

SERMON: “THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE ...”
TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT PSALM 47
NEW TESTAMENT MATTHEW 7:21-23 & 26:36-46

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Stewardship Series – “Thy Will Be Done”

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INTRODUCTION

There are certain words that get used often during election cycles
You hear those words from reporters, from pundits and from the candidates
One such word is ‘administration.’ From the candidates, “in my administration ...”
Then they go on to say what they intend to do – a promise, a platform, a plan

During these election cycles, we are encouraged to be informed voters
to compare plans, platforms and promises, to compare administrations
That makes sense, to think about how things would work (and would not) work
when they are in power ... in their administration.

You know who else talked a whole lot about his “administration?”
Jesus did. He didn’t use the word administration. His way of talking about it
was to talk about the kingdom of God, to announce that it was at hand
to tell us what the kingdom is like through his own example and through parables

Jesus talked about the kingdom of God more than any other subject
Think about how often you hear me reference where I went to school
plus any references to soccer or food ... that much. His favorite topic

It is how he introduces himself. We find that as he begins his ministry
earlier in Matthew chapter four, **“From that time on Jesus began
to proclaim, “Repent, for kingdom of heaven has come near.”**
Please notice the first word used – repent. He is telling us that with the kingdom
at hand we need to change, change direction (That is what repentance is)

So as we continue this series built around this phrase from the Lord’s Prayer,
“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done” ... it would help us to keep in mind
the honest truth that ‘Thy will’ and ‘My will’ are not the same thing
The kingdom that we pray comes on earth as it is in heaven
is Jesus’ administration – not my way, not your way, Jesus’ way.

That humility is key. We need that openness and honesty as we follow Jesus
To use another sports image that applies to more than sports
We need to be ‘coachable.’ We hear course corrections regularly on GPS
And we follow them. We’d be wise to heed course corrections
from Jesus as well. He coaches us up. He challenges us.

SPEAKING OF RULERS

The first lesson we look at this morning is Jesus coaching us up
It is from the sermon on the mount shortly after he gives us the Golden Rule
“do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” He warns us about
false prophets – wolves dressed up in sheep’s clothing.
He talks about how we are to bear good fruit

Then he says that not everyone who says **“Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom,
but only the one who does the will of my Father.”**
Tough words that challenge us not just to talk the talk, but to walk the walk.
Think back to that Golden Rule for how to walk that walk

Speaking of rulers. Did your parents have that space, or do you have that space
as a parent today where you measure your children and their growth?
I’d like to think that our Heavenly Parent has a room like that
In our Father’s house there are many rooms ... including one with
pencil marks and a yard stick ... and lots of names, lots of names

Jesus holds us accountable, holds us to his standards, his yardstick
And he measures our growth, growth reflected in our words and deeds
Jesus loves us where we are and he loves us enough not to leave us there
loves us enough to get us moving us forward, growing
I’d imagine he has a pencil and yardstick to keep track of our growth

Now let’s take a look at what growth looks like
Think about the times you grew from experience
Haven’t most of those growing experiences been a bit of challenge?

My personal experience is that I have learned far more from and through
tough times than good times, from my shortcomings more than my successes
Might that be true for you too? And not just for us as individuals
But for us as a church, as a community, as a country?

The names on the laundry room door jam measuring our growth include many names
including names like Cedar Falls, Waterloo, Iowa and the US of A

Growth doesn’t come from taking the easy way. It comes as we join in on
the good work God is doing all around us. Let the orange cones
be a reminder ... participating in Thy will being done means we’re entering
a construction zone. The reason the cones are there is to let you know
to drive carefully. It might be messy, some re-directing of traffic up ahead.

Seeing that this is a stewardship sermon, I’d remind you again of what
a famous architect, John Portman, said about construction ...
*“You can count on three things with construction. It will take longer than you think
It will make a bigger mess than you think and it will cost more than you think.”*

NOT EASY ... COSTLY

Jesus taught that lesson and he lived it. Doing “Thy will” is not easy. It is costly
He lived it throughout his life teaching us to pray “Thy will be done,”
reminding us that the kingdom of God is at hand. And most clearly in this passage
in his own wrestling with his destiny that he was going to Jerusalem
not to take it back for Israel ... but to suffer and die

We hear that struggle between my will and thy will in his prayer

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, yet not what I want but what you want.”

