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*Transforming Daily Life*

719 Earl Garrett Street  
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Three Sermon Outlines on  
*Work and Faith*

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***“Living the Will of God”***

Tod Bolsinger, M.Div., Ph.D.

SERMON NOTES

*The  
High Calling  
of Our  
Daily Work*

*Making a real living connects you to a bigger picture,  
a grand design, an abundant life.  
Each of us has only a small part to play, but what a part!  
It's the high calling of our daily work.*

– Howard Butt, Jr., of Laity Lodge  
TheHighCalling.org

# Three Sermons on Living the Will of God

“On Earth as It Is in Heaven...” Tod Bolsinger, M.Div., Ph.D.

## A Note from the Author

At the center of the Christian faith is a distinctive sermon. In the center of that sermon is a chapter with a distinctively Christian prayer. And in the center of that prayer is a distinctively Christian petition: “*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth...*”

For Jesus, the very heart of his mission was the proclamation and demonstration of the Kingdom of God. And bringing God’s reign and rule—God’s will—into every human heart, every earthly sphere, every location, place, position, and purpose is the mission of every follower of Jesus today. As Abraham Kuyper famously declared, “*There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’*”

But that mission is not natural to us. We, by nature, live for ourselves. We want our will to be done, not God’s will. We wrestle with the will of God. We struggle with yielding our wills and living out God’s mission from the center of our beings. When it is done from a place of humility and openness, the wrestling with God becomes the transformation of our wills. Salvation is offered and accepted and God’s reign (and the joy and peace of living into and out of that reign) rules our lives. As beloved creatures, we are invited by Jesus to receive life and adoption, to become truly children of our Heavenly Father. When we accept that invitation and become followers of Jesus, we are given Jesus’ own Spirit to transform us so that our lives become the answer to the prayer at the center of Jesus’ own life: “Your Kingdom Come, O Father. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” That transformation is what the Sermon on the Mount and especially Matthew Chapter 6 is all about.

The three outlines presented here are as follows:

1. Closet Christians: How Secrecy Leads to Spirituality
2. The God Who Is Into Everything
3. Worrying Well

## Sermon 2

# The God Who Is Into Everything

### Scripture

Matthew 6:5-15

<sup>5</sup> “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup> But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>7</sup> “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

<sup>9</sup> “Pray then in this way:

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*

<sup>10</sup> *Your kingdom come.*

*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

<sup>11</sup> *Give us this day our daily bread.*

<sup>12</sup> *And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

<sup>13</sup> *And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.*

<sup>14</sup> *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (NRSV)*

### Outline

**Theme: Prayer is how we let the God who is both King and Father into every area of our lives.**

- 1. King and Father**
- 2. Every area of life**

**Conclusion: A “Secret” Prayer Irony—We can’t do this alone.**

*“Our Father... Give us this day... forgive us our debts...”*

### Sermon Development

For so many of us, the Lord’s Prayer is the prayer of our childhood. We learned it in Sunday School, we said it with our parents; it’s one of the few parts of the church life that some of us know by heart. If someone asks us to pray, most of us could muster up the Lord’s Prayer to say. But here’s the weird truth. It’s not a prayer. It’s *teaching* about prayer. If you look closely at Matthew chapter 6 you’ll see that Jesus is not praying, but teaching.

*The Lord’s Prayer* is in the section where Jesus is teaching his disciples how to develop a righteousness or spirituality that God approves. Right after giving and tithing (which he taught them first, by the way) Jesus teaches his Kingdom disciples how to pray.

Now, for reasons that I will explain later, many Christians say this prayer as a liturgy, an act of worship. And while I believe that is perfectly proper, we have to be clear that Jesus didn’t intend it that way. *The Lord’s prayer is not a prayer to say, but a way to pray.* It’s the scaffolding for building a life of prayer. It is instruction on how to transform our prayers into *Kingdom* prayers.

*And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others...*

<sup>7</sup> *“When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.*

Jesus is mindful that most prayers fall into two categories, attempts to impress people and attempts to manipulate God. So many of us approach prayer as if it is nothing but either ceremony or an opportunity to ask the Divine Genie to fulfill our wishes. Whether prayer is an act of public piety intended to enhance your reputation, or prayer is a set of incantations meant to tweak the universe to your liking, Jesus condemns both as falling short of real and true prayer.

Kingdom praying is not about our fulfillment, but our *transformation*. In the Kingdom: **Prayer is how we let the God who is both King and Father into every area of our lives.**

*...your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

<sup>9</sup> *“Pray then in this way:*

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*

<sup>10</sup> *Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

Prayer is the arena for letting the God who is both King and Father to bring his Kingdom, his will to the little piece of earth *that is your life*. And then through your life he begins to invade this world with his love and grace, truth and peace.

### ***1. King and Father***

In this prayer, notice the juxtaposition of two titles. In a sermon on what it means to live in the Kingdom of God, we are told to call God, “Father.”

The word that Jesus used here “Abba” is the word that a Jewish child would learn to call their Father. Or that a student would call their teacher. While it still denotes respect, it is mostly a word of intimacy and endearment. It is a word that denotes a special relationship.

Jesus tells us that in the Kingdom we get to address God as Father. If we take on the reign and rule of God, we become adopted by God. In the Kingdom of God, we are not just subjects, but we are heirs, children of the King. And as God’s children we are called to work with our Father in the “family business” of spreading the Kingdom.

