**Luke 22:24-62 March 18, 2020**

**Lent Midweek 3 – Thy Will be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven “Lord’s Prayer in the Lord’s Passion”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I remember vividly my time on different sports teams growing up. While it may be hard to believe if you know anything about my physical attributes now, back in fourth grade I was rather short. I played on the local basketball team but didn’t get to play much. I didn’t have any kind of “basketball skills” and was generally uncoordinated and awkward. One time I went up to the coach and asked him what the problem was and why I wasn’t getting to play. He explained that it was for the good of the team that I wasn’t playing, and I shouldn’t focus so much on myself. He even told me once, “There is no I in team.” I wasn’t very happy about this, and as I got older, I got taller. As I got taller, an assistant coach took me under his wing and taught me how to rebound, how to play defense, and how to set proper screens. Suddenly, I was the starting center on the team, and it was for the good of the team that I played. This is just an example of the world of sports where one minute the will of the coach is for you to do nothing, and the next the will of the coach is for you to be a main fixture on the team.

How do we know God’s Will? That’s the question of our sermon tonight. We pray it in the Lord’s Prayer “Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.” If we pray for it to come, shouldn’t we know what it is? And how does it fit into our Lord’s Passion? In our Gospel reading tonight, specifically in verse 42 Jesus prays, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” This was the calm before the storm in the Passion of Our Lord, as Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane for the Will of God to be done, but also if the cup of suffering is able to pass, that it pass from him. So passionate is he in his prayers that his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground, a foreshadowing of what would happen later in his Passion, as thorns pushed down into his head, and as his blood fell to the ground as he hung on the cross. He prays that the will of God is done, but could it be that God’s will would truly be to have his own Son be executed? Something doesn’t seem right….after all God would never want anything bad to happen to Jesus, or to us His beloved children. But…bad things seem to be happening all around us. We are living during a prolonged quarantine for sickness, a sickness that is debilitating our lives and killing people. How could that possibly be God’s Will?

We lean on Martin Luther again for understanding. From Luther’s explanation of the Third Petition found in the Small Catechism, “The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also. *How is God’s will done?* God’s will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God’s name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His word and faith until we die. This is His good and gracious will.”

Let’s just use this definition to fit into what we know about the Passion of our Lord. While the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ may seem to be the plan of the devil, this was actually the moment when Satan’s plan of destruction was thwarted, hindered, and completely broken. The problem of sin was remedied by the sacrifice of our perfect Lord and Savior, and that would be God’s good and holy will. Also, through the cross of Christ, Jesus takes our sin upon himself and in its place gives us His perfect robe of righteousness. This happens in Baptism, which is one of the Sacraments that God has given to strengthen and keep us firm in the faith. So, God works through these means of grace to do His will. He works through His Word which reveals this amazing sacrifice on our behalf. He works through His Sacraments that connect us to the forgiveness won on the cross. He works through the passion of Jesus Christ to expose our sinfulness and to strengthen our faith.

The hard part of meditating upon God’s Will, is that we don’t always agree with God’s Will or submit to God’s Will in our lives. We don’t always lean on God’s understanding, instead we focus and rely on our own. Think back on the story of me as a young basketball player. Even though I wasn’t equipped to help the team, and wasn’t taking any steps to be better, I wanted to play. My will was to simply get out there and play, even though I didn’t really know how to play defense and was just shooting the ball at the basket from the three-point line. It was a hard truth, but if the will of the coach was to do what was best for the team, I shouldn’t have played until I got better. But my will would be to always have me in the game, because it was what I believed was best for me. That’s how we view our will up against God’s perfect and Holy Will. Even if it doesn’t hinder the devil, the world, or our sinful nature, even if it doesn’t strengthen our faith or let God’s kingdom come, we don’t care. We want to do it. Our Will is for us to be happy, and happiness can supersede God’s commands. It doesn’t matter if it’s wrong, we want to do it. It doesn’t matter if God’s Word says we shouldn’t do it, our Will is greater than God’s.

Yet in the Passion of Jesus Christ we find God the Son, praying to God the Father, and putting himself in submission to the Will of God the Father. “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” If Jesus Christ, the perfect lamb of sacrifice, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, can face the hardships and pain and suffering that came from God’s Will being completed by his death and resurrection on the cross, how can we in good conscience pray this prayer and not submit ourselves to God’s Will in our lives. Because whether we’re sick or healthy, clean or dirty, rich or poor, we pray for God’s Will to be done, and we can’t pretend to understand every aspect of God’s Will in different situations in our lives. All we can pray is that it is done. We don’t have to understand all of it, we don’t have to have it all laid out and explained to us, we pray that it is done in our lives and we go about the work that God has called us to do.

Thy will be done Lord, meaning it’s not about me, or what I want, it’s about You and Your Will. You can put your faith in God, because ultimately, he shows His love for you by sending His Son who died for you. You can trust your place on God’s team, because he isn’t holding you back from something you deserve out of spite or anger, he’s looking out for your best interests and ultimately the care of your soul. Earthly happiness, and us chasing after the will of our bodies only leads to a finite happiness that soon wears out. Our will is tainted and easily tempted, we just chase after the next thing that will make us happy and don’t see the big picture of how it will benefit our faith. But God provides, even in the midst of struggle, and sickness. God provides His Word to feed our souls, to give a lasting and eternal care and strength, until we see His ultimate Will realized and we are with Him in heaven for all eternity.

God will call upon you to do His will here on Earth, and you may pray the same prayer that Jesus did. You may ask for there to be another way. This isn’t sinful, but always see that in this prayer and in our Lord’s Passion, the will of God is what we put at the forefront of our lives. God, Your will be done.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.