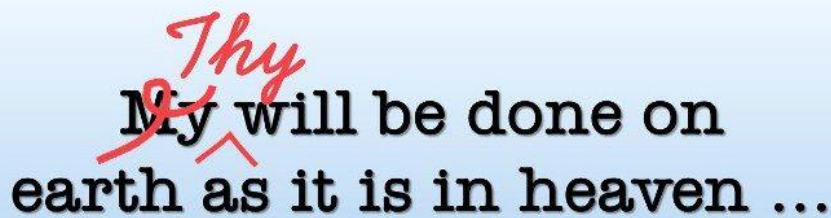


A Sermon Series on the Lord's Prayer
Part Six: *"Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*
Based on Matthew 6:10b; Galatians 4:6-7; Romans 8:14-17, 26-28;
and Mark 14:32,35-36

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The Fourth Petition: *"Nehwey tzevyanach aykanna d'bwashmaya aph b'arha*
/ *"Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."* (Matthew 6:10b)



Thy
~~My~~ will be done on
earth as it is in heaven ...

*In the Episcopal Order of Worship, the priest sometimes introduces the Lord's Prayer with the words, "Now, as our Savior Christ hath taught us, we are bold to say, ..." The word bold is worth thinking about. We do well not to pray the prayer lightly. It takes guts to pray it at all. ... "Thy will be done" is what we are saying. This is the climax of the first half of the prayer. We are asking God to be God. We are asking God to do not what we want but what God wants. (Frederick Buechner, *Listening to Your Life*)*

Are we up to the task of bringing heaven to earth? Can we help bring about God's will for our world? Can we be midwives helping to birth God's realm of love, justice, and compassion?

"Nehwey tzevyanach [DESIRE] aykanna d'bwashmaya aph b'arha / "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Tzevyanach = desire (not will). Would it have been different if the Greek and English translators followed the original Aramaic more closely? What does it feel like to say "your desire be done ..." rather than "your will be done ..."?

What do you think of with the word will? Does it carry positive, negative, or neutral connotations?

Do we really have free will? How can we even pray with boldness "thy will be done" when we can't even control our own wills?

Even the great St. Paul admitted that his will was not free. Can any of you identify with his anguished lament written in his letter to the Romans when we confessed: ¹⁵ *I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ... I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.* ¹⁹ *For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.* (Romans 7:15, 18-19)?

Book used for our exegesis: John Dominic Crossan, *The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of The Lord's Prayer* (NY: HarperOne, 2010).

There are **two versions of the Lord's Prayer** in **Matthew 6:9-13** and **Luke 11:2-4**. These were **composed between 85-90 CE**. But there are three other places in the New Testament (Galatians 4:6, Romans 8:15, Mark 14:36) where the Lord's Prayer is found in a nutshell, concentrated in the exclamation "**Abba ho Patēr!**" This bilingual address to God (Daddy) in Aramaic (**Abba**) and Greek (**ho Patēr**) is most accurately translated as "**Abba! The Father!**" These references to "Abba! Father!," known as the "**Abba Prayer**," are early versions of the Lord's Prayer.

Galatians 4:6-7 (written by Paul in the mid-50s CE)

*"⁶And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, '**Abba! Father!**' ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God."*

Romans 8:14-17,26-28 (written by Paul in the mid-50s CE)

*¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "**Abba! Father!**" ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. ... ²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.*

Mark 14:32,35-36 (written in the late 60s or early 70s CE)

*³² They went to a place called Gethsemane ... and [Jesus] began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ... ³⁵ Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ "**Abba, Father,**" he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

In the *Abba* Prayer in Romans and in the Gospel of Mark we find the term "**will**" of God used, just as in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew: "**your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**"

How can we even pray that God's will be done when we can't control our own wills and desires? This question is raised in the passage from Romans where it says: "**for we do not know HOW to pray as we ought**" (Rom 8:26).

We learn from the *Abba* Prayers in both Galatians 4:6-7 and Romans 8:14-17,26-28 how we are even able to pray for God's will to be done. It is because God's Spirit works in and prays through us.

As a result of praying the Lord's Prayer, we actually are empowered to be not just the beloved children of God but actually even "**an heir, through God**" (Gal. 4:7) or "**heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ**" (Rom 8:17). As heirs of God we are called to assume our responsibility of taking care of all of creation and working toward God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven, knowing that God offers God's Spirit freely to all who ask!

The bottom line and the promise we can stand upon is this:

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8: 28).