

“Your Will Be Done On Earth as it is in Heaven” (Matthew 6:5-13)

June 12, 2011

Pastor John Bronson

Order of Worship for June 12, 2011, Communion and Promotion Sunday

Pre-service Song

Welcome and Announcements

Ministry Moment: Missions (really? Is this Miss J?)

Call to Worship: Revelation 4:1-11 and Prayer

Songs of Worship:

“All Heaven Declares”

Overhead

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

Song # 210

“Micah 6”

Overhead

“We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise”

Song # 213

Offering and Offertory

Special Music:

Message: “Your Will Be Done On Earth as it is in Heaven” (Matthew 6:5-13)

By Pastor Bronson

Closing Song: “ At The Name of Jesus”

Song # 766

Parting Word of Grace

Sunday Evenings in God’s Word

5:30 to 7:00

The Henneker Music Building

**Hebrews II, “Faith’s Hall of Fame”**

“The Prayer Closet”

June 12, 2011

*“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”*

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying for:

1. **Russel and Sharla Weisner serving in Malaysia:** their return to the US on home assignment will be safe and grace-filled; the Lord will guide them in all their home contacts for mutual encouragement and renewed call; their eldest daughter will make a healthy transition from Malaysia to college life in the US
2. **President Obama:** the Lord will lead him away from entanglement in partisan politics; the Spirit will grant him clear vision of the motives of those around him and the grace to forgive and guide in truth and righteousness
3. **Youth Ministries:** the summer schedule will draw many new youth into the group; the youth graciously welcome and seek to encourage all newcomers; the staff enjoys the Spirit’s guidance and refreshment in leading and teaching
4. **Military Personnel of the Week: E4 Tim Hammonds** (son of Tom and Cindy Hammonds): finishing his last year of service in North Dakota; please pray for the Lord’s direction for when he gets out of the Air Force
5. **Young Adult of the Week: Mary Finn at Butte College** (daughter of Sean and Penny Finn): for courage and protection as she embarks on her transfer to University of South Alabama in August; that she stay close to Christ and live/run for Him

Pastor John Bronson

The title for today’s message is “Your Will Be Done.” What I want to do today is, in addition to completing some thoughts about the will of God, is to take a moment at the end of the message to talk about what it means when it says, “. . . on earth as it is in heaven.” I said at the outset that attempting to give a summary introduction to the will of God is an overwhelming task. One gentleman phoned me up and said, “Are you all right?” He had [other] reasons to be talking to me. I said, “No, I am not all right.” He said, “Why?” I said, “I am attempting to do something for which I am inadequate, and it weighs on me.” I am incapable of actually doing justice to what God’s Word says about the will of God. So I can introduce it, but I cannot possibly cover it; it is impossible.

Another thing I wanted to mention, arising out of other conversations: I have made it clear that in a few years I will be retiring. That is my intention: I am old! I am not yet senile, but I am old. Graciously many of you have said, “I don’t want that to happen too soon.” Well, neither do I; not too soon. But you know, beloved, what I want when I walk away from here is a body of people who know how to read the Bible. That is what I want. I don’t want to leave here and have people say, “O, do you remember what Pastor John said?” I am dust; but the Word of God is eternal. It is the Word that gives you life. So it is important that you learn how to come to this word, appeal to God, and then have the Holy Spirit open this word so you can read it and you can understand, whether I or anybody else is here.

Today what I would like you to do is this: in your bulletin you should have two inserts. Every week I put in questions, and then [today] I also have a series of verses. I want to walk quickly through those verses. They all have to do with the will of God. There is no way I am going to talk about all these verses; that is not my intention. What I want us to do is to let the Spirit of God take God’s word and open our minds up so we get a broader picture of what it is we are dealing with when we talk about the will of God. Many times we get into those discussions about the will of God, and we think we are arguing with each other about it, but in reality we are talking about different aspects or parts of the will of God and we don’t understand how they don’t connect in our thinking. It is important to get a broader picture of the will of God. I am just going to read through those verses. You have them before you – follow along as best you can.

