

Not What I Will but What You Will

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that you would continue to gently but powerfully pour out the Holy Spirit upon us. Father, sometimes your word teaches us things that really go against the grain of our culture and things that really go against the grain of just ourself, of how we see ourselves.

And so, Father, this is one of those times when your word does this. And we ask that your Holy Spirit would help us to see the beauty and the wisdom and the power of your word and that we would believe it and trust you and live our lives in light of your word.

And Father, we ask that you would do this gentle but powerful work of your Holy Spirit within us. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So, I am the opposite of hip and au courant.

I learned things probably months after others know that there are... In fact, probably when I learn about a phenomenon going on in social media, it's probably already declining.

But I have discovered this week that there's something going on for those under 30 involved in social media called manifesting.

[1 : 2 0] And it must be a bit more popular than our church. They get like... I think they've had 150 million views at one of the main sites for this, which is a little bit more views than our webpage gets by like 150-fold almost.

More than that, way, way more. 150 million-fold. Anyway, what it is, it's very popular. And it's... Basically, it's...

There's things that I deserve in life and that I want in life, and I really want to have them. And so, I need to focus my thoughts and focus my energies and believe that these things are going to happen to me.

That I'm going to get that job. I'm going to get that relationship. I'm going to get that friendship. I'm going to get that recognition. I'm going to get that raise. You know, whatever it is, I'm going to get that trip.

And I just need to, like, believe it and put my energy into it and be positive about it. And that will go out into the universe, and the universe will give me what I desire.

[2 : 2 2] I think I've tried to summarize what manifesting is. It's a little bit, for those of us who are older, it's like the secret, only more contemporary. And it's very popular.

150 million views and talked about in lots of different spots. I mention that because in such a world where something like this is so possible, so powerful and popular, I read to you just a moment ago this sentence.

Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Now, that's not particularly controversial, but this next bit is. Yet not what I will, but what you will.

Yet not what I will, but what you will. This is a profoundly anti-Canadian comment and belief.

In fact, if one of you were to go to your very good, just, social justice, Canadian, secular friends, you had a group of them over, maybe your neighbors, you have really great neighbors, and you were to say, by the way, you know, on Sunday we heard about this text, and George encouraged us and showed us a way that it applies to our lives, and we should believe it.

[3 : 50] Yet not what I will, but what you will. And if they felt comfortable, or maybe after they'd had a couple of glasses of wine or something like that, and their inhibitions were removed, they would probably say something like, really, like Jesus said that?

And you'd say yes. And then you'd say, and you believe that? And you'd say yes. And they'd say, you actually think this is a good idea? And you'd say yes.

And then they'd probably point to you and say, you've got blood on your hands. That's the language of abusers. That's the language of oppressors.

That's the type of language that leads women and children to be abused by men. It is the language that is used by tyrants to oppress.

And you have blood on your hands, if you encourage people to believe this. They might also say this.

[4 : 55] You know, that sounds like it's a really, you know, okay, I'm going to give you a bit of credit, but, you know, it's very, very, very disempowering. Like, don't you think, George, that, you know, young men and young women just starting out in their careers and trying to get careers and trying to get ahead and hoping to maybe save up, make a down payment on a house or get a car, and don't you think, George, that that's a very disempowering thing to have the model that they're to say over and over not what I will but what you will?

Don't you think that? George, don't you think that real religion and real spirituality should empower people, empower them to get what they want, empower them to move forward in life, and what you've just said is the complete, it's just wrong.

It's wrong-headed. It's foolish. You see, Jesus is saying, not yet what I will but what you will goes deeply against the grain of the Canadian, one of the Canadian cultural stories that we all just understand and we all breathe.

So, what do we say? Well, first of all, of course, abuse is wrong and a problem. And I'm not going to say that if you look at it a little bit closely, you'll see that it's not as bad as it looks.

I'm going to say something different. I'm going to say that in its context, when you hear Jesus speak, you understand what he says, that it's beautiful and wise. That it's beautiful and wise.

[6 : 34] And that if you listen to what Jesus says, and you take it into your heart, it will help you to achieve the deep yearnings and longings of your heart.

In fact, that when you listen to it more closely, you'll realize that key bits and pieces of the Canadian cultural story are actually taking you away from the deep longings and yearnings of your heart.

So, those are bold claims. Let's go. If you have your Bibles, let's go. That's Mark chapter 14, verses 32 to 42, we're going to look at.

And in terms of the context, just before I read it, in some ways you could say that the 24 hours, this is part of a 24-hour period that literally, and I mean literally in the old-fashioned way of literally, it literally changes the world.

The world will be different after this 24-hour period than it was before. And in this profound 24-hour period, it begins with Jesus as an observant Jew celebrating the Passover meal and the story of God's delivering his people from slavery and bondage in Egypt.

