



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

Doing the
will of God

Treasures in
heaven

Seeking
God in our
worry

MIDWEEK SCRIPT

2018

February

Session 1 – Doing the will of God

Welcome to the February midweek experience. Last July we discussed the Sermon on the Mount, and this month we return to discussing Jesus' most famous sermon. Near the end of His sermon, Jesus said, in Matthew 7:21, *Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord" shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*

Jesus says that not everyone who invokes His name enters the kingdom of heaven. Why not? Well, not all things **said** to be done in God's name truly reflect God's will. Throughout history, and still today, people do things in God's name for reasons other than doing His will.

Let's consider God's will in the context of His plan of salvation:

1. God's will is that we love Him, trust Him, and obey Him.
2. God's will is that we love our neighbor.
3. God's will is to give salvation to all mankind.

Our Father's will is that we love Him. In Mark 12:28-32, we read of an encounter between Jesus and a scribe. The scribe asked which is the first commandment – in this context, "first" meaning most important. Jesus responded that it is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

It's our Father's will that, out of our love for Him, we trust Him completely and implicitly. He wants us to use our free will to do **His will**. God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever present. He is perfect, He is sovereign, He is love. This makes Him very much unlike us, and though He always acts in our best interest, His will and ways are often quite difficult to understand or accept. In the words of Charles Spurgeon, a 19th century Baptist minister, "God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart." When Apostle Thomas doubted the Lord's resurrection, Jesus encouraged him to believe, and offered His hand and His side to show it was Him. Thomas touched His scars, and then believed, calling Jesus, "God". Jesus replied, *Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed* (John 20:29).

Sometimes we question God's will because our life experience does not seem as easy or pleasant as our neighbor's. In His sovereignty, God does not require that we all experience the same things in life, nor does He reveal himself to all mankind at the same time. We see this clearly in the New Testament. Jesus told Apostle Peter that he would be a martyr, while Apostle John died a natural death. The disciples Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were allowed to remain in Bethany, while other disciples were called to leave their families and go with the Lord on His journeys. Joseph of Arimathea, who prepared Jesus' body for burial, was permitted to be wealthy, while the rich young ruler was asked to sell all that he had. In the parable of the workers in the field, Jesus taught that while in the end the reward is the same for all who believe, not everyone will be introduced to God's plan of salvation at the same time. Despite these differences, God loves us all equally and wants us to love Him enough to trust Him and obey Him.

God's will is that we love our neighbor. When we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, and as Jesus loves us, we want salvation for our neighbor as much as we want it for ourselves. This will prompt us to act according to God's will:

- We will not judge our neighbor or demand that God punish sinners, especially those who sin differently than we do. Instead, we are willing to forgive.
- We will act in a way that conforms to the gospel, and not in a way that becomes a stumbling block for someone else on their path to the Lord. If we are true Christians, believers, and followers of Jesus Christ, we will comply with Jesus' teaching and do as He did – act according to the will of His Father all the time.
- We will serve our neighbor out of love, and support our neighbor's efforts to follow Christ.

God's will is to give salvation to all mankind, but each of us has to want that salvation. God will not save anyone against their will. To fulfill God's will, we need to accept His word and sacraments in faith, renounce all

that displeases Him, allow the Holy Spirit to renew us, and permit the new creation within us to evolve into spiritual maturity.

Though doing God's will is a simple concept, it is not easy to accomplish. Jesus acknowledged this when He taught the disciples to pray. In His model prayer, the Lord included the phrase, *Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:10). This phrase is a statement of desire and a plea for strength. Surely, God will hear us when we sincerely pray these words, for He is eager to help us do His will.

Session 2 – Treasures in heaven

Today, we'll continue exploring the lessons Jesus taught while preaching the Sermon on the Mount. In the last session, we discussed the will of God. In this session, we'll build on that instruction as we focus on Jesus' teaching about storing up treasures in heaven.

What comes to mind when you hear the word "treasure"? You've most likely seen a movie about a person or a group of people desperately trying to find long-lost treasure. They're usually willing to go to incredible lengths to get their hands on someone else's possessions. And often, they come to the end of their journey only to discover that time has eroded the treasure, or someone else has beaten them to it. Treasures can cause us to do extraordinary things. That's why Jesus teaches us to focus on treasures of heaven.

Listen to the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 6:19-21: *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

These verses prompt us to ask:

1. Are your priorities only for this life, or the one to come?
2. What types of treasures are you storing up for yourself?
3. Where are you keeping your treasures?
4. Where is your heart?

