

Desiring God's Will

2Samuel 2:1-11

In the bible God has preserved for us a number of examples of prayer.

The whole book of Psalms is God's people praying to the Lord with praise, adoration, exultation, and also lament.

There are examples of prayers in all throughout the bible, but there is one prayer I think that is likely known by more people than any other.

What do you think? Which prayer from the Bible is known best by people?

It has to be the Lord's Prayer.

Even when I was typing this sermon Microsoft Word recognized it and made sure I used capital letters to type the words Lord's Prayer.

Many of you grew up reciting the prayer every day in school.

It is a great prayer, not to say with vain repetition but to pattern our prayers after.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Amazing prayer. We call God "Our Father"! He is the reason we exist, He cares for us, provides for us, and loves us.

Hallowed be your name. He is holy, completely distinct from everything else that exists, infinitely glorious in all His perfections, pure beyond our understanding, and radiating His goodness in unapproachable light.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Have you considered lately what that means?

There is a mountain of theology to consider in that statement, but I want to briefly focus in on one question, "How is God's will done in heaven?"

Answer, it is done in full obedience and delight.

There is no creature that abides in heaven that says no to God or hates His will.

Jesus commands us to pray for that same kind of desire to be upon the earth.

We should desire everything that God desires and delight in it all.

I know that sounds impossible. Because of the rebellion that is in the human heart it is hard to imagine a world like that.

If we are honest we don't come anywhere close to that as believers.

This prayer is a powerful reminder of our need of grace. We so desperately need to forgiveness, kindness, and patience of God and He gives us that if we are in Christ.

We also need to power of God to change our hearts so that we will want what God wants and delight in it.

[That is what our text this morning is about. In **2Samuel 2:1-11** we see David, the man of God's choosing to be king of Israel, desiring God's will. This is something that should be a concern to each and every believer, it is what Jesus teaches us to pray for. Let's look together at these eleven verses and see three important lessons about desiring God's will and ask God in our hearts right now to increase our desire to want what he wants. Here is the first lesson from this text...]

Point #1 – God reveals His will and people have the opportunity to listen. (Verses 1-4a)

While grasping every detail of Who the LORD is and all that He does is beyond us, He has made plain more than enough of His glory and His salvation for people to know Him and to desire His plans and purposes.

Just because people have the opportunity to listen does not mean they will, we will see that down in verse 8.

As we begin in verse one, however, we see that David wants to listen. **(Verse 1)**

Ronald Youngblood points out that David is most likely “inquiring of the LORD” through the high priest, a man named Abiathar, by means of casting lots with something called ‘Urim’ (meaning light) and ‘Thummim’ (meaning perfection).

The Urim and Thummim were instruments given by God through Moses to the high priest to be kept in the breast piece of the high priest's garb and they were to be used to seek the Lord's will.

If we only look at that process out of context it seems like a process of random chance.

Just roll the dice and that is how you figure out God's will.

I've seen people do that sort of thing and I believe wholeheartedly that it is very unbiblical.

The very names of Urim and Thummim, light and perfection, tell us this is much more than random chance.

What does light do? It enables us to see. What is the king desiring to see? The perfect will of God.

What we need to keep at the forefront of our minds here as we consider David ‘inquiring of the LORD’ is that the Lord has already spoken concerning David.

Back when he was a young man tending his father's sheep the prophet Samuel, a man whom God clearly spoke through over a long period of time, came to David's house in Bethlehem and at God's verbal command anointed him the next king of Israel.

David knows the big picture, what he is seeking here is particular detail and he gets it. We can get that backwards. We can think the details are the most important thing in discerning God's will and disregard the big picture.

What we need to do is get the big picture right, which comes from knowing our bibles, and trust the LORD to work out the details. That is what David is doing here.

He truly wants the LORD's direction, he is desiring His will.

Now, look at what he does with the instruction to 'go up' to 'Hebron'. (**Verse 2-4a**).

He wants to know where to go, God says go to Hebron and that is where he goes.

Now the word "Hebron" means *association, fellowship, or to be joined together*. That is a very fitting place for the new king to go because that is what God's people are supposed to be.

They are to be inseparably joined together under the rule of the king that God has placed over them.

Does that sound familiar? That is what we are to be as Christians. We are to be joined together under the reign of King Jesus.

God is pointing us to that by sending David to Hebron.

So David goes up because he wants what God wants.

There is a foreshadow of difficulty here at the mention of David's wives going with him, there are two with him and he has been married three times at this point in his life.

God's design for marriage is one man and one woman in a lifelong covenant.

When people mess that up things go badly.

We will sadly see David get into trouble, but this moment here in chapter two is a moment of restoration.

I can only imagine how happy David's men were at this turn of events. Imagine living in exile and struggling in the wilderness for a long period of time and now you get to come home.

They get more than just coming home, they get to witness the men of Judah anointing David king.

