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Briefing 27: Wednesday 26th August, 2020

Dear friends,

Over the next 2 weeks we are going to focus on the next phrase in the Lord's Prayer: "Your kingdom come, **your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**" Next time, we will focus on submission to God's perfect plan for our lives, no matter what that means for us. But today we will focus on obedience to God's moral law.

Those of you that are grandparents will know the tension that sometimes arises when grandchildren want to do things in your house with which you are not comfortable. When that happens at our house, our reaction is always to say: "you might do that at home, but this is our house, and so it's our rules."

In heaven, God's will is always done. The angels obey the Lord's will perfectly, going here and there at his command. But despite the fact that the Earth also belongs to the Lord, God's perfect moral will is not always obeyed on earth.

How do we know? Because idolatry and hatred, murder and jealousy, adultery, greed, deceit and the rest, are commonplace in this world, and each and every one of those sins are against God's good and perfect law. God has given us his commands in the Scriptures, he's even seared his law into the consciences of human beings, and yet we rebel against him again and again and again. We know the bad things that we shouldn't do, and we do them. We know the good things that we should do, and we don't do them. We know God's will but we don't obey it.

Sometimes we think we know better, and imagine that God's commands don't apply to us, in our 'special situation'. Sometimes we don't care, because we want what sin offers us more than we want to obey God. Sometimes we have never bothered to consider what God's will might be. That's where praying the next part of the Lord's Prayer comes in: "Your kingdom come, **your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**"

When we think about obedience to God's moral law, we can pray that evil would be restrained, that justice would roll like rivers, that racism and abuse and greed and exploitation and hatred would be checked as people's hearts are brought under the sound of the gospel and they turn to God in repentance and faith. That is how God's will might be done more and more on earth as it is in heaven.

But we cannot pray this part of the Lord's Prayer without thinking about ourselves. Do we know what God's commands are? And if we do, will we accept their authority over us? As well as pointing the finger at the failings of others, are we willing to obey God's commands and seek to live holy lives that honour God and reflect his goodness? If we are, then this part of the Lord's Prayer can be turned into a prayer for God's help to do just that.

How might you pray Your Will Be Done? Why not start with something like this...

Heavenly Father, I praise you because you are holy and good, and that your word is perfect, reviving the soul. Thank you that in the Scriptures you have revealed your perfect will for mankind and shown us, in your Law, the right way and the best way for people to live.

Please heavenly Father, may your law be honoured in our town and nation, that evil might be restrained and people freed to enjoy life without fear or prejudice or exploitation. Give wisdom to our government and leaders that the laws they pass in our land might conform to your commands. And please bless and protect those who seek to uphold the law and bring lawbreakers to justice. May your will be done in our community and country we pray.

But heavenly Father, I pray for myself, that you might change my rebellious heart so that it both loves and wants to obey your perfect law. Help me, through the power of your Holy Spirit, to submit to your commands and live a righteous, godly and holy life that reflects your goodness to the world. Where I succeed, keep me humble Lord. Remind me that everything I do is by your grace and power. And when I fail, bring me back again and again to the cross of Jesus, that I might know your cleansing and restoring power at work in my life.

Heavenly Father, may I do your will, as it is done in Heaven. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

OTHER NEWS:

OFFICIAL RE-OPENING OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCH:

An invitation to come to the official opening on Saturday 12th September from 10am to 4pm, is ➔, but we need people to volunteer to be refreshments servers (speak to Karen Walker) or day stewards (speak to Steve Bamford).

As part of re-dedicating the building, from Sunday 6th September at 11am to Saturday 12th at 11:00am, in hour slots from 7am to 10pm, we will be attempting to read the whole of the Bible out loud in the church. I'll have a timetable with me on Sunday, but if you'd like to reserve one or more slots before then, do email me.

INVITATION TO THE OFFICIAL RE-OPENING OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCH STEVENAGE SATURDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER, 2020.

After 12 months of major refurbishment works, we are delighted that the work is complete and that St Nicholas Church is now open once again. Come along and celebrate with us!

- Church open from 10am to 4pm.
- Display of the work including many fascinating archaeological discoveries.
- Free refreshments being served outside all day.
- Opening ceremony with the Bishop of Hertford, Rt Rev'd Dr Michael Beasley at 12 noon.

RSVP: enquiries@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk

PRAY WITH US ON TUESDAYS: Zoom prayer gathering at 7am-8am. Email Dave for an invite.

CHALLENGE FOR CHILDREN (and adults): Just 3 days left for anyone under 14 to earn themselves a £10 book voucher by learning the books of the Bible off by heart. Parents- encourage your children- and learn with them!

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETINGS: St Nicholas APCM will be after church on Sunday 20th September and St Mary's APCM on the Sunday after, 27th September. Electoral Rolls, which allow people to vote in elections for PCC members, are now open for people to join, and a form (suitable for both churches) is attached for completion and return by the Sunday 2 weeks before the APCM. Hard copies are available in both churches.

Both churches will need to elect churchwardens for the coming year, deanery synod reps (2 for St Nicks, 1 for St Mary's) and a number of PCC members. Nomination forms will be up in church from this Sunday and we ask that you prayerfully consider whether the LORD is calling you to stand and serve in this capacity.

RENEW CONFERENCE: Each September I usually head to Leeds for the ReNew Conference... but this year, for obvious reasons, it has been moved on line and made free! Details of the conference and a link to a booking form can be found via the following link, <https://www.renewconference.org.uk/annualconference/> and if you are free on the morning of Monday 14th September from 9-1, do sign up.

A further option is to watch it together, socially distanced in front of the various screens, at St Nicholas. That would give us the chance to chat about things outside over coffee breaks and make it more of an event. If you'd be interested in doing that, please sign up using the link above and then let me know.

FLOWERS: To place flowers in either church, either in memory of a loved one or in thanksgiving to God for his goodness (*perhaps at a special birthday or anniversary*), simply contact Chris Chambers for St Nicholas (tel 221409), or for Graveley, write your name on the rota in the church porch or speak to Marion Bracey (tel 350082). They will either keep the date free for your own display or use your donation to put some flowers in church for you.

CHURCH SITTERS/WELCOMERS REQUIRED: We are still looking for people willing to church sit and welcome passing visitors to St Nicholas on **Monday mornings from 10am-12noon. Wednesday afternoons from 2pm-4pm and Friday mornings from 10am-12noon.** If you'd be willing to take a turn at this, do let Steve or Karen know. Thank you.

THIS COMING SUNDAY, the 9:30am service at St Nicholas will include a celebration of the Lord's Supper. The service at St Mary's at 11:30am will be a Service of the Word. At both services, we will end our series on Christian basics by looking at Romans 11:33-12:21, the call that, in view of God's mercies, we are to offer to God our whole selves, our souls and bodies, as living sacrifices. It will be a challenging message of whole life discipleship and sacrificial service. Please pray that it will stir all our hearts to love and serve the LORD more.

If you are yet to book in, you can do so here: <https://forms.gle/NgwnNk2rneB1RLnW6> If you're not able to make it, do make sure you join us either live on Facebook or catch up later.

Yours in Christ,

Dave