

“Praying With Jesus: May Your Will Be Done”

Matthew 6:10b

www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+6:10b

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“It’s never too late to have a happy childhood. But the second one is up to you and no one else.”

God’s Will gives freedom to us to choose.

Making choices is a God given opportunity that we human beings agonizingly enjoy. We have large life changing decisions that face us occasionally. And we have small daily decisions that challenge us.

- Whom will I marry?
- What college do I attend? Or, do I even go to college?
- Shall I change jobs or stay with the same company?
- Do I forgive someone who has harmed me and seek to build a better relationship or shall I ignore them and hope they will go away?

Decisions, choices, directional challenges---no matter what you call the process it is a gift from God. God chose to create us as free persons who can make choices and accept the consequences of our decisions. When I say that God gives you freedom, I mean exactly that. God does not give you freedom with strings attached. That would not be freedom at all.

Let me clearly and forthrightly challenge the Reformed theology of John Calvin and other Enlightenment theologians. I believe they were wrong when they taught that God’s will was a plan that was mapped out for every person. Therefore, when a person came to make a decision the question of God’s will was a guessing game to get it right according to the invisible, unknown plan of God. God’s will does not mean God’s plan! Such an idea makes a mockery of God’s gift of freedom of choice. If we mean by God’s will that a divine plan for each of us is in place and we must mysteriously find out what it is so that we can live right, then we do not have freedom of choice.

Let me suggest another way of understanding God’s will. God gives you the freedom and the responsibility for your own choices. God, Our Father, does give us clear, unmistakable, divine truths, principles, and laws to guide us. God does give us the life, teachings, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to guide us and give us eternal hope. God does give us the presence of the Holy Spirit as a daily counselor. We are not left alone with our decision-making. With the big picture, God does have an overall purpose of the salvation of the world. Individually, God gives us a free choice to participate in God’s redemption or to reject God’s amazing grace. We are responsible for making the decision. God does not pre-ordain our decisions. God does not set up a cosmic guessing game. God gives us the freedom to choose for God or against God. God also gives us the responsibility for the consequences of our choices.

Let me take you to a famous Biblical passage concerning God’s will. In **Matthew 26:36-46** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+26:36-46) we read about Jesus’ struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus prayed for God’s will to be done before his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. Jesus’ words according to Matthew’s Gospel are, “My Father, if this cup cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” (vs.42) Jesus faces a life or death choice. In choosing, Jesus relies on prayer, on the support of friends in prayer, and on the presence of God in the garden. Jesus could have chosen differently. There was no predetermined plan. Jesus had the free choice to either follow God’s path across the Kidron Valley into Jerusalem, or return to Bethany and do his own thing. Jesus knew God’s desire for the redemption of the world. Jesus knew the reality of the world and the need of God’s redemption. Jesus freely chose the path of unconditional, redeeming love. Jesus could just as easily have chosen to go back to Bethany. But, Jesus crossed over the Kidron Valley and redeemed the world! Jesus faced that choice that we face:

Cross the Kidron Valley or Go back to Bethany?

In the small decisions and the large decisions we often choose to go back to Bethany. Some of us do not even think about consulting God on our decisions. We just do our own thing. Some of us choose poorly, then blame God, our parents, or any other authority figure close by us. Some of us think about seeking God's guidance, but we think we do not have the time to pray. Some of us do not want a relationship with God. We are still fighting the authority figures of our past and God's presence with us is something to be rebelled against. Some of us think God is out to get us, rob us of pleasure, or ask us to do something we cannot do, so we stay away from asking God for guidance.

I do not know how it is that you choose a Bethany existence, but I know that many of us do just that in both the major decisions of life as well as the small daily decisions. Let me illustrate.

Bethany!

You are in Bethany, if you are following the media's consumer mandate to get, get, get and you reject God's basic law of stewardship that it is far more blessed to give than to receive. If you are spending more on fast food, or dog food, or recreation, or vacation, or anything else than you are giving to God, then you are back in Bethany. God's clear teaching is that you give to God a minimum of 10% of your income. Anything less and you are missing a great opportunity to know God's amazing power to give to you.

Bethany!

You are in Bethany, if you honor and love someone or something more than you love your God. The first commandment of God in **Exodus 20:2-7** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=exodus+20:2-7) is reinforced by Jesus in **Matthew 22:37** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+22:37) with a direct command to love the Lord your God with all your mind, heart, soul, and being. The way you find out your first love is by evaluating the way you spend your time and your money. If soccer, football, cheerleading, business, television, or anything else is occupying more of your time than honoring God in worship and through prayer, then you are in Bethany.

Please don't say that you can't help it. Please don't say that it is just this time in your life and you will do better later. You can choose to cross the Kidron with Jesus right now and trust God more completely with your time, your interest, your money, and most of all your love.

