

**God in the Here and Now**  
**Matthew 6:10**  
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**Hamblen Park Presbyterian Church**  
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“Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

On one level this section of the Lord’s Prayer is a very easy prayer. We want peace in our world. We want God’s love to grow in our world. We want justice and goodness to prevail. We want the hungry to eat and the homeless to find shelter. This prayer expresses our hopes as well as God’s hopes for life here on earth.

Yet, on a different level, this prayer is a very courageous and potentially life-changing prayer. This is a prayer that also says, “Thy will be done in my life right here and now.”

In college I helped lead a Christian fellowship group on campus. I thought it was going to be an easy conversation. I asked a friend to attend a fellowship meeting. He had been active in church through high school. His church involvement had been very meaningful to him. I was stunned when he politely declined, stating that he had other things he wanted to do while in college. As our conversation continued, I learned that he had stopped going to church and was not currently interested in his Christian faith. A paraphrase of what I remember is, “There are many new things I want to try here at college, and I won’t be able to do them if I get involved in Christian activities.” He essentially told me that he was shelving the Christian life for a while so he could experience other things in life. When I asked him when he thought he might return to the Christian life, he told me that maybe in his mid-20’s or later, but he didn’t really know. I never knew whether he thought it was God or the Church that would limit his life. But it was clear to me that he thought that living a Christian life would mean he would miss out on some things he really wanted to experience.

I have run into similar conversations over the years – conversations in which people think that God will mess up their lives if they decide to follow Jesus. The basic idea seems to be that God will lead them down the wrong path. Some people are afraid that God will change their lives too much. (I am pretty happy right now and I don’t want God messing with my life – such as making me become a missionary or a religious fanatic.) Others seem to be afraid that following Jesus will take all the fun out of life, placing too many restrictions on them. These conversations showed me that many of us fear God will bring too much change, place too many constraints on life, or make us do something we really don’t want to do.

These conversations make me realize that this section of the Lord’s Prayer can be a difficult and courageous prayer – especially if we personalize this prayer. “God, I want for my life what You want for my life.” This prayer goes against a fear that paying

attention to God might mess up our lives. We fear too much change, too many constraints or too much pressure to do something we don't want to do.

For a moment I want us to suspend these fears that God will somehow mess up our lives. I want us to see this prayer as Jesus' invitation to something we don't want to miss. This prayer points to something worth waking up for in the morning.

You know the feeling of something you don't want to miss. I love my work, but I don't want to miss vacation. I liked school, but I didn't want to miss summer break. We have things we don't want to miss.

For the next several minutes, I want you to think of this prayer as an invitation to experiencing the good things God has for us. "God, you know what is best for my life, so I want to find out what that is by following you and living your way."

I have spent days thinking how best to illustrate this. I kept coming back to telling you some of my story and how this has worked out for me. Though I was hesitant to do this, it is the best way to explain what I am trying to say.

Early in college I came to a point where I said to Christ, "I want what you have for me. I want to follow you and your way to true life instead of trying to find life on my own." I think I was essentially praying for God's desires (another term for God's will) for me to come true in my life.

There was no flash of insight. My problems did not go away. Everything did not suddenly fall into place. But there was a change. I stood on something solid. I had a direction to go even if the pathway was still unclear. And I faced a lot of disappointments. My career path came to a dead end when I was not accepted into medical school or nursing school. My family continued to deteriorate as my mother's alcoholism worsened. The presence of Christ sustained me in these times.

But I was learning what was really good in life and what was really important in life. I began to learn that life did not revolve around me and what I wanted. I learned the importance of loving people and listening to people. As a youth director I learned that the teenagers were more interested in how I cared for them than what I said to them. They weren't interested in hearing some abstract message that God loved them. They wanted to know if God cared about their conflicts with their parents. I learned a few things about being patient when finding a job after seminary extended for almost a year. I learned about God's timing. I learned that in God's timing, God would provide a wonderful church to serve and would let me get to know the woman who would become my wife. God's gift of patience gave me some of the greatest gifts in my life.

What I have discovered more than anything else, is that Jesus has been with me every step of the way – guiding, nudging (sometimes pushing) and leading me on the path of a life where I have experienced some of the things that are really important. There were steps along the way I would not have chosen. There were people I had to put up

with I would rather have avoided. I have been stretched to care for people I did not like but was called to love.

I would say that as far as knowing God's will is concerned, I have only had glimpses of God's desires for me. I still hold back certain areas of my life from God. I am still hesitant, thinking God might lead me places I don't want to go. But I get glimpses of what life with Christ is really about. I wouldn't trade those glimpses for going back to directing my life. Life with Christ has not been easy, but it has been wonderful.

At this point I would definitely say that God has honored my feeble attempts to believe in Jesus and follow Jesus and I wouldn't trade this life with God for anything. I wouldn't want to have missed it. I have had the opportunity to learn something of what Paul described in Romans 12:1-2. He taught us to give our lives to God and allow God to transform our lives. He said the result would be that we would come to know God's will and would learn what is really good and what real maturity means. (The Greek word translated "perfect" means something closer to that which is complete or that which is what it was meant to be.) Through Christ, God has given me glimpses of what is really good in life and what is really important in life.

I would not want to have missed what it has meant for me to try to submit my life to the will of God right here and now. My feeble attempts to take a step toward God have meant that Christ has been through life with me and given me blessings beyond what I could ask or think. I wouldn't want to have missed this life with Christ.

When Jesus invites us to pray, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," he invites us to a life of experiencing God's wonderful desires for us. Those desires can give us blessings such as God's peace and presence and loving church family. God's desires for us will also stretch us to learn about such things as love, patience and sacrifice. Jesus invites us to pray, "God, I want for my life what you want for my life." Jesus invites us to believe that the God of love and mercy wants only the best for us and will lead us in the best path if we are willing to follow.

So, I have been asking myself, "What is the next step in my life that God doesn't want me to miss? What does God have in store for me at this time that I don't want to miss?"

Jesus invites all of us to pray, "God, I want for my life what you want for my life?" I invite you to pray this prayer today.