**Romans 12:1-2**, *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

**Ephesians 5:15-18**, *“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. . . .”*

In **Philippians 2:12-13** we get a different sense of the will of God. In this case notice how the will of God connects with us: *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”*

**1 Thessalonians 5:12-18**; *“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*

**Hebrews 13:20-21**, *“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

**I John 5:13-14**, *“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.”*

**Revelation 4:11**, *“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”*

I would commend to you the next time you prepare yourself to go into your closet, to separate yourself away from the busyness of life; the next time you take time to set aside and spend with your heavenly Father, I commend to you that you take this list and let the Spirit of God speak to you as you read down through it. Say, “Lord, I want to understand what is Your will, what is Your will for me? As I enter into this time of prayer I want, my intention is to give Your Spirit the liberty to so move in me that the thoughts of my mind, the impulses of my heart – the desires that arise – are the expression of Your will: that is my desire.” See if the Lord will not indeed honor His word in you.

Especially in light of what we read in Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 5:15-18 and Philippians 2:12-13, someone is going to ask me a question, and not unreasonably. When you look at these verses, especially if you look at Philippians 2, are we dealing here with the sovereign will of the Creator – that would be Revelations 4, all things that exist, exist for what reason? God said so! Period! So when we look at all these verses do we apply the absolute sovereign will of the Creator, or are we dealing here instead with the law-giving will of God who sets options before His creatures? Notice, to the Romans Paul says that they must discern the will of God through testing with a renewed mind. The mind is to be renewed with the revealed truths of God and the testing is to occur as the believer seeks to live in the world according to that truth. To the Ephesians Paul writes the same. If you look at Ephesians 5:10, this is what Paul says, noticing these two phrases: *“We are to try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”* That is closet work. This is what you do when you take yourself away from the rest of your obligations and responsibilities, when you take yourself away from the media and its constantly sending you stimulus, constantly trying to get its message in your mind. You isolate yourself so you can be shut up with God. You say, “God, I want to discern what is pleasing to You.”

Again looking at Philippians 2:12-13, we read, “Therefore my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your salvation in fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” So how we are praying? And to whom do we pray? In what manner do we pray? Do we pray as if God makes every choice? Or do we pray as if God offers people options? How many know the answer? That is the answer: we pray both ways, of course. You cry unto heaven: “God, do it!” And you cry unto heaven, “God, may he or she do it!” so that the will of man agrees with the will of God, not only in their hearts, but in yours. Of course! This is a false choice.

Notice Hebrews 10:24, we read this exhortation, *“Let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another all the more as you see the day drawing near.”* Now what is that exhortation about, and do we please the Lord by meeting that expectation? Here is a “let me stick my nose in your business” question: how many of you deliberately sought a means of encouraging someone else to love and good deeds when you came to church today? If in prayer we tend to

Pastor John Bronson

forget the [character, nature and attributes of the] God to Whom we pray, often praying as if God didn't know what we going to say, didn't understand the situation, or sometimes praying as if God did not already have an answer, or sometimes praying as if God hadn't already expressed and told [us] His whole will –see if you go back to the list [of verses read at the beginning] you realize God has an opinion about most everything, and He has already told us what that opinion is. So sometimes I wonder, I hear people agonizing, “What is the will of God?” I will ask them, “Have you read the Bible?” “Well, uh, I was hoping for something more personalized.” “Well, have you tried praying and reading the Bible?” Let the Spirit of God talk to you while you read the Bible because God has told us His will in the Word! So if our tendency is to forget who God is while we pray, being all occupied with our praying, our tendency in life together is to forget to encourage one another to love and good deeds.