When Jenny Melkvik was actively teaching she chose to cross the Kidron when she served as the teacher representative to a statewide math competition for public schools. The officials changed the day of the competition from Saturday to Sunday. Jenny informed the organizing group that she would not be participating. One person stood up against the entire group. And, Jenny's witness to her love for the worship of God and the honoring of God's name brought about a change in the entire statewide competition. Because one person spoke up, the competition was moved back to Saturday.

Parents you can make a difference with soccer games! You are not victims of a schedule created by the organizer from hell. You can freely choose how you will spend your time and your money. You can choose to live within the purposes of God. You can choose to honor God with your time, talent, and money.

You can cross the Kidron valley with Jesus! As you do, let me tell you what to expect.

Choosing to walk across the Kidron Valley!

From the Garden of Gethsemane into Jerusalem you have to cross the Kidron Valley. In Jesus' time a small stream ran along the floor of the valley. Once Jesus chose to walk with God's will, he crossed the Kidron and went up to the house of Caiaphas the High Priest. When you choose to follow Jesus and you walk across the Kidron you can expect certain happenings.

- **You will find God in the struggle.**

We think that keeping our children from struggle is the best way to parent. Foster Cline and Charles Fay developed the parenting process of “Love and Logic” to encourage parents to allow young children to struggle. Children grow confidence by learning how to make choices, receive the consequences of their choices, and learn to evaluate the consequences so that they can make better choices another time.

If that is good parenting advice for humans, don’t you think that God set up the world that way? You find God most often and most personal in the struggles of life. Read the Psalms and watch how often a Psalm will begin with feelings of abandonment and fear and end with affirmations of God’s goodness, mercy, and loving kindness. Don’t you know this truth for yourself? When you have been in deep grief, when you have faced difficult times, God is so close beside you. And, in the midst of the struggles of life we have the opportunity to learn more from God than ever before.

When the big “C” word was given me nine years ago, Jamie and I struggled with God. Our life as we knew it was ending. A chapter of the book of our 31-year marriage was closing. We were challenged to write a new chapter when we were not ready to close the last one. Our choice was to become angry, fearful, blaming, and ultimately very negative and self absorbed. Or, we could choose to find a way to trust and honor God. We deliberately chose to cross the Kidron trusting God and seeking to learn all that God could teach us. Anger was a part of that struggle. For one weekend fear became a part. For the entire time grief was a real part. But, through it all we placed our lives into God’s firm and sure hands. The image that God gave me was that of a river of God’s marvelous grace flowing along through dry ground. I could choose to stay on the bank doing my own thing and living life my way. Or, I could choose to get into the river and canoe downstream. The free choice was mine. Once in the river, I could choose how to travel on the river. The speed was my choice. The stops along the river were my free choice. When making a foolish mistake the consequences of my choices still exist. In other words, I could still fall in the water. However, as I traveled down the river of God’s grace I am blessed with a presence and a love that language cannot describe. During that time my struggle with God was more intense than any time in my life. And, my sense of God’s presence was also more intense!

Walking across the Kidron Valley with Jesus gives you an identity as God’s child that is eternal! No matter what the struggle, you find God right there with you!

- **You will learn to trust in God’s wisdom!**

With God’s presence comes access to God’s infinite wisdom. God does not leave us alone to make our life choices. God’s wisdom comes to us through Holy Scripture, the church, Christian friends, and even from strangers. We are not left alone to make decisions.

God informs the small day-to-day decisions.

1. Are you tempted to steal an item from a store or from your place of work?
God’s will is no! The wisdom of God teaches us that God will provide all we need.
2. Are you tempted to become sexually involved with someone other than your spouse? God’s will is no! God’s will for you is to enjoy the great gift of sexuality within a single, long term partnership with a trusted spouse.
3. Are you tempted to walk away from someone without forgiving them?
God’s will says no! You find reconciliation for yourself as you trust God’s wisdom to reconcile you with all others.

When you choose to follow Jesus across the Kidron valley, you are clearly informed by God. The promise is that in following Jesus doing God’s will you are on the path of ultimate goodness that brings eternal joy. Walking across the Kidron Valley with Jesus gives you an identity as God’s child that is eternal!

- **You can trust in God’s goodness!**

God is indeed good all the time. (**Matthew 19:17**) (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+19:17) When God gives a command, teaches a principle, lays down a law, God wants us to experience ultimate joy. God’s ultimate will is shared by Jesus in **John 10:10** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+10:10) when he says: “I

come that you may have life, and have it abundantly.” There is only good in God’s heart for each one of us. You do not need to fear God. You do not need to think that God wants to rob you, cheat you, keep you from life. God created life! God loves life in all forms! You can trust God’s goodness.