That action of anointing is really important. Anointing was the biblical means by which people were set apart as being chosen by God to serve Him in a particular way.

In this case David is being anointed as king in Judah.

Here is a really important question for us to think through?

Did the anointing of David by the men of Judah make him king?

No! God made did that through the prophet Samuel years before.

So if this anointing in verse 4 is not making David king what is it doing? It is recognizing him as king.

Listen, human beings do NOT make the will of God, we can only recognize the will of God.

God time and again affirms that David is the man of His choosing from the anointing of Samuel, to the defeat of Goliath, to sustaining him in the desert, to bringing him up to Hebron.

He makes His will known and gives people the opportunity to embrace it.

[Jesus on occasion compared the kingdom of heaven to a banquet. A meal/celebration has been prepared and the master of the banquet sends out messengers saying to the people come partake and enjoy. The invitation is clear and everyone who hears it has the opportunity to respond.]

It is the very same thing today.

The Lord could not be clearer about our need to know Jesus as Saviour.

He could not be clearer about how he wants us to live as men and women, husbands and wives, friends and co-workers.

He could not be clearer about being humble, selfless, gentle, loving, patient, kind, and a like.

He could not be clearer about being the only One worthy of our worship and devotion.

[The bible is extremely accessible where we live and I know there are some hard things in here, but if we are being honest we will admit that most of it is fairly clear if we want to understand it. The question is do we want to understand? If we can honestly pray the part of the Lord's Prayer which says, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." If we really want that, then what David does next will make a great deal of sense to us. What he does next shows us this second lesson, that...]

Point #2 – Desiring God's will requires faithfulness to what is right. (Verse 4b-7)

When we want what God wants we grow in our commitment to what is commendable in the sight of the LORD.

I can only imagine that there was a great deal of things the men of Judah told David when they anointed him king, but the bible here only tells us about one.

Look with me at the **second half of verse 4.**

There is a bit of a back story to the men of Jabesh-gilead burying Saul.

When Saul and his sons fell in battle the Philistines came upon their bodies, mutilated them, and nailed them to the wall of a town called Beth-shan.

“Beth-shan” means ‘house/place of quiet’ it is a town in Israel’s territory, a place west of the Jordan that belongs to the tribe of Manasseh.

When you hear “place of quiet” what comes to your mind?

What comes to my mind is peace and safety.

By taking the lifeless bodies of the king and his sons and putting them on display in that city what are the Philistines saying to God’s people?

They are saying your peace and safety are gone and we have conquered your land.

News of this offense went out and the men of Jabesh-gilead heard about it.

This was the city that Saul had rescued from the Ammonites when he first took the throne.

The men hear what has happened to Saul, travel through the night, risk their lives, defy their enemies, take Saul and his sons down from the wall, give them a respectable burial, and remove that insult from their people.

They were showing honour, respect, and faithfulness to the fallen king.

Here is how David responds in **verses 5-6**.

A cynical interpreter might look at this and say David is just being political trying to win over the men of Jabesh-gilead.

That is unlikely because that city just isn’t that important in the big scheme of things.

Remember, they needed to be rescued and before Saul is moved by the Spirit no one is that interested helping them out.

So what would be the upside for David commending these guys and promising his devotion if they can’t really contribute very much?

I don’t see one. It is far more likely David commends them because he admires their faithfulness and loyalty.

More than admire those qualities he rightly sees them as godly qualities.

The same Hebrew word for loyalty that he commends them for in how they treated Saul is the same word that is translated in his prayer asking the LORD to show them ‘steadfast love.’

He is essentially saying, “You did what was right with a godly affected and devotion and so I will be devoted to you.”

To that he adds this in **verse 7**.

David exhorts these men to strength and courage.

Why does he feel the need to do that? Because Saul, the king, has died.

Things look bad, but they need to know that the plans of God haven't failed.

The will of God is still being worked out in the world, there is another king to sit on the throne, and things are going to get better.

That is the only logical reason for David to be committed to these men, because they did what was honourable and good and because David wants God's will for his life he is committed to what is right.

[We all know that some things go together well. Some things are a matter of opinion. I think mashed potatoes and gravy make a good combination. Blue skies and warm temperatures makes a good pairing. I'll stay away from anything fashion related because I'm colour challenged and I can never remember the pattern rules. Here is the thing, you can have mashed potatoes without gravy and blue skies without warm temperatures, and all kinds of fashion choices. There are other things though that have to go together. If you have fire you will have heat, a bolt needs something to thread into to be useful, and if there is wind it will move a flag on top of a pole.]

When we think about the will of God and loving what is right it is more than a good combination, it is a necessary combination.

God's will is the outworking of Who He is and one of His attributes is that He is just.

People often talk about God being loving and it is absolutely correct to do so, but if we talk about God's love without His justice then we not only misrepresent Him we are saying something that is impossible.

Love has no meaning apart from justice.

That is why the cross is glorious beyond our comprehension.