[7 : 56] And by the end of that 24-hour period, that day, he will have been betrayed, he will have been falsely accused, he will have been whipped and beaten, he will have been crucified, he will die, he will be embalmed, and he will be buried, and this all takes place in 24 hours.

And this story is right here in the middle of it. And it goes like this. And they went to a place called Gethsemane, so they've just finished celebrating the Passover supper.

He's predicted, amongst other things, that they're all going to fall away and leave him. And they went to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, sit here while I pray. And he took with them Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.

And he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch. And going a little farther on, he fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

I'll just sort of pause here for a second. This has been well commented on by lots of people, but it's not bad to point it out again.

[9 : 17] I've done many, many, many funerals, and I've talked to many, many, many people who've gotten a terrible piece of news that they have cancer, that it's inoperable, that their days are not going to be numbered in decades, not even in years, probably not even in months, but maybe in weeks.

And almost all of them handle the news better than Jesus is handling his upcoming death right now. I think all of them handle it better. So what's going on?

That Jesus, in fact, actually, if you know the original language, it's even more desperate than it's talked about in English. When it says greatly distressed and troubled, you need to understand that's greatly distressed and troubled.

Not just sort of greatly, but really distressed and troubled. And when he says his soul is sorrowful, even to death, that he has like a deathly type of sorrow. And his collapsing on the ground in his sorrow and in his distress, that's how he's handling his impending betrayal and death.

So what's going on? Well, we're going to talk about what's going on in a moment. But what we need first is to see this un-Canadian prayer.

[10 : 45] That's the context. He's not handling this. Doesn't seem to be handling it very well by a Canadian point of view, outsider. And then this is what he prays. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you.

Verse 36. Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will. Now there's, you know, a couple of things about this.

If you think about it for a second, it's actually... I've met a few people who've said something like this, but it's a very, very common thing on the internet, and it's a very, very common thing in books and movies.

And the reason why many people become irreligious or walk away from the Christian faith or some other type of faith is because they've observed a loved one in deep sorrow and deep pain calling out to God that they would be spared from the suffering and death, and God is silent, and they die.

And that's actually what we're seeing right here, at least on one level, isn't it? It's a story where it appears as if God is silent in the anguished cries of Jesus.

[12 : 13] And it seems as if he says in this context, yet not what I will, but what you will.

It seems, at least to our Canadian ears, as if it's him disempowering himself. It's as if he's enabling abusers to our Canadian ears.

Well, let's consider this story a little bit more and think about it a little bit. I just finished reading a novel, a very good novel, and the novel centered around a dad and his best friend and a six-year-old boy.

So the dad, his six-year-old boy, and the dad's best friend. And the story centers around the fact that the dad and the best friend, the dad convinces the best friend that this boy, the dad had to spend some time in jail for something.

And the dad convinces his best friend that his wife is an abusive mom and convinces his best friend that the mom's dad is sexually abusing the six-year-old boy.

[13 : 33] And so the best friend helps his friend to kidnap the boy. And so a big part of the novel, of course, is that conversation and then, of course, the kidnapping.

And then, of course, is the chase as people, especially the grandfather of the little boy, begin a chase to try to get the, from their point of view, to rescue the child back.

And as part of their trying to evade, that's the father and his best friend and the six-year-old boy, as part of their attempt to evade being captured, they go into a wilderness area and it's night.

And as this whole journey is going on, one of the things which is very interesting in the novel is that the best friend starts to realize that he has made a terrible, terrible, tragic mistake and that the abusive parent was the dad, his best friend, not the mom and that he probably shouldn't believe anything that his best friend has said.

And it's a very well-written novel, the anguish and the puzzlement as he starts to dawn on him that he has believed these lies of his best friend and that his best friend, I mean, the dad, is abusive.

[14 : 52] And so as the chase goes on, the dad is very hard towards the little child, always ordering him around and this other fellow, we'll just call him Bob, and Bob continually ends up being one who protects the six-year-old boy and comforts him.

So they get into this situation where they're in trouble, it's cold, they're going to die of exposure, they need to get out of it and they can't go backwards because of where they are and the only way to get out of it is to go down a fairly steep side of a mountain and then cross some rapids.

And at every stage as they're going down this thing, which is needed if they're not going to die of exposure, at every time it's at all difficult, the little six-year-old boy says, I can't do it, I'm afraid.

And at every time that the little boy says, I can't do it because I'm afraid, the dad gets angry at him and says, I need to toughen you up.

You just got to do it. But Bob, who loves the little boy and cares for him and consoles him, reaches his arms out and says, we can do this.

[16 : 12] We can do this together. Trust me. And it's very moving. So here's the question for us. When we read Jesus' prayer, why do we assume that God is the abusive father and not the friend who consoles?

