

The gospel for Sunday, July 24, 2022 comes from the 11th chapter of Luke's gospel.

*Jesus was praying in a certain place and after he's finished one of his disciples sent to him Lord teach us to pray as John taught his disciples he said to them when you pray say father hallowed be your name your kingdom come give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive everyone indebted to us and do not bring us to the time of trial. And then Jesus said to them suppose one of you has a friend and you go to him at midnight and say to him friend lend me three loaves of bread for a friend of mine has arrived and I have nothing to set before him any answers from with him do not bother me the door has already been locked and my children are with me in bed I cannot get up and give you anything. Tell you even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs so I say to you ask and it will be giving you search and you will find knock and the door will be open for you for everyone who asks receives and everyone who searches finds and for everyone who knocks the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who if your child asks for a fish will give a snake instead or if a child asks for an egg will get a scorpion if you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.*

We've all heard stories, and we may even know someone who's been diagnosed with a terminal disease, and who has months or days to live. Maybe it's a cancer diagnosis, Lou Gehrig's disease or other illness and their life expectancy is limited. And once the reality of it all sets in, for many of these people they face incredibly difficult decisions about their future. Some even find that this is a time to live out their very best lives. To see, and do things they maybe never would have done otherwise.

Some travel, some work on mending relationships, others focus on their families, start foundations, open a business and more. And some get busy working on things like advocacy, becoming a force and a voice for others, working for justice and peace, and other causes they may be passionate about. But the point is this that so many of these people, when faced with an existential future, get busy, and change things to help make the world and people a better place for those who come behind them.

When Jesus was teaching his disciples his prayer... "our father in heaven, how old is your name." And then, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven", I believe he was talking about that present time, in that very moment. For us mortals, there are lots of wills, your will, my will, the wills of our friends, the wills of our enemies, the wills of

those who despise us, the wills of those who love us. We each have our own “wills” – our own ways of seeing things. Our own way of wishing things to be a certain way.

But just what is God’s will in all of this? What do we mean when we petition God to make God’s will be done on earth? There was a time and place where God’s will had been done on heaven and earth. And that was a creation, however you might envision that. It was a place, a time, when God had finished his work and tells humankind to take care of all of this now. God sees that all that he had created was “good”, and invites humankind to tend to it all – to be good stewards of what God had created. To multiply and grow and participate in this whole thing called creation. To make tomorrow better than today, and the next day and the day after that and so on.

And thus begins our downfall, because we spend our lives, our time, and our precious resources doing *our* will on earth. Millions, billions of us, each with their own distinct will, trying to bend creation to our will, and to our own pleasure. And claiming that what we do in our own name, is in fact doing God’s will.

“I see it this way” some say, “you see it another way”, others say, and ne’er the twain shall meet. And so play this whole thing since creation, and we’ve created a real mess of what God has so lovingly and freely given us to tend to. And all of our wisdom, all of our technology, all of our smarts, can’t bring heaven and earth together again. We’ve taken God’s heaven - that brief moment in time and when all that God created was good, and have totally messed it up. All because we want to do, *our* will. Our will be done.

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”, we petition God. I believe Jesus knew, in teaching his disciples this prayer, that he has come to reunite heaven and earth. To usher in God’s reign. To show humanity what heaven on earth looks like. Things like helping the poor feeding the hungry so they’re all may be fed, working for peace, ending hatred bitterness and division among gods people. Healing the sick and lame. Tending to the least among us,

restoring dignity to the outcast. All of the many things that Jesus did in his own ministry. That's the heaven on earth and Jesus came to usher in. God reconciling the world to himself once again.

Is it any wonder then, that those who saw and understood what Jesus was doing in his ministry we're so excited and hopeful? God's kingdom had come – and it was right there, right then, before their very eyes, and the lame were healed, sinners forgiven, the outcast restored. They were seeing this new creation unfold right before their very eyes even as Jesus was with them. It's what John the gospel writer called the new creation. The new heaven and the new earth.

So back to where I started this message, images of someone you may know or someone who may be facing a terminal illness, and how some are inspired to get busy, reorienting their lives to some greater cause, to give their remaining days some real meaning. Finding gratitude in the truly important things of in life. And so how we think about heaven affects how we spend the rest of our days - how we orient our lives; where we put our energies and our focus, where we put our time and our talents.

If we see heaven as some far off place that we'll be in another time after we die, we lose sight of all the work that's in front of us right now, right here on earth. And that's not the life that God calls us to. God calls us to lives that work to bring heaven on earth right now, right here, by doing this important work of restoring creation again. With the urgency you'd bring if you knew your last days on earth were rapidly approaching.

And what might that day look like – this heaven on earth? Maybe it looks like this: days when we all can live sustainably; days when all are treated fairly before the law; days when all have access to quality healthcare; days when government works for all people, and not just a few; days when love conquers hatred and cruelty; days when, the Psalmist writes, justice and peace will hold hands and kiss each other. Days when, the prophets wrote, when justice

will roll down like water, and so much more.

And so when we pray the Lord's Prayer today or any time, may that prayer be a reminder to us that God's will being done on earth as in heaven, is something that we have a stake in - something that we play an active role in bringing about. Prayer causes to be an active participant not only in just praying, but in re-orienting our own lives to help bring it about the restoration of heaven on earth. And Jesus promises that our requests will be answered. Jesus invites us, through this prayer that we so often take for granted, to commit to doing our part to help usher in God's kingdom right now, not some future time after we die. But now.

So going forward, when we pray the Lord's Prayer, yes, we're asking God to usher in a new kingdom and that God's will be done (and not ours.) But we're also doing this in partnership with God. Because we have a role to play in it all, and a lot of work to do. So when we pray the Lord's prayer may also be a reminder to us, that we need to get busy, that when we pray "thy will be done on earth as in heaven", is a call to action, to get busy, to partner with God to bring heaven and earth together again.

And with God's help I believe it can be done. Amen.