What is Jesus doing on the cross? He is dying in our place, paying our debt of sin.

Why does He do that? Because of God's love.

What is the payment that is being endured?

It's the full wrath of God poured out on Him.

He doesn't ignore our rebellion He pays the price. Why? Because God is just.

[That is God's will, that is His most glorious and eternal plan for His people. If that is what God's will is like how can anyone say they want His will apart from having a desire for what is right? That is impossible. You can't say I want God's will and ignore what is written in His word. That is the pursuit of your own will not God's will and no matter how much religious language you slap on top of that you cannot change that reality. We can see that in the next few verses. It is something everyone who desires God's will needs to know because we need to trust the LORD in spite of it. Here is the lesson, that...]

Point #3 – People often reject what God has clearly revealed. (Verses 8-11)

Even though the LORD has consistently and constantly made Himself and His ways known, people have willfully and persistently acted against His plans.

In the first seven verses we can see the outworking of God's will and then we come to this in verses 8-9.

There is a lot that is said in this verse and a lot that is left out.

What we are told is that a man named Abner takes a guy named Ish-bosheth to a place called Mahanaim and sets him up as king over the northern part of the kingdom of Israel.

We know that Abner was Saul's uncle and 'commander of the army'.

Because that is true we can say with a good amount of confidence that Abner was fully aware of the fact that David had been anointed by the prophet Samuel as the next king.

He absolutely knew how God has been with David and delivered him from trouble.

He knew the will of God and rejected it.

What we don't know is how Abner survived the battle that claimed the life of Saul and his sons.

Did he retreat at Saul's command? Did he run away to save himself? Was he not on the battlefield for some reason? We don't know, but we do know that he survived it and we know that he retained a strong influence in the nation, enough to make Ish-bosheth king.

Ish-bosheth is likely not his real name but the name he became known by.

I say that because his name means "man of shame".

This is the first time this name is mentioned in the bible and not much else is known about him.

The fact that he is known by the name "man of shame" likely means he would never have made it to the throne on his own merit.

This is likely Abner looking to install a puppet king to retain his place in the kingdom and even increase the power that he had.

It is very interesting that Abner takes him to Mahanaim. That name means, "Two Camps".

The back story of that place is really fascinating.

It got that name from Jacob when he was returning to the Promised Land to meet his brother Esau.

When he got to that place he met some angels and called the place "Two Camps" one camp being the camp of God and another camp being his own.

Now let's think for a moment. What do angels from heaven do?

They do the will of God right. They act as His agents in the world doing what He commands them to do.

When Jacob first names the place he no doubt thinks of it as a blessing and is wanting his camp to be in line with God's camp.

But here it is a testimony of contrast. There is the camp of God saying "David is King" and the camp of Abner saying, "the man of shame" is king.

Abner is opposing/rejecting the will of God.

We get a sense of where that is heading in **verses 10-11.**

Ish-bosheth is king two years and if we look ahead we will see that his reign doesn't end well for him.

David reigns from Hebron for seven and a half years and during that seven and a half years his reign increases until it is established over the whole nation, he then moves to Jerusalem to continue his rule as king.

The lesson that we should take away from that is that the will of men comes to nothing and God's will endures.

Yes it is true that David's rule will come to an end, but his rule was always part of something bigger in the mind of God.

David's rule leads to Jesus' rule which endures forever.

People may reject the will of God, but they can never change the will of God.

[Recently I was at the mouth of the St. Clair River. Anyone ever been there? Right by the Blue Water Bridge where all the water from Lake Huron is flowing in the current is incredibly strong it is so strong I highly doubt the even the best swimmer in the world could swim against the current and make any progress. You could swim as hard as you want and you will still get carried downstream.]

That is a good image of the will of God. It is going to happen.

You can fight against it, but you can never change it.

Sometimes it may feel like people opposed to God's will are winning.

I think if we are being honest it kind of feels that way now doesn't it?

It's not true! This has happened many times in the history of the world and it always turns out the same. The LORD prevails.

Listen, He conquered the grave so we would know that He never fails.

Don't be surprised, discouraged, or afraid when people reject God's will.

Be humble and keep trusting Him and keep loving and doing what He says to the glory of His name.

These are good reminders for us.

It is good to be reminded that God reveals His will and give us, by His grace, the opportunity to listen.

Are we listening with open Bibles? Do we have a desire to live out His will? If we do then we will seek to be faithful to what is right.

That will be true no matter how many other people around us reject His will.

I imagine it was tough at times for people like Noah, Elijah, and Jeremiah.

They trusted in God's plans and purposes even when everyone else was fighting against Him.

That is hard, but if they could stand here this morning and say something to us, one thing they would almost certainly say would be, "It is worth it because God never fails."

When is the last time we earnestly prayed to the LORD "Your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven?"

Do we desire God's will this morning? Do we want what He wants? I pray that we would and do so all the more and we long for the coming of King Jesus.