

Sunday, September 28th, 2008
The 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Philippians 2:1-13, Matthew 21:33-46
Thy Will be Done...

Each and every week, we pray the Lord's Prayer. Each and every week we ask that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Every week, we say, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." So we say it, but what does it mean? If you're at all like me, the Lord's Prayer is so well drummed into your head that it is hard to start in the middle, and if you get interrupted you have to start over.

But think for a moment what it is that we're actually asking in that prayer. We're asking that God gets God's way on earth as God does in heaven. Now, in the Reformed tradition that's not that theologically exciting. Our big piece is that God is always in charge. God is in charge of who lives, who dies, who is damned and who is saved. So this doesn't seem to be anything that different from where we should already be at.

But take that a step deeper. Take that from the macro view of things down to the micro view. Take that down, drill down into our daily lives. How is this part of the prayer going to happen? Is God going to reach down and start pulling our strings to make us do what God wants? Or are we going to change from what we want to what God wants?

Take our passage from Matthew for example. Jesus is testing the crowd of chief priests and elders even as they attempt to test him. And after some of the testing is over, Jesus tells them a parable. A man has two sons, one of whom does what he is asked to do after saying he won't. The other son says he will do it and does not. Jesus asks the crowd which son did the will of the father.

Step back for a moment. How do we know what the father wants? Well, we could take it that he told the two boys what he wanted them to do. If we do that we need to be careful, because the Father has told us plenty of what to do as well. But even if we take the direct instruction as good enough, what do we mean?

So, who does the will of the father?

Is it the son who says he will, but doesn't?

Is it the son who says he won't but does?

Or is it the son who goes to the cross?

The response from cute, soft, lovable, nice Jesus, to those wonderful church people is that the prostitutes and tax collectors will see the kingdom of God before them. So much for Jesus always being nice.

The answer from the Son is that neither son is doing the will of the father. It is not enough to go halfway. It is not enough to say so and not do so, or to do so and not say so.

And Jesus walks the walk and talks the talk. Even in the garden, when he asks God to take the cup from him, he concludes with thy will, not my will be

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done. And this is what we hear in the Christ hymn in Philippians. Paul describes Christ as being so obedient to the will of the Father that he emptied himself, and gave himself over to death, even death on a cross.

You see, if we're waiting for the correct answer to who does the will of the Father, then the answer is the Son – the Son who is obedient even to the point of death, the Son who is willing to give up everything, even his life, to do the will of the father. It is the Son who does not regard equality with God as an excuse to do his will,

And it is the Son from whom we derive our names. It is the Son whose baptism, whose death and whose resurrection we are baptized into. It is the Son who both says and does the will of God and who submits to the will of God.

So to those of us who wait behind, to those of us who claim the name of Christ, are we willing when we pray thy will be done, to give what the Son gave?