

Your Will Be Done

June 17, 2018

Luke 22:39-46

39 He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. 40 When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." 41 Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, 42 "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." 43 Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. 44 In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. 45 When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, 46 and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

The Scripture reading takes place in the middle of passion week, between the Last Super and the arrest of Jesus. The Scripture story is this. Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives and his disciples follow him. He prays and in his prayer he confirms that it is God's will that is to be done. An angel appears and gives him the strength that he needs to endure everything that he is about to go through. Then he prays more earnestly. Meanwhile, the disciples fall asleep. Jesus goes up to them and instructs them to pray also.

Now let's take a closer look at some of the details of the Scripture. The Mount of Olives is a special place. It is biblically a holy place. In 2nd Samuel 15:32 David went to the Mount of Olives to worship God. So, before the temple was ever built, this was a place that David designated to worship God. Now, in the New Testament, Jesus goes there to pray on a regular bases and he asks his disciples to pray also. Prayer is a very significant thing to do, it is a matter of faith formation, discerning the will of God, and being in communion with God. Jesus has a very specific prayer request - that you may not come into the time of trial. In other words, pray you don't have to endure the type of things that Jesus is about to endure.

Then Jesus prayed. There are two very important distinguishing characteristics about the prayers of Jesus. One is the nature of his prayer life. Jesus prayed in earnest. He spent hours in prayer. The other noteworthy characteristic is that the focus is on the will of God. This is one thing that I think is often overlooked in biblical lessons. The very specific characteristic of this prayer is that Jesus says "yet your will be done."

It is all about the will of God. The will of God is the key to everything in our faith. The very basic root foundation of our faith is that it is built upon discerning the will of God. The Christian faith is rooted in Judaism which was founded on the will of God. But they had a problem and it was a repeat problem - the will of God vs. the will of humanity. So, they got off track. Once you boil it down to its very basic principle there is really just only one problem. It is the same problem that repeats itself over and over again. It is the will of God vs. the will of humanity from the very beginning to today. God sent agents of reformation (the OT Bible heroes) to the people and over and over again they tried to fix this one root problem - the will of God vs. will of humanity.

What was really needed was reformation. So, God sent Jesus who turns out to be a master reformer. So, the Christian faith is a faith that can be said to be based on God's act of reformation. However, there is a problem, and it is that same problem that festers over and over again throughout the centuries. It is the will of God vs. will of humanity. And humanity, being true to human nature, got off track. Again reformation was needed and so we had the Protestant Reformation. Then America grew out of a diversity of people with a diversity of religions and once again - through discernment - people realized that elements of the religious culture were not

focused on the will of God. And once again reformation was needed so we had the restoration movement. Our denomination, the Disciples of Christ, is rooted in reformation, to be true to God, to study and obey the teaching of Jesus. So, the goal - the desire - of the person of Christian faith is to be a true Christian. This entails not only studying teachings of Jesus but to earnestly follow him. Therefore, the goal - the desire - of the church, if it is to honestly be a true church, is to study Jesus and obey his teachings and discern the will of God.

It is all about the will of God. In today's Scripture in spite of everything that Jesus was about to face his concern was for the will of God to be done. Faith formation comes to us from prayer, Bible study, and the faith community. Today is a good lesson on faith formation. If you want to learn anything about faith, look at Jesus. The ministry of Jesus is purpose driven which is totally focused on will of God. He leads a life that is devoted to prayer and discernment.

I remember a story about a church in conflict that a friend of mine was telling me about. And while he was talking I thought "they just don't see how simple it can be." It was obvious to me that everybody was doing their own thing instead of God's thing. Nobody was devoted to an active prayer life. They would pray but not like Jesus who prayed earnestly and spent hours in prayer. Nobody was devoted to a study of Scripture. They would read the Bible and they would have Sunday school and a scripture reading in worship service but little if any real devotion. The more he talked the more I thought "they just don't see how simple it can be." So, I made a bold claim "all church conflict comes from a failure to discern and obey the will of God. It is either you, or them, or both." He was obviously stunned by my comment and very emotional so he keep on talking. It was as if talking vindicated the self through the testimony. All the while I am thinking "you just don't see how simple it can be. It's not about you and your story. It is about the will of God."

You have a purpose driven ministry that is based on discerning and obeying the will of God. It is the will of God that rules over the will of humanity. Our offering of ourselves to God is not because God demands it and we comply with obedience, like an authoritative parent who says "because I said so!" Our offering is a response of thanksgiving and gratitude. We respond by giving of the self which is devoted to prayer, service, and ministry. We give because of God's grace. God has given generously to us. The appropriate response is to give generously in return. This ministry - your ministry - is not one that you can take or leave, or pick and choose. It is not about whichever you like best or whichever suits you. This ministry - your ministry - is founded upon being true to the will of God.