Consider for a moment the conversation you had with the people you greeted this morning before worship began and then consider what normally goes on in the Fellowship Hall. We are friends. Some have a few and some have a lot. So we talk about many things, don't we, and shouldn't we? Should we not want to share out of the abundant interests and hobbies and also the challenges and perplexities that we face in life? Of course we should. But do we ever encourage one another in love and good deeds? Do we ever make that the subject of our conversation? I appreciated the comments this morning of the importance of having contact in the course of the week. And how important is that contact if it comes saying, “I have been praying for you; how's your walk? Are you confronting any issues? Can I pray with you about something? You know, I was reading the Word of God today, and when I was reading I was thinking about you. Let me share these verses with you. Allow me through the power of the Holy Spirit to encourage you to love and good deeds.” We wonder, don't we, sometimes? We live in a society where we can go an entire week, between Sundays perhaps, and never hear the name of God other than as a swear word. And if you turn on the media in any of its multiplied forms and unless you very carefully select your places, you will likely hear nothing about God at all. I have a book at home and this is the title, “Why it is so easy to live as if God doesn't Exist.” We live in a culture which is determined to live as if God does not exist. God is an embarrassment in our culture, but He shouldn't be for us. You and I both know that all of us together swim in this pond, this toxic pond of a culture that has turned its back on God. So when we come alongside of another Christian “fish”, we might want to say, “Hey, how's it going, walking with the Lord, sensing His presence, keeping your antennae properly connected with the ultimate truths? Keeping your feet on the foundation, no matter how slippery? I just wanted to encourage you to remain faithful to God and to do the good deeds that manifest His great love.” I would commend to all of us having that conversation with three people this week, and see if the Lord will not honor His word.

Any sincerely believing church can do great things if it has a mind and the will to do it. Nini and I had the privilege of going down and meeting with a bunch of other pastors who were meeting with the Louis Palau evangelistic team. Are you acquainted with Mr. Palau? He is going to be putting on what he calls a festival, a crusade festival in Sacramento about a year from now. The thing that caught my attention – his headquarters are in Portland, Oregon and he had a [pastor] come from there who attends a number of his festivals – this man came to the meeting and he gave these comments: he said that in the city of Portland the churches have banded together in order to cooperate in blessing the city. What they have done is they have taken on the public schools. Churches are assigned to different schools where they come in and they paint walls and they wash them and they fix the planting and pour out all kinds of resources into these schools. At first it was looked upon with suspicion. A year and a half later the schools want the churches to come. The pastor made this comment. “In your town, if everyone in your church left, would anybody in your town care? If your church shut down, would anybody in your community notice?” Now here is the capper: Portland is as “advanced” socially as San Francisco. They have the first openly gay mayor in the United States. Not long ago that mayor got into a heap of trouble. Guess to whom, he turned for help and counsel: to the pastors of that city. This is their comment: we are not here to change you; we are here to stand with you. God has made you the mayor of this city. We respect your authority. We are here to serve and to bless this city. Consequently the mayor's ears were open because he wasn't being condemned.

Any church can do great things if they're willing to be used by God. Do you think there is a possibility that that mayor will eventually come to know Jesus Christ personally? O yes: he already turned to the pastors in his hour of trouble because he couldn't trust those who don't walk with God. I believe that is worth thinking about. This is why we pray “Thy will be done.”

How often have we prayed for the power to control or redirect someone else's choices? Have you ever agonized as you watched a neighbor, a friend, a family member moving with seemingly impervious determination, stubborn ignorance and willful neglect of every word of good counsel onto paths of ruin, relationships of folly? And you find that for these people that you love passionately, that you hope for that you pray for, that you stand impotently on the side and you watch them walk right straight into a place of destruction, you watch their lives fall to pieces, you see bitterness begin to flow out of their broken hearts, and there you stand. What do you do? Hopefully you pray.

I cannot touch your heart; but God can. Therefore I pray to God. I don't pray to a dead god. I pray to a living God, and that living God is able to act. Consider these words from the Old Testament. Psalm 65:1-4,

- 1) *Praise is due you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed*
- 2) *O you who hears prayer, to you shall all flesh come.*
- 3) *When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions*
- 4) *Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of you temple!*

My wife are in these days, actually today, actually maybe even right now our grand-daughter is being baptized: that is Lily. The other day she turned to her mom and she says (you've got to know Lily. She is seven.) I think I want to be baptized. She is a very serious person. Reid Ross would be like that! She wants to be baptized. What does that mean? It means that the Lord High God in His grace and goodness has reached down and laid His hand on her soul and says, “Come!” Do you think that has been prayed for? Oh, my goodness! I thought about it. Nini and I have five children, all of whom walk with the Lord. Is that a boast? Oh, no! That is no boast, beloved. That is to fall down on your face before God and say, “Great are Your mercies, endless is your kindness and goodness. Thank You. You have been so kind to us. And we have prayed. Why pray? Nobody else can touch the heart and draw the heart to Himself. Are you praying for anyone? Are you asking the Lord?