Why do we assume that God is the abusive father, not the friend who consoles? You see, at every little point in that journey, what does the boy say? I can't do it.

It's not my will to do it. And what does the friend who loves the boy, Bob, who loves the boy say? You need to not do what you will. You need to do what I will.

And if you don't do what you will but do what I will, you will ultimately be safe and you will arrive at a place of safety. You will arrive at a good destination.

So why is it when we read the text that we assume that this is an abusive relationship? Why is it that the Canadian cultural story bends us to assume something like that?

[17 : 25] if you could put up the first point for a second? Jesus' prayer is not hurtful foolishness.

It is deep and beautiful wisdom. Jesus' prayer is not hurtful foolishness. It is deep and beautiful wisdom. And we see the beauty and the wisdom of it if you think of another situation.

You see, on one level, what is the deep longing of our hearts? One of the deep longings of our hearts is that we would have a friend like Bob. That we would have a friend who consoles us and loves us.

That is a deep longing of our hearts. We have a crisis of loneliness in our world. I mean, one of the reasons I urge you to, if you can, to come back to in-person worship is that as wonderful as the technology can be to enter into worship online, it's not the same as being able to see the disruptive joy of children at certain points and times of the service.

And you need to be present with others because we need friends. But here's the other thing. Consider Louise and me or any marriage or any romantic relationship or for that matter any friendship.

[18 : 55] In a love relationship or in a friendship relationship, there has to be two things that go on if that actually is going to work. If you're actually going to be able to be friends. If you're actually going to be able to have that loving relationship.

And on one hand, what you need is you need to put yourself forward. Like, I need to put myself forward. Louise doesn't want to have a relationship where I'm always completely absent and distant or when it comes time for us to spend time together, I pretend I'm somebody else or something like that.

She wants me to put myself forward towards her. But at the same time, if I only put myself forward all the time towards her, that will kill the love relationship because there has to be times when I put myself second relative to her.

There has to be times where I say in a sense, not what I will but what you will. And if there's never a time in a relationship where the husband or the wife or one of the two friends never says yet not what I will but what you will, then that relationship will not last.

That friendship will not last. You see, the fact of the matter is there has to be, if you're going to have a friendship, if you're going to have a love relationship, there has to be a bit of a dance. The dance of putting yourself forward and the dance of saying, I'm not going to be first, I'm going to be second or third or fourth or fifth or whatever it is.

[20 : 17] If it's a family and you have kids, there has to be times that the dad or the mom put themselves last. If that's going to be a family, that's a family of love.

And we see this very, very same dynamic here. like, why is it that with our Canadian cultural lens, we see this as being an abusive type of thing and enabling abuse and not maybe thinking that it actually is a little bit about how love looks.

You see, in fact, in particular, as we're going to see in a moment, Jesus has to put himself forward. The hour depends upon Jesus doing what only Jesus can do.

He has to put himself forward. It has to be him. There is no possible way for it to be someone other than him. But not only does he have to put himself forward, he has to put himself last.

love. And that's what love looks like. See, part of the problem that we have, unrecognized, is that the Canadian cultural story, that you have to be number one, you have to look out for number one, you need to empower number one, number one needs to get what number one needs, number one needs to get what number one wants, number one needs to get what number one desires, is that entire cultural story, as it seeps into our thinking and our affections and our emotions and our imaginations, kills love, friendship, families, and institutions.

[22 : 11] It kills them. And you know what? On your deathbed, on your deathbed, the things that will bother most people is not that they didn't have more power.

And I'm not saying that there's never time when you shouldn't have power. I'm not saying that. What will hurt people? What troubles them? The relationships they wrecked.

The way they spent too long at the office and missed that opportunity to love their wife and kids or their husband and kids. What will bother you is that you spent far too much time like this and never saw the beautiful children for how beautiful they are.

You spent too much time like this and never thought of your mom or your dad. You spent too much time like this and never had time with your friends and that's the regret because those are the deepest and deeper longings of our hearts.

And that is why Jesus' prayer is not hurtful foolishness. It is deep and beautiful wisdom. So why is Jesus scared or apparently acting with such drama?

[23 : 36] Here's a thought experiment. Imagine for a moment that one of you says I found this cool new app and you should really download it and you download the app.

And what you don't realize is that in a week or two time, once the app has gotten synced with all those things it has to get synced with, all of a sudden you get a message that you have to show up at a particular room and here's what you discover.

Here's what you discover. That this app has been able to record every single one of your thoughts for the last 48 hours. Every one.

And they've transcribed them and you're going to go and sit with your family and friends while they're read out. everything you've thought for 48 hours.

That catty comment about how your best friend looks. That smug assessment about how better you are than somebody else.