Jesus' teaching in these verses is about priorities. He's challenging us to assess our top priority in life. If we've been seeking material goods and riches, He's encouraging us to change our mindset and begin setting up a storehouse of treasures in heaven. He's asking us to see a bigger picture. This can be hard to do in the midst of our earthly life when we're concerned from one day to the next about the things we believe we "need" to do. Material goods *are* important for this life. Jesus would not have taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," if He had not considered material necessities important. But Jesus instructs us to give first priority to those things that have an eternal effect, and then care for the things of this life. Through it all, we can trust in Him and remain confident that the One who hears our prayers will provide what we need.

Jesus' intent is not to dissuade us from establishing our earthly life. He doesn't restrict us from purchasing a home, setting up a savings account, or having valuable possessions. However, those things are not to be our chief objective! Instead, these earthly riches can be used for His glory. How do you do that? If you've been blessed with a home, invite people in to share a meal and lift up the name of Jesus together. The same concept applies to all of the physical abilities and material possessions you've been given. Give God the glory for all that you have! Build up heavenly treasure by doing good to others in Jesus' name. Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit on how to use your gifts to edify others, carry out the mission of the Church, and profess your heavenly citizenship through faith in Jesus Christ.

Is there a better place to store up your treasures than in heaven? You certainly wouldn't store your most valuable possessions in a place that can easily be accessed by thieves or damaged by the weather. Who better to entrust with our most valuable treasures than the One who is our greatest treasure? He encourages us today to store up treasures with Him so that we can enjoy them with Him for all eternity. Jesus affirms that if we lay up treasure in heaven, our hearts will rejoice in the investment. Ask yourself daily, "Is my heart with Him

in heaven?” When we can answer that question affirmatively, we can live each day with joy as our heavenly treasures multiply.

In conclusion, consider the words that Paul wrote to Timothy, asking God to help us keep our focus on heavenly treasures: *Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* (1 Timothy 6:18-19).

Session 3 – Seeking God in our worry

In this session, we'll wrap up this month's exploration of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount by looking at what He teaches us in Matthew 6:25: *Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?*

There are so many things in this world that we can worry about: taking tests, paying bills, raising children, failing health, and countless others. Worrying about these things consumes our time and our energy with no tangible benefits. So if worrying costs us so much, why do we do it?

Think about a situation you have lived through, or are currently living through, that causes you to worry. If there's anything in your power that could help the situation, you'd take the necessary actions to relieve the worry. However, when there is nothing left to do, we feel helpless and not in control. Worry is a symptom of fear and lack of control. When we're living through difficult situations, we fear the outcome. We want to control our circumstances, and when we can't, worry takes hold.

But what does Jesus tell us about worry? He reminds us to focus on the fact that God loves us: *Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?* (Matthew 6:26). God cares for all of His creation, and yet as His children, we can be assured that He values us that much more. His love for us means that He is always watching over and caring for us.

When we recognize this, our trust in God expands. This is easier said than done in situations where things are not going as we hoped or planned. But that's the point: we cannot only trust God when everything is going smoothly. We have to trust in Him always. This becomes easier when we realize that while *some* things in life are under our control and within our ability, *everything* is under God's control and within His ability.

When you start to worry, intentionally seek God and remind yourself of His nature. **God is our Provider** – not our job, education, or personal abilities. We must acknowledge that *He* is the One who provides for us. It may not be in the way we expect or want, but He will provide. **God is perfect.** He never makes mistakes. Because of His perfection, we know that all the good in our lives comes from Him. And, **God is peace.** He knows that by allowing us to become who He intends us to be, we'll attain His peace. This might mean living through situations that are difficult, but we know His nature and the promises He makes for our future.

Let's look at how Jesus relied on His Father when worry could have overtaken Him. Before Jesus' betrayal and eventual death, He went into the garden of Gethsemane. He knew the struggle and torment that lay ahead. He was counting on His friends, the disciples, for support, but they fell asleep, leaving Him alone in the garden. Even with the tremendous weight of the task ahead, Jesus was able to focus on His Father and pray to Him three separate times (Matthew 26:36-46). Jesus, our Teacher, demonstrates in this experience that the response to worry is prayer! Jesus intentionally sought His Father, reaffirmed His trust in God, and could then accept His role in the salvation of all people. No matter what the circumstances, we can trust in God. Peace, security, and strength are found in Him alone.

Worry has no place in our lives if we have God in our lives. Jesus even says in the Sermon on the Mount, *Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?* (Matthew 6:27 NIV). It is a matter of practicality to

understand that worrying is useless. The more time we spend worrying, the less time we spend seeking God. By choosing to focus on Him and by following Jesus' example, we are laying up treasures in heaven, as we heard about in session 2.

Through Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, we can see that He wants our relationship with God to grow. For this to happen, we must depend on Him more and more, and surrender our desire for control. In moments of worry, let Him be the One who supports us as a foundation of strength.