The difference between Thy will and my will may not be easy to see particularly in relatively easy times. But in difficult and decisive times times when we need to make a choice, choose a path ... the difference between the two will often become clear – costly but clear

You know those times, those places. You can probably name them in your own life, Those places along the journey that proved to be turning points

I’ve often thought about this passage about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane relative to his time. This was that moment, the night before just outside the city, his last chance to change his mind

As I prayed through this passage this week, I still clearly see Jesus in his time and place But having been to and having prayed in this garden myself, now twice I see this passage better in my own time, my own place ... and in that place I kept thinking about where that garden is ... decided I needed to show you some maps to maybe help you get a sense of place

I’m going to show you where the Garden of Gethsemane is ... and then back up My purpose and prayer is to help you see that this place reflects the tension in this prayer - the way we struggle with thy will versus my will (like Jesus did) and how we all too often and too easily confuse the two acting like my will is thy will “Let me tell you what God is thinking. God agrees with me”

The holy city of Jerusalem is ‘holy’ because of what happened there Holy moments for Jews, Christians and Muslims in chronological order It is also a divided city in the heart of a divided world. Let me show you

Show image – Old City of Jerusalem from Mount of Olives

MAPS

We begin with the view of the Old City of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives
You see the Dome of the Rock there. That sits atop Temple Mount
It is one of the holiest places in Islam and the holiest place in Judaism
with what is believed to be the ruins of the western wall of the Temple

The city is traditionally described as having four quarters
The two you see in this picture are the most clearly divided
The Jewish section in the Southeast where the Western Wall is
(you go through security to go there) and the Muslim quarter in the northeast
home to the Al-Aqsa mosque – not really open to tourists.

The Christian quarter, home to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the northwest
and the Armenian quarter in southwest. There too you see and feel both
the holiness and the tensions. The rest of the city spills out around the Old City
The Garden of Gethsemane sits just outside the old city to the east,
down in the Kidron Valley. Here's the first map I want to show you

Show image – Walking Tour of Mount of Olives

You see the Garden is there in the top center of that map
The Mount of Olives where Jesus went with his disciples after sharing
the last Supper is to the right. The Dominus Flevit Church (the Mother Hen Church)
is there to the right, up the hill. It is where Jesus prayed over the city
The Temple Mount is there on the left. You may also notice the graveyards

This map shows you where these ancient holy sites are in relation to one another
The next two maps widen the frame and change the time frame to today
I share them because I think they show the tension in and around the Holy City
I want you to regularly pray for the peace of Jerusalem (See Psalm 122)
This is the beloved city – beloved by Jew, Christian and Muslim today

Show image – East Jerusalem and Ring Settlements

You remember I told you the Muslim Quarter is in the Northeast
Muslims, like Jews, want to claim Jerusalem as their capital. The east side of the city
(old city and new city) is the Muslim part of town. It is in the Occupied West Bank
You see the large burgundy blots around the city ... those are settlements
intentionally built so as to ring that part of town, claim that land for Israel

Settlements continue to be built changing the facts on the ground
They include larger apartment complexes on Palestinian land around Jerusalem
and planned neighborhoods built by the government and some settlers
just taking and claiming land on their own throughout the West Bank
You can see just how many there are, and how spread out on this map

Show image – Map of Israeli Settlements in Palestine

SUMMARY

I show you these maps from yesterday and today so as to see the challenges of understanding with open minds and hearts the difference between my will or our will and Thy will. How are we to know?

The Garden in which Jesus prayed the prayer saying, “**Father remove this cup from me, yet not what I want but what you want**” is nestled in a land fraught and full of tensions. Bitter divisions and inequalities and ongoing war

Going back to talk of an election season and administrations
The candidates are asked question about the ongoing war in these Holy Lands
The questions need to be asked and answered. But do we really expect quick and easy answers or solutions to such complex challenges

I beg you to pray and keep on praying for these Holy Lands
For Jew and Christian and Muslim and secular

And I beg you to pray with humility in so doing
because it seems to me that one reason we need to do so
is that so many of us, including people with great power, are quite busy
pursuing their own wills convinced they are doing God’s will. But are they?

Show image – Garden of Gethsemane (Peace)

God’s will is beyond our comprehension, beyond our control
It helps me to recognize that ... especially when I’m convinced I’m right
and someone else is wrong, especially when I’m convinced I know
for sure what they, whoever they may be, just might need.

Dear God ...
Give me the humility and hope to pray like Jesus
Not my will be done, but Thy will