

Micah 6:8 ~ Matthew 22:34-40

Your Will Be Done

Third of Six-Sermon Series on the Lord's Prayer

August 4, 2019 ~ Communion Meditation ~ 8th Sunday after Pentecost

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Anyone have one of these at home? Maybe four or five of them? Who likes them? Who *really* likes them? Surely there have never been fights at *your* house over who gets to control it--when two or more are gathered to watch the same screen. I remember way back in the days when these handy little items first came out. The earliest ones actually had a cord attaching them to the T.V. And before that, of course, we had to actually get up and go over across the room to the T.V. set to change the channel, adjust the volume, or turn it off. Imagine that: you millennials and younger. Ancient history. What is this nifty gadget called?

Yes: A remote Control. It's that second word, CONTROL, that is at the heart of my meditation as we continue into our third week exploring the Lord's Prayer. Here's a blitz review of the first two weeks: First week: WOW GOD. We start by naming and praising God, *Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name*, short hand: WOW GOD. Then last week, remember the yeast and the flour, and the merchant who finds the pearl that turns his life around? Those parables helped us see what "*Thy kingdom come*" might look here on earth, or "God's kin-dom", Short form? CHANGE THE WORLD.

Now this morning, our third petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Short form? TAKE CONTROL, GOD. Yup, there's that "C" word, control. Let's think again about these (remote controls): Why do we like them so much? They give us control over our devices. Look at all those buttons. Of course, we like most anything that has buttons. Even our 16-month-old granddaughter, Isabel, instinctively knows to push the buttons on any cell phone or remote she is quick enough to grab. This instinct of hers, amazes me. Are we all born with a button-pushing gene these days? Or did that start with children born in the 1990's and beyond? Don't we all love buttons, and switches, whether it's our favorite X-Box or PS4 Controller, a joystick, our remote control, or any mobile device that we can hold right in the palm of our hand. With it we control: On/off; loud/soft; Mute/Unmute, move your player here or there; Change the channel, or change your streaming service. Wow. What control. No wonder they call it a "joystick."

Just imagine if our Greeters, as you enter the sanctuary, along with giving you a smile and a bulletin, handed you a remote that you could use during the service, so you could switch channels when you got bored, skip through the sermon, mute out a hymn or a prayer or a scripture you weren't in the mood to hear. You'd probably always get out of church on time—or ahead of time. OK, stop imagining that—come on back from fantasy land. Seriously, I think there are two basic things we love about our remotes and our controllers. First, they give us the feeling of complete control, at least over the game we are playing or the episode we are watching. Second, they release us from having to get up and move off the couch. What a marvelous technological advance! Total control with minimal physical output. What's not to like about that?

Well, Jesus came along and taught us to pray something different, didn't he? Although we tend to live our lives and pray our prayers as though he taught us to pray, "My will be done," that's not quite what Jesus taught us. Or came to this earth to show us. Or died on the cross to give us. What Jesus teaches his disciples to pray seems like the exact opposite: *Thy will*, or *YOUR will be done*. Or, in short form: TAKE CONTROL, GOD. But Jesus, don't you know that when we are watching our favorite program, we don't even give over our remote all that willingly to our brother or sister? How can we possibly pray for God to take control of every aspect of our lives so that we can live for what God wants, rather than what we want?

What *does* God want? Today and every day? If only we had a catalogue, a blueprint, a map, that would show us, teach us, tell stories and parables about what God wants...Yes: we do! We have the Bible. The Bible tells us what God wants. Yes, the Bible is a big book, actually 66 books filled with a lot of wild and crazy stuff, as well as plenty of tedious, boring, unrelatable stuff (still holy and God-breathed). In just 3 verses from Micah and 5 verses from Matthew we are given the essence of what God wants. If we actually did these 8 verses, we wouldn't be reeling from the news of not one but two mass shootings, yesterday at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, taking 20 lives and wounding 26, in what appears to have been a hate crime; and then in our former hometown, Dayton, Ohio, at a bar in the Oregon District where 9 died and another 16 were injured in one minute, before being apprehended by the quick work of the Dayton police. according to Dayton's mayor, this was the 250th mass shootings this year. And Jesus wept.

The answers to tough problems that are throttling the soul of our nation and our earth, are not easy or obvious. No one person, party, or country has it figured out. But, I believe this prayer can move us forward because it asks the right question. It calls us, it commands us, it convicts us to discern and to do what is *God's will* to heal this world Christ came to save. What does God want? The greatest commandment has only one action word that starts with "L" – yes, God wants, God is all about, the LOVE verb. Love going three ways: Love God, Love Neighbor, Love self. This is not a new concept that Jesus made up. Nor is this commandment unique to Christianity. It is at the heart of the Jewish and Muslim faiths as well. Here Jesus was quoting the laws that he had been taught as a Jewish boy in the synagogue. Found in Deuteronomy 6:4-6 and Leviticus 19:18. Perhaps it seems like God wants the impossible. Good news for us: impossible is where God starts.

Micah, one of the four eighth century prophets from the Southern Kingdom, wrote these words, "O Mortal, he has told you what God requires: to DO justice, LOVE kindness and walk humbly with your God." It is that third one, "walk humbly with your God" that laser beams into our hearts the hardest part, if we are honest. To really pray, "Take Control God" requires true humility. By praying "Take control God" or "Your will be done," we are admitting that we do not have all the answers. Walking humbly comes harder for some people and some cultures than others. For those of us born into white privilege, economic privilege, and/or education privilege—those of us who were born on third base, yet think we hit a homerun: we think we are in control. And if we are not, then we should be. Don't we know what's best? This connection between privilege and control holds true for countries, as well as individuals. So-called "First

World” countries, particularly super-powers, such as our own USA: we think we know best. Here in this petition of the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus is teaching us to pray our way out of this illusion.

I hear Jesus commanding us: Don’t change channels when you don’t like what is on, or get bored, or bothered by the channel that God is streaming into your heart. Don’t change the channel—*be the channel* through which God’s kingdom comes on earth, as it is in heaven. Yes—on earth, that is, right now. Better watch out: When we really pray, “Thy will be done on earth. We are praying our way off our couches and onto the field, every day.

We will close my meditation together now, with a responsive prayer for the breaking in of God’s kingdom in our world today:

“Lord God, because Jesus has taught us to trust you in all things, we hold to his word and share his plea: **YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE.**

Where nations budget for war, while Christ says, ‘Put up your sword’: **YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE.**

Where countries waste food and covet fashion, while Christ says, ‘I was hungry... I was thirsty...’: **YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE.**

Where powerful governments claim their policies are heaven blessed, while scripture states that God helps the powerless: **YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE.**

Where Christians seek the kingdom in the shape of their own church, as if Christ had come to build and not to break barriers: **YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE.**

Where women who speak up for their dignity are treated with scorn or contempt: **YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE.**

Where men try hard to be tough because they’re afraid to be tender: **YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE.**

Where we, obsessed with being adult, forget to become like children, **YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE.**

Where our prayers falter, our faith weakens, our light grows dim: **YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE.**

Where Jesus Christ calls us: **YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE.”ⁱ**

ⁱ Wild Goose Worship Group, *Wee Worship Book*, 4th Incarnation, GIA Publications: Chicago, IL, 2002) 16-17.