This is why I raised this matter of the will of God. People don't understand it. They become confused and upset. Does God offer us choices, or does God decree? Which way do we pray? We pray both. The Father's involvement, I believe, is proportional to the depth or extent of human need. This is most extreme, of course, in the case of those who are lost, who are dead. We are told in Ephesians 2:1-2 that people are dead in their trespasses and sins. But perhaps the clearest of all statements, perhaps the most difficult to take is in Romans 9:15-18. This is what Paul says, “*For [God] says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then he has mercy on whomever he will wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.*” How do you pray?

This is hard to take. But it is also the heart of prayer. The heart of prayer is precisely that God can and will bring the dead to life. If you do not believe that God can bring the dead to life, then just stop praying, because dead men go to hell. So we pray that God will bring the dead to life. We pray that God will soften the hardened heart. We pray that God will bend the stiffened neck. We pray because it is God and God alone who brings hope where there

Pastor John Bronson

was no hope. If you pray to a God who is no more able to touch and change the hearts of others than you are, then don't bother praying. But if you do believe, pray, pray and pray.

In my same conversation in which I said I don't want to leave a church that is always referring to what I had to say, I said instead I want to leave a church that prays. At some point, when the Spirit moves in us, we are going to learn how to pray for our city and keep praying until God in His grace transforms this place. The things that I have just been speaking of are the reasons why all true theology is a theology of prayer, and all true theology is done on your knees.

God's interest in us is not limited to our first encounter with the gospel and of our coming to faith in Christ. We read in 1 Peter 1:3-5, *“Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* Got it? Are you going to lose your salvation? Why are you not going to lose your salvation? It is because God intends that you not. Do you notice that? If Romans 9 along with Romans 3 indicate that God wills our justification by grace through faith (also Ephesians 2:8-9), with which Peter agrees [in 1 Peter 1:3-5], Peter also indicates that it is God who guards us with His power. It is God who guards us with His power for our salvation. So we read this in Romans 8:27-30, *“...the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”* You will be glorified. You will persevere to the end, for it is the will of God that you will endure to the end. That is His sovereign will. Along the way He will offer you endless choices leading you in that direction.

It is God's will that we endure to the end. How many of you know somebody who has fallen away from the faith, somebody who made a profession, somebody who had a walk, somebody who had a testimony and now the world has grabbed them and they have dropped off the edge into the pit? Do you pray? Pray! It is the will of God that they will endure to the end. You have an option. Your option is to pray. When we pray the third petition, “Thy will be done,” of the Lord's Prayer, we are celebrating the Father's power and wisdom in preserving us as His children: “Thy will be done.” Thy will be done in me. Thy will be done in my friend Sam who is far from the Lord. Thy will be done.”

Inseparable from this is a further aspect of the will of God which relates directly to our prayers. Look again to 1 Peter 3:13-18. This is very different; here Peter says, *“Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.”* The will of God: if God wills the end – in this case our perfect sanctification and our final or ultimate salvation to be revealed at the last time – God also wills the means. God has a plan. Did anybody ever tell you that? “God loves you and has...” What Campus Crusade said was that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. If you use the word “wonderful” correctly, that's right. “Wonderful” means, “you never dreamt of it.” “Wonderful” means it is beyond your rational grasp. How many of you have wondered whether or not God's plan was wonderful for you? When Nini and I lost a child to death we wondered about that. When Nini recently went through her agonizing pain, we wondered, “Is this wonderful, is this it, is this the wonderful part?” Well, you know what, it is.

