be done is to cry with David as he did in Psalm 68 verse 1, *"Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; and let those who hate Him flee before Him"* and with the saints under God's altar in Revelation 6 verse 10, *"How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

To pray rightly is to pray in faith, believing that God will hear and answer our prayers. I think the greatest hindrance to prayer is not lack of technique, lack of biblical knowledge, or even lack of enthusiasm for the Lord's work, but lack of faith. We simply do not pray with the expectation that our prayers will make a difference in our lives, in other people's lives, in the church, or in the world.

There are three distinct features of God's will as He has revealed to us in Scripture.

1. First is what may be *His will of purpose*:

This vast, comprehensive and tolerating will of God is expressed in the unfolding of His sovereign plan that embodied the whole universe, earth, heaven and hell. Isaiah wrote about the ultimate purpose of His will in Isaiah 14:24 when he said - *“The Lord of hosts has sworn saying ‘Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand’”* (Isaiah 14:24; Jeremiah 51:29; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:9-11). This is the will of God that allows sin to run its course and Satan to have his way for a season. But in God’s appointed time sin’s course and Satan’s way will end exactly according to God’s plan and foreknowledge.

2. Second, is what may be called God’s will of desire for us.

This is God’s will desire for us but it is not always fulfilled by us. This is within His will of purpose and completely consistent with it but it is more specific and focused. For example, Jesus greatly desired the salvation of Jerusalem. He prayed, preached, healed, and ministered among its people to that end. But few believed in Him; most rejected Him, and some even crucified Him. Yet He prayed which we read of in Luke 13:34 *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!”*

That was the repeated experience of God’s Son, who came to earth that men might have life, and have it more abundantly. Like the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, most people were not willing to come to Jesus for that abundant life (John 5:40; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

3. And Thirdly is what may be called God’s will of command.

God’s will of command is entirely for His children, because only they have the capacity to obey. The will of command is the ardent desire of the heart of God that we who are His children obey Him completely and immediately with a willing heart. Paul posed the question and encourage the believers in Romans 6 vs 16 to 18 *“Do you not know, that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness”*

God's will of purpose embraces the ultimate end of this world, Christ's second coming and the setting up of His eternal kingdom. His will of desire embraces conversion; and His will of command embraces the commitment and obedience of His children.

Now the great enemy of God's will is pride. Pride caused Satan to rebel against God, and pride causes unbelievers to reject God and believers to disobey Him. For God's will to be accepted and to be prayed for in sincerity and with faith, self-will must be forsaken in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul, again to the Romans, encouraged the believers in Romans 12:1&2- *"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect"*

When we pray in faith and in conformity to God's will, our prayer is a sanctifying grace that changes our lives dramatically. Prayer is a means of progressive sanctification. The author John Hannah said,

"The end of prayer is not so much tangible answers as a deepening life of dependency.... The call to prayer is a call to love, submission, and obedience, the avenue of sweet, intimate, and intense fellowship of the soul with the infinite Creator."

Just follow the logic - Jesus tells us in this example of prayer that your father is the Lord, the creator of the universe. He is the king and He has a kingdom. Prayer by faith, prayer fuelled by worship generates a sense of expectation and *what is it?* We can expect His kingdom to come, His rule and His will can be expected. The kingdom is again the place where God is sovereign and Jesus invites us to allow Him to rule in our hearts and lives. In God's kingdom there is no will other than His will and this is one of the reasons why we know that it is in the future but we also know that it is available.

We can also see that there are four wills that demand our love, our loyalty, and our obedience. One of those is our very own will - it's what I want, it's what I want when I want it. The other is the individual and collective demands of everyone that you come in contact with, e.g your parents, your friends, people who want to influence you. There is also Satan's will. In John 8 the religious leaders challenged Jesus and asked if He's greater than their father Abraham. Jesus said *'before Abraham ever was, I am'*. They understood Jesus was

making an extraordinary claim. Those religious leaders claimed freedom 'We are free because Abraham is our Father' and Jesus's response was 'You are not free because you are in bondage to sin'. and He told them 'You're of your father the devil and the desires of your father you want to do.' What did they want to do? They wanted to get rid of Jesus. They wanted Him dead. This is exactly what Satan wanted.

So there is my will and everyone else's will, then there is Satan's will but there is also God's will. When Jesus says you pray 'thy will be done', you are inviting God and his desire, his guidance, his instruction, his purposes to come to pass. The Bible says in the Old Testament times God spoke through the prophets but he has in these last days spoken to us by his own dear son. When Jesus was asked the question by the religious leaders 'What shall we do that we may work the works of God?' It was the religious leaders' way of saying '*what is it that God wants from us? What is it that I have to do?*' and Jesus answered and said to them 'This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent' (John 6:28&29)

Do you want to know what God wants? God wants you to believe that he sent his son and that in sending his son, there's a provision for you in every single way. There is a love for you, mercy for you, forgiveness for you and hope for you.

This is God's will and in order to do God's will you have to know God's will and this is why we study the Bible. This is why we take the bible very seriously. Paul wrote to Timothy saying 'study to show yourself approved unto God', a workman who need not be ashamed of God's will. God's will is found in God's Word. God's will is God's plan which is the message of salvation.

In our prayer, there is faith, there is worship, there is expectation, there is submission. In other words, when we pray we must earnestly ask "God, do what You want." That's the bottom line in prayer. "Do what You desire God, do what's in Your heart to be done." That's the petition, that we know God's will and then we submit to God's will. The believer's call is to bring heaven to earth by hallowing the Lord's name, letting His kingdom come, and seeking to do His will. *Amen*