5th Sunday after Trinity
4th in a Series on the Lord's Prayer
Rolling Meadows - 1965

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. Matthew 6: 9 & 10 Our Father who art in heaven, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

THY WILL BE DONE

This petition is prayed against the dark backdrop of a world in which God's Will is not done. Or are we to believe that it is God's Will that nations should be pitted against one another - that there should be wars, hatred, violence conflicts between classes, and strife among men? Pick up your daily newspaper and read about all the greed, lovelessness, filth, misery, and sorrow that ~~keeps~~ continues sweeping over the earth in an ever increasing crescendo. Is this the Will of God? Or is it not rather the will of men who have done it or caused it to be done? But we do not need to look outside of ourselves at all. Is all that goes on rumbling in our own hearts - the protesting thoughts that will not be reconciled, the fretful spirit of worry and anxiety, the coldness in our attitude toward our neighbor - is all that goes on within us in thought, word, and deed, and even in our dreams really the Will of God? Is not this again our own will, which is so terribly hard to break and which never tires of arrogantly turning down the latch when God knocks on the door of our heart? Is it not our own will that really makes us so discontented and unhappy? Is it not our own will that we want to be freed from when we pray: Our Father who art in heaven, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

This prayer is a cry from the depths of a man's whole being. And that is why it has all the promises of Him who came down to us in the depths of our anguish and misery. But more than that, it plunges us into repentance - that hard but godly grief which, the Apostle says, leads directly to salvation, but which nevertheless is a bitter, dark road that must be traveled. We should not have to pray at all that God's Will be done, if it were really being done among us and if we ourselves and the whole world were not living our life in a constant boycott of His Will. Jesus makes it very clear to us that God's Will is not being done among us. He bids us to pray: Father, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Obviously what He means is this - that there may be created here on earth the same conditions in which the Will of God is done so clearly and unmistakably among the

angels of heaven who are constantly beholding the face of His Father, constantly engaged in the heavenly liturgy, the unceasing worship of God.

Do you remember that tremendous saying of Jesus: My food is to do the Will of My Father in heaven? Listen carefully: My food is to do the Will of the Father. It is not an extra, a dessert, which I think about only after the physica needs of my appetite and my life have been appeased, something with which I round out the meal of life by giving it a little bit of religious flavor. No, it is My food - the principal meal of My life is to do the Will of God. Just as I live by My daily bread - just as my whole body is driven toward food by the spontaneous urge of hunger — so I live by the Will of the Father, so I am driven to Him and linked to Him with every fiber of My being. My whole life is driven by a single impulse: to live in unbroken and complete harmony with the Father. And just as the stilling of hunger creates a state of satisfaction, of contentment - so I ente into a great peace when I live in this harmony with the Father.

When it comes right down to it, don't all of us have this hunger? What strange creatures we are! We barricade ourselves within our own selfish nature, resisting the Will of God and everything that He decrees concerning our life as if our whole happiness depended on our having our own will. That is what makes this petition so difficult to pray. It is not only because of weakness that we fail to do God's Will. It is not only because we lack the necessary energy to obey or are too sluggish and give up too soon. The trouble lies much deeper. Our standards of value have become so twisted and distorted that we do not want to do otherwise. For example, our will constructs and pursues certain plans for our life. We are determined to have a certain standard of living - we want to achieve success - we want our families to be happy — and if it turns out otherwise, we clench our fists and curse the Will of God that spoils our plans, or we fall into doubt and despair, and our love grows cold. And all the while we are protesting, we grow more hungry and empty. For no man, no matter if he has tried it a hundred times, has ever yet found happiness in pursuing his own will.

Nietzche once said: You cannot endure it any more, your imperious fate?

Love it; there is no other choice. Nietzche saw that a man simply grinds himself to powder inwardly when he constantly opposes his lot in life. We know this very well ourselves. For illustrations we need only to think of the many people who are eating their hearts out with bitter complaints. They cannot reconcile themselves to their lot, and so they go on living in a consuming, nerve-shattering conflict with what has come into their life and cannot be changed. To all such people Nietzche says: Throw in the towel and give up; you have no other choice. You will only ruin yourself. Try to love and affirm what you hate. As if anyone could do such a thing! This would be just like seeing a drowning man struggling for his life and crying for help, and then calling out to him, Are you afraid of drowning? Stop your futile kicking; love the water and affirm it.

The very reason that people suffer so terribly in their lives is because they feel that God does not really care. And this is the point where we realize how completely Jesus becomes the Pastor of our souls - in contrast to that will-o'-the-wisp comfort of the world which can give us no peace. For Jesus shows me that I can pray to my Father: Thy Will be done - and that His Will is done, even beyond my own prayer and understanding, and that therefore I can put my life and my lot and my destiny into His Hands. Jesus does not ask me to do such a foolish thing as to love my fate. He never said to any blind or sick or lame man: You should love your sickness, your leprosy, your blindness; then you will stop groaning. Nor did He say to the mother of the young man of Nain: Love this terrible breach that death has brought into your life; then your nerves will calm down and your tears will be dried. Rather He laid His hands upon the sick and tormented to show them how the Father feels toward them, to give them a sign that their pains grieve the Father and that He is present with His help.

Everything that happens to you, whether good or bad, must first pass before your Father's eye. Even in the midst of trouble and tragedy the thoughts of His heart are thoughts of peace toward you, and not of evil. And if His dealings with you appear to be utterly horrible, cruel, and incomprehensible, then let your tormented gaze search out the Savior. He has been through it all before you,

He is your Helper and Friend in every need, and He will give you rest. Someday, perhaps after long years of inner growth, you may learn to love and affirm what i now so bitter and cruel. For the Father's Hands transform and hallow the destini that flow through them. He who is reconciled to the Father is also reconciled to his lot in life - for his life is lived in the light of eternity.

There is a tone of joy and victory in the words: Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It is not a prayer of resignation and renunciation. Rather there is something radiant and shining about it. This prayer, Thy Will be done, is spoken to none other than the Father. And I can be sure that if I let His Will be done, this can only bring peace and fulfillment to my life. For it is the Will of Him who stands before me in Jesus Christ, & who has promised that all things must work together for good to those who love Him. Where His Will rules everything comes out right in the end. When this happens, we are already joined to heaven and to the hosts of those who praise and love God and whose food it is to do the will of God. Not that this in itself will change this troubled, pain-racked earth into heaven. There will alway be plenty of dark valleys, suffering, and mourning and crying. But above the darkness, heaven is open, and we can hear the songs of those who have come out of great tribulation, whose robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, and have overcome and obtained the victory. The praise of the children of God in glory catches up our own pilgrim voices. It puts the bickering complaining soul to rest and gives us, instead of gloomy resignation to our fate, a foretaste of the peace of God. Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.