Albert Schweitzer said, “The fundamental idea of good is that it consists in preserving life, in favoring life, in wanting to bring life to its highest value, and evil consists in destroying life, doing it injury, hindering its development.”

God is in the growing life business. There is no evil in God. You can trust that God’s commands are life principles that will bring you joy now and joy forever. The real choice you have is to trust in God’s goodness by choosing to obey God’s life principles. Or, you can disobey God and experience death and destruction.

The real question for you on a daily as well as lifetime basis is can you trust God’s goodness? Do you want to follow Jesus across the Kidron and enjoy the opportunity to live God’s life of unconditional love?

Most of us are like the young boy who was saying his prayers kneeling beside his bed. His mother over heard him praying, “Dear God, make me a good boy, but it’s all right with me if you’d like to take your time about it.”

The classic movie scene detailing the challenge of actually placing your life within the circle of God’s will comes to us from Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. At one point in the movie, Indiana Jones has to step out in faith in order to bring life to his dying father. He stands on a ledge hearing the words, step out in faith. He looks down and thinks that the first step will be his last step. Finally he steps out and finds an optical illusion has hidden a rock bridge across the deep chasm. He can walk across and find the living water from the Chalice of Christ that will heal his father. He only finds out that he can walk across after taking the first step on faith.

Video Clip: Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

Walking across the Kidron Valley with Jesus gives you an identity as God’s child that means you can trust in God, your Father who is absolute goodness! You do indeed have a choice each day. I urge you to clearly say in your mind:

I will step out in faith and follow Jesus.

Right now I urge you to make a life choice. If you have never decided to follow Jesus then I urge you to quietly pray a prayer of surrender. Just pray, “Jesus, I don’t know where you are leading me, but I am going to follow. I am excited to learn from you what the best possibility for my life is! Thank you Jesus for being willing to lead me through life’s difficult journey.”

For those of you who have made that decision there are other choices to make. What area of your life is still in Bethany? Is your time an issue with God? Is your money an issue with God? What area of your life can you not pray Jesus’ prayer, “Thy will be done?” Whatever it is that is holding you back, let me ask you to go to prayer right now and get it straight with God.

When you fully and completely decide to follow Jesus across the Kidron life becomes full and free. Following Jesus brings you the most fulfilling, most exciting, most joyful life possible. Following Jesus allows you to pray with Jesus, “Thy will be done” in all places, in all times, with all things in my life.

When you pray, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” You join with millions of brothers and sisters from around the world who know that no matter what might happen in this life, nothing can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their lord. You can then walk across the Kidron Valley with Jesus knowing that whatever happens, the abundant and amazing grace of God is with you. That knowledge allows you to say with the song writer who wrote the words to this hymn in the midst of the grief and suffering at the loss of his 4 daughters to a tragic accident in the North Atlantic. Near the sight of that awful tragedy, walking by faith, trusting in God, Horatio G. Spafford wrote the words to a now famous hymn.

“It is Well With My Soul”

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
“It is well, it is well, with my soul.”

Though Satan should buffet,
Tho’ trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

It is well, with my soul.
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

For Sunday, September 26, 2010’s Sermon

Foundational Scripture: Matthew 6:9-10b

Featured Scripture Reflection: “Pray in this way: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.’” (Matthew 6:9-10 NRSV)

Opening Icebreaker: Share a time in your life when you disobeyed one of God’s principles or laws. What was the consequence?

Scripture Questions

What is the scripture saying?

- What are some passages of Holy Scripture that might help you understand the phrase God’s will as used by Jesus? (Ex. John 10:10; Matthew 5:9; Exodus 20:1-21; etc.)
- In Matthew 26:42, Jesus again uses the phrase, “may your will be done” in a prayer. How do you think the Lord’s Prayer and the Gethsemane prayer experience are related?
- The sermon states that Jesus was free to walk back to Bethany or to go forward across the Kidron Valley. What do you think?
- The sermon states that God’s will is not a “mysterious set plan” that you have to figure out in order to be in God’s will. What do you think?

How is your life touched?

- When have you had a ‘stepping out in faith’ experience like that of the film clip from Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade?
- What areas of your life are situations where you choose to safely walk back to Bethany? (Giving money to God? Time allocation to God? Unresolved conflicts? Etc.)
- Share a time when you have found God in the midst of a life struggle.
- Share a time when you learned to trust God’s wisdom more than your own.
- Share a time when you learned firsthand of the goodness of God.

What is God’s invitation to you?

- Jesus invites you to pray in community and individually in surrender to God’s purpose for your life. What one area do you need to surrender to God this week?

What can you pray for?

Pray that Chilson Hills will be a joyous, faithful, praying community of God’s incredible resurrection power celebrating Jesus Christ’s transforming hope and love in order to help grow God’s Kingdom on earth.