

Thy Will Be Done

God's will is good and gracious. God reveals His good and gracious will in His Word. God's will is revealed in the Law. It is God's will that we have no other gods, that we use His name properly, that we sanctify the holy day with His Word, i.e. go to church on Sundays regularly. It is God's will that we honour and obey God's authorities in home, state, and church, that we care for our neighbour's body, that we are faithful in our marriages, that we respect our neighbour's property and reputation, that we are content with the gifts God has given us. This is the good and gracious will of God for us.

It is also God's will that all people would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. And that truth is Jesus Christ, who has died to atone for the sins of the world and who lives that the world may have life believing in His name. It is God's will that no one should perish but that everyone would be brought to repentance and faith. The good and gracious will of God is a will to save from sin, from the power of the devil, from the accusation of the Law, from a troubled conscience, and from death and damnation. This is the good and gracious will of God toward us.

Some agonise over what is God's will for their lives. As a pastor, I am constantly asked by people: "What is God's will for my life?" It isn't hard. Review the Ten Commandments. In addition, it is God's will that we receive His forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Jesus by being baptised, hearing the absolution, the preaching the Gospel, eating and drinking Christ's body and blood, and that we lead godly lives as His free and forgiven children. This is the good and gracious will of God.

The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer. However, Jesus wants you to pray that God's will be done in your life. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

In heaven, God's will is unopposed. Who would dare? Who would want to oppose God's will in heaven? No one, of course. But on earth, that is a different story. God's will to save sinners in Jesus Christ encounters immense opposition. On earth, the devil, the world and our sinful selves oppose God's will! These three incessantly resist and wage war against the good and gracious will of God. They seek to overthrow His kingdom and mock His name.

Scripture teaches that the devil is a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). He cannot bear to have anyone teach and believe rightly. He hates it when his lies and abominations are exposed. He flips out when people have their sins forgiven for Jesus' sake when believers in Christ lead godly lives to the praise and honour of God's name.

The devil knows that he has willing allies in the world and our own sinful flesh. He knows the greedy, self-centred ruthlessness of a world hellbent, and he recruits and marshals his volunteers with his ranting and raving. He is a clever devil – beautiful, seductive, coy, handsome, appealing. The grass on his side is always greener. The worship of his name is so much more appealing. He offers so much fun. He hides the consequences. He waves all sorts of treasures before our eyes: power, possessions, sex, money, fame, celebrity, popularity, pleasure. "*All these I will give to you if you bow down and worship me*" (Matt. 4:9). The devil knows that our sinful human flesh is hellbent against God, that it wants so desperately to be "like God" and to live for self. And so he stirs up in us doubt, despair, lust, greed, envy, covetousness, hopelessness, depression, and rage.

"Thy will be done." This is a bold way of praying. Jesus prayed this way in Gethsemane on the night He was betrayed into death. "*My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from Me! Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will!*" (Matthew 26:39). If Jesus prays this way, how much more must we pray this way too?

"Thy will be done, Father - in our homes, our families, our marriages, and our bedrooms. Thy will be done - in our work, our play, our worship. Thy will be done - in our sicknesses, suffering and service. Thy will be done - in our doubt, our despair, and in the hour of our death.

"Thy will be done" is a bold declaration of war against everything that would get in the way of our salvation. It is a demand that God gets in the way of our damnation, that He meddle and interfere with our lives.

In *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, we are presented with "A Short Form of Confession." This is a form of private Confession and Absolution. In it, the penitent is given to say: "Dear confessor, I ask you please to hear my confession and to pronounce forgiveness IN ORDER TO FULFILL GOD'S WILL." Could that really be? Can it really be the fulfilling of God's will that we confess our sinfulness in His presence and be freely forgiven in the name of His Son?

The answer is "YES" and "AMEN." The good and gracious will of God is that sinners bow before Him, confess their sins and receive the free gift of forgiveness. This is why He has sent His Son to be born of a woman and then to die and be damned for the sin of the world as He hung on the cross. This is why God gives us His holy Word, why He instituted Baptism and the Holy Supper. It is why He calls and ordains pastors and authorises them to speak forgiveness in His name with the promise that the forgiveness they speak is God's own forgiveness. This is why God gathers congregations around the Word and the sacraments. It is so that His good and gracious will to save may be done among us and with us and in us.