

Text: Matt.26:36-44

Target audience: Christians

Topic: Prayer

Theme: Praying God's Will over ours

My purpose for this message: to help us realize that sometimes what we pray for is hostile to God's plans.

Delivered: March 6, 2005 @ KEFC

Surrendered Prayer

What does a child do when a parent says no? (show Foxworthy clip of tantrum in grocery story).

I wonder if God ever sees us that way. You didn't get the job, didn't get the girl—or the guy, you're on the outs with a friend and things aren't getting better. A friend's marriage you begged God to save falls apart, or the daughter you pleaded for is on the run from you *and* God. Maybe we don't throw ourselves on the floor but at least think, "if God doesn't give me what I want, why even pray?"

As a boy I asked my parents for a lot of things: a bicycle, a pony, scotch tape and lots of construction paper. I asked to ride my bike on the road, can I go swimming after lunch, can I stay home from church tonight? Can I stay up late? Can I go to Marshall's house? Can I skip practicing the piano? Can I let my hair grow longer?

My parents said "Yes" to a bike and all the construction paper and tape I needed, said "Yes" to longer hair in the summer but "no" during school. It was usually "yes" to Marshall's. But they said no to the pony, riding bike on Rt. 340 before I was 11, and "no" to skipping piano practice.

Our heavenly Father sometimes says "yes" and sometimes "no." Last week I urged you to pray with determination and persistence and not just give up after a halfhearted try, doubting God will do anything anyway. I do wonder if some of the answers we think are "nos" are actually "not yet's" but we toss in the towel too quick.

And some "no's" might become "yeses" if we remove an obstacle in the way: failure to repent of long-cherished sin, or by failure to honor our spouse, or failure to persist in prayer.

But for all of God's "yeses" and "not yet's" there are also "no's" and God won't budge. How do we react it? David Wilkerson says "*I believe there is nothing more dangerous to a Christian than to carry around a resentment against God. Yet I am shocked by the growing number of believers I meet who are peeved at the Lord. They may not admit as much - but deep inside, they hold some kind of grudge against him. Why? They believe he's not interested in their lives or problems! They're convinced he doesn't care - because he hasn't answered a particular prayer or acted on their behalf.*"

We can become angry when God says no, or unbelieving, ultimately, prayerless. I want to suggest something else this morning: surrendered praying. PRAY.

Many people wear WWJD bracelets: What would Jesus do if God said no?.

Tell the story

When Jesus was born, although He remained God, He had an infant's mind like *any* infant would. While He was completely God, He was also completely human. Like normal babies we presume He couldn't speak or reason.

Still God, but when Jesus stepped down from heaven's throne, He chose to shield—or hide—from Himself aspects of his divine wisdom, knowledge and powers. Hid so

effectively that Luke wrote about him at age 12, Jesus was **growing** in wisdom and stature (2:52). Like his friends, he was developing physically, emotionally and mentally. Not spiritually for not having a sin nature meant that He was already inclined toward His heavenly Father's will.

Inclined. That's different from his flesh (humanity, not his sinful nature) wanting it. We don't know when Jesus became aware that His mission was a deadly one but probably at least by the age of 12. That's how old he was when his mother upbraided him for staying behind in Jerusalem to talk with the religious teachers. He replied with some puzzlement, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" as if they should have known; it appears he did.

Early in His earthly ministry He informed his disciples about His mission: I'm here to die (Matt.16, Mark 8). In fact, Jesus told them *numerous* times. And, this was not simply an early obituary, He wanted them to understand T H I S I S W H Y I ' V E COME.

Knowing his destiny, that must mean Jesus went to the cross without a peep. Not so. READ Matt.26:36-44. Jesus knew at least this much: he would die, die on a cross, die because a follower sold Him out, die not just in physical agony, but spiritual: He would shoulder the sins of everyone. He wished God would pour out the contents of the cup He was about to drink. Nothing about any of it sounded appealing.

Except. Except that it was the Father's will, and *that* was what He wanted most. He wished He could dodge the excruciating pain. He was despondent that His followers were going to run away when He needed them. He dreaded—not just hanging on the cross—but hanging there unviewed by His Father who could not look on the sin His Son was bearing. But none of His wants mattered nearly as much to Him as His Father's want. READ Jn.6:38.

I've not here to do what *I* want, but *what* my Father wants. Brother, sister, can we say that?

In John the apostle's first letter, he wrote this about prayer: *This is the confidence that we have in approaching God: that if we ask for anything according to His will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.* (1 Jn.5:14-15).

"Approach God with confidence," John insists. Throughout the Scriptures, we are pushed to pray; urged to ask, prodded to plead. "Pray and don't give up" (Lk.18:1). "You don't have because you don't ask" (Jas.4:2). And God knows our prayers reveal what we want; our desires.

We want a relationship healed, we want a spouse, we want our financial dilemma solved, we want an "A" on the course. We want a Prowler, a better job, a husband who loves the Lord, we want a child; or we've got one like we saw earlier, we want to give one *away* (child!) Our praying is driven by our desires. But sometimes our desires run headlong into God's desires.

Like when we have the brass to ask God for something He's already said "no" to in Scripture: maybe it's to get a boyfriend or girlfriend that's unsaved. Maybe it's to make a killing on a business deal that's shady in the first place. Maybe what we want is revenge. These are automatic "no's."

But to some of our prayers that *are* fine, *are* good. God still says no. Why, we may never know. But, you can be sure of this: God said no on purpose, not by accident. And He did it because He has your good and His glory in mind, not because He's spiteful.

A number of years ago a private pilot flying cross country approached the FAA's Denver control center. The pilot—whose home was near sea level—repeatedly asked for permission to drop to 10,000 feet. Each time the control center denied his request, insisting he remain at a higher altitude. He didn't know that 14,000 foot high mountain peaks lay dead ahead.

Concl:

If you want to do some good reading on why God *might* say no, check out Leith Anderson's, *When God Says No, Discovering the God of Hope Behind the Answer we'd rather not hear*. My concern today is not God's refusal, but our response to it. READ Jas.4:15.

“All such boasting...” *I* will do this, *I* will do that. No, I will do this—if it is not only my desire but God; do that—if it is not only my desire but God. The ultimate objective of prayer is not what I want: it is the glory of God. Not my will, but yours.