Notice how this juxtaposition continues throughout this prayer. We address God as Father, immediately adding the phrase “hallowed” or “holy” “be your name.” We dare not forget the holiness of God in our intimacy with our Father.

Also, the first petition is not “Father take care of me.” “Father do this for me.” “Father can I have this?” but instead, “Father, I pray that your will will be accomplished. We, your children, pray for your reign as King to be made more and more manifest in our world as it is in your world.”

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

Kingdom praying is keeping a clear focus on the gift of knowing that the King of the whole world is our Father and that the Father has called us, his children, to be part of his work to bring the Kingdom to the whole world.

Beginning with our very lives. Which leads to our second point.

### ***2. Every area of life***

Over a generation ago, Dr. Robert Munger wrote a little booklet called, *My Heart Christ’s Home*. It is a classic work that has been reproduced literally millions of times.

*My Heart Christ's Home* is a parable that compares the human life to a home. When we become a Christian, we invite Jesus to enter our lives, but so many of us only invite Jesus into the entry way. We want him in our lives, but not too far in. Slowly, step by step, the booklet encourages you to invite Jesus into every part of your life like you would invite him into every room in your house. The living room and your public relationships. The kitchen table and your family life together. The study and your work life, your finances, the decisions you make about your future and your security. The recreation room, garage and workshop and all your leisure activities. Your bedroom and the most intimate areas of life. The cluttered closets with all the things you are trying to hide from him. Slowly Jesus insists that every door be opened, every room made available to him until he literally lives and reigns in every part of our lives.

The Lord's Prayer is very similar. Jesus begins by reminding us that our Father already knows everything we need and would ask of him, so prayer isn't about informing God of any fact, or any need or anything he doesn't already know. Prayer is our letting Jesus into our lives for *our* sake. Kingdom praying is learning to say, "thy Kingdom come, thy will be done" in every area of my life Lord, because I trust that you are my gracious Father. Trusting in your fatherly care, I invite your reign into my life.

In every area of life, we are to pray—like Jesus—so that in every area of our lives we become like Jesus—the one who lived this prayer. Through his teaching on prayer, Jesus is teaching us the way to be transformed more and more like him. And this is seen nowhere more clearly than one point that Jesus goes back and underlines after the teaching on prayer.

But when Jesus taught these words in the Sermon on the Mount, he said,

*forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.<sup>13</sup> And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.*

And then added this phrase:

*<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

According to Jesus (and this is so important that it is the only part of the prayer that he repeats a second time) we must offer forgiveness to others as generously as we need it ourselves.

*Forgiveness.* That is the point of our secret spirituality, becoming a person who can forgive those who have harmed us, because forgiveness is the activity that is most like Jesus himself.

Let us never forget that we who were invited to live with Jesus in his Kingdom are not the innocent, but the rebellious creatures who ruined the Kingdom in the first place. We are those who are worthy of judgment, who by our sins and actions have rightly earned rejection and condemnation.

When Jesus invites us into his Kingdom, he calls us to turn from our ways of living without God and to now live under his reign and rule. Jesus then invites us into a deep spiritual relationship with him that absolutely transforms our lives. Prayer is about making us Kingdom people who are like Jesus in every way, the hallmark of our lives being our forgiving others the way we have been forgiven.

### **Conclusion: A "Secret Prayer" Irony—We can't do this alone.**

It is important to remember that this whole teaching on prayer comes as one of three illustrations of Jesus' instruction in Matthew 6:1: *Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

Once again, the focus of this section is not private prayers for privacy's sake. It's not because shared prayers or spiritual practices are unseemly, but for one reason only: So that we Kingdom people will only desire affirmation and praise from our Father and King.

But here is the weird, "Secret Prayer" irony: We can't truly seek God alone. We can't seek his Kingdom and his will in our very lives, by ourselves. Left to ourselves, most of us who are attempting to seek only God and God's transformation will usually end up seeking out those things that will keep ourselves on the throne: our

preferences, our desires. We may not seek the praise of others, but left alone we'll try to manipulate God for our own desires.

I believe this is why Jesus taught us to pray *corporately*, even in private, “*Our Father...Give us this day...forgive us our debts...*” This is why he taught his disciples together to pray in plural voice. And this is why St. Tertullian, a brilliant second century apologist wrote that we only truly learn that Jesus is the Son and God is our Father from the Church who is our Mother.<sup>1</sup>

This is why we pray and sing the Lord’s Prayer together in liturgical form, because we who desire to know God as King and Father and have his will and ways be part of every area of our lives *need each other* to accomplish it.

And I invite you at your next worship service to ask yourself: Is there any area of my life that I have not allowed the God who is both King and Father to demonstrate his love, to exercise his rule? And then open your eyes and pray—in the privacy of your own heart, surrounded by the community of disciples—to let God’s Kingdom come, God’s will be done in your life in that church, with those fellow believers in our Father’s world.

## Sermon 3 Worrying Well

### Scripture

Matthew 6:19-34

<sup>19</sup> “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup> but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; <sup>23</sup> but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>28</sup> And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

<sup>34</sup> “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today. (NRSV)

### Outline

**Theme: If we learn to worry about the Kingdom of Heaven, we’ll not have to worry about anything else.**

How do we learn *kingdom worrying*? How do we learn to worry *well*?

1. Worrying well *starts with treasuring well.*
2. Worrying well *trusts the Fatherly love of the King.*