John Piper made this observation: don't waste your cancer. How do you waste any tragedy in your life? Bitterness, regret, doubting God, in the words of the angel to Paul, “kicking against the goads”. How do you redeem the time? “God give me the wisdom and the strength to go through this and give You glory.” Why would we do that? Why? How long are you going to live? How long will you walk in peace; how long will you know joy? Are you going to be with me, standing at the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ, seeing the twenty four elders fall upon their faces when the four living creatures give praise and say, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty”? Are you going to be counted along with me as one of the myriads, shouting out “Worthy, worthy, worthy”? Now let's have context: “Worthy in the death of our son Eric; worthy in the death of my brother-in-law; worthy in the rebellion of my son Joshua; worthy in the pain of my wife? Worthy, worthy, worthy. For out of all things You have brought infinite good, and I can drink from the chalice of Your grace and feel the living waters pour through my soul.” So, how much can we put up with now that He would be glorified?

Beloved, we live in a culture which concentrates on comfort and convenience, and makes our lives trivial. But we are not trivial. You and I are creatures that will dwell with God for eternity, and His intention, His will is to prepare us for that endless blessing.

Here are the six summary points that I have made in brief compass in three sermons regarding the will of God:

1. That we might know the whole of God's law: that is His will.
2. That by His will all people will chose to know and obey the whole law and respond to the call to faith: that is His will. When we pray “Thy will be done” that is what we are praying.
3. That all will know the law of God and the hope of glory.
4. We are praying that according to His will God will bring the lost to salvation.
5. We are also praying that by His will God will preserve and guard us in faith to the end.
6. That God will make us wise through suffering.

I said I would take a little moment at the end to address this phrase, “As it is in heaven.” We have some glimpses, not many, of heaven. Here they are, this is not all of them, just the ones I thought of: Jacob and the Ladder: what did he see at the top of the ladder: God upon His throne. We also have this glimpse: Elijah and his servant. The enemy has surrounded the city. The servant is terrified. Elijah says, “God let him see.” He opens his eyes, he looks up and he sees the host of heaven and fiery chariots circling the city. Isaiah and Ezekiel both had remarkable glimpses of heaven: the throne of God had come and set itself upon the earth. Indeed this was the throne right from heaven: The cherubim, the wheels, the four living creatures filled with eyes. But of course it is the book of Revelation in parallel with Daniel that gives us the most explicit glimpses of heaven. What do we see there? A vast assembly spread around this immense throne at the center of all this praise and adoration.

But let me take you to a rather different picture. Hebrews 12:18-24 speaks directly to us and to our circumstances when we pray “thy will be done on earth as it is heaven.”

*“For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, ‘If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.’ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear.’ But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”*

Pastor John Bronson

Are you there? Have you come to that glorious place where God is at the center of all and the blood of Christ is the payment and the cleansing and the renewing and the establishing of your hope so that you can enter into the presence of the Living God? “As it is in heaven where God’s will is done and we have fullness of joy forever.” May it be so; indeed may it be soon.”

Father in heaven as we prepare now to lift our voices to you and give expression to our praise and thanksgiving, may You be pleased with us, may You pour out Your Spirit upon us, may you stir up afresh in our hearts and minds a remembrance of your goodness to us, and may we be armed, our Father, through Your word and the indwelling Spirit to walk faithfully as Your servants in all the days to come, until You come and bring the age to an end. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. How would you complete the sentence, “God’s will for my life is...”?
2. What sort of testing have you done to determine God’s will in or for your life?
3. Do you think it is possible for a person to know God’s will? How can we “ask...according to His will” and so have the assurance that we are heard?
4. “If the characteristic weakness of our prayer life is that we forget to think clearly about the God to whom we pray, the characteristic weakness of our life together as Christians is that we neglect to encourage and spur one another on in the faith.” Do you agree?
5. Do you think/believe God directs our lives through circumstances or by direct influence on our hearts and minds? (See Psalm 65.)
6. God declares that He never abandons His children and He never loses a single one of them. By what means do you think he accomplishes these things?
7. Has suffering been a means for spiritual growth in your life? Do you believe, and does it seem right to you, that God willed for this suffering to occur? Do you believe God adjusts His plans according to the unfolding of events, or that events unfold according to His plans?

8. What most attracts you to heaven? What is especially noteworthy to you in the description of heaven in Hebrews 12:18-24?