[24 : 38] That lust, that greedy thought, that angry thought, that constant irritation with your mom or your husband or your wife.

every single one of those thoughts for 48 hours has been transcribed and is going to be read out to those who you thought about.

And it's going to happen six hours from now, four hours from now. time. How would you feel about it?

Would you be filled with sorrow? Would you be filled with deep distress? stress? Would you maybe even collapse emotionally?

Because to have what you've thought recorded just for 48 hours, that doesn't even count. It could be a week, it could be a month. Just to have that recorded and revealed to everybody, and to have to experience their anger and all those other things at you, in a room, that would be something that you could never recover from and that you could never be consoled for.

[26 : 03] Listen again to what Jesus prays in verse 36. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will.

So what is the cup? If you could put up the next point, that would be handy. The cup is an image that comes from what our Jewish friends call the Tanakh or the Torah, what we call the Old Testament, Christians call the Old Testament.

It's in about a dozen, 15 some odd different places. And if you look at those references, it is this, your cup, sort of a metaphor, an analogy, it is the accumulated wrong that you are responsible for and the Lord's just anger at the wrong you are responsible for.

Your cup is the accumulated wrong that you are responsible for and the Lord's just anger or wrath at the wrong you are responsible for. Now notice I said responsible for because I want to capture sins of omission and sins of commission.

It's both those times, using my analogy of the lustful thought or the angry thought or the vengeful thought or the unforgiving thought, and it's also those times that you pretended you didn't get a text to pick up your brother or your sister or your friend and give them a drive and you pretended you didn't get it.

[27 : 25] And it's not just the pretending, it's the failure to do something that you could have done. You're responsible for that. It's things you've done and the good things that you could have done, should have done, and didn't do.

You turned a blind eye, you were a deaf ear to it. And so those of us who like fantasy movies and all, it's like those things that you see in fantasy movies where, you know, there's some evil wizard or whatever and he wants to make himself or she wants to make herself stronger and she somehow finds a way to get the evil from other people into a cup and they can drink it.

And of course, that is only a bad thing for that person and for everybody else. But it's almost as if every time you go through life and you have that thing that you're responsible for that you're wrong and it goes into the cup, imagine something really black and foul smelling, really just not even pure black, just something that muddy and foul smelling and rank and it goes into a cup and every time that happens it goes into a cup and it goes into a cup and the cup doesn't overflow, it just becomes more concentrated and more concentrated.

And it's not just like in the fantasy novels where it's just that the bad things go into the cup because then you might be an evil wizard and actually desire to have that because you might foolishly think that if you can get all that badness back in you you'll only be stronger but that's not the way the world works and it's not just anger in the cup as if God is this crazy, anal, angry, angry, driven person.

It's both. It's the wrong and people's, and God's anger at the wrong. To give you a sense of why that's a just thing, it would be just as imagine for a moment that Louise was to share with you something that I had done which was wrong and she shares that wrong with you and all of you would have turned from looking at her and looked at me and said, George, that was wrong.

[29 : 17] And if Louise says that was wrong, you'd all be going like this, yes, that was wrong. You're right to be angry. And George, like, what were you thinking that was wrong?

Louise is right to be angry. And God, in a sense, is involved in everything you do that's wrong and it's not only that he's involved with everything that you do that's wrong, he's also doing something which social justice warriors and others properly want, which is to hear the cries of the victims and to have the victims' cries heard so that those who are perpetrating terrible things on the victims, that they know and they hear that and they feel it.

And so in that cup is all of the wrong that I'm responsible for and God's proper anger at that wrong and it goes into a cup. And if I would be unmade and inconsolable and devastated after just having 48 hours of my thoughts revealed, how destroyed would I be to have my whole life revealed?

If you could put up the next slide. So when Jesus prays, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you, remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will.

This is giving us another image of what's going to happen when Jesus dies on the cross. The death of Jesus on the cross is his taking your place and drinking your cup.

[30 : 53] That's what you see when you see Jesus dying on the cross. It is the weight of not just having to drink my cup, and that would be a very foul cup.

But also drinking yours, and yours, and yours, and yours, and yours, and yours, and yours, and yours. And because he's God, the son of God, he has a sense of just how foul that accumulated cup will be of all the cups of all the world, of all the people, that he will drink, and he will be unmade and desolate, because he drank my cup, and he drank yours.

And that's what he's doing on the cross. Listen to the prayer again. Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. All things are possible for you, God.

Remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will. And Jesus will leave there, as we'll see in a moment, to walk towards the cross, to drink the cup.

If there was no other way other than Jesus drinking the cup for you to be made right with God, that means your situation is vastly worse than you've ever dreamed.

[32 : 28] but at the same time, if there's no way, if Jesus has done such a thing for you, you are vastly more loved by God than you can ever possibly imagine.

And that's the message of the gospel. I'm vastly worse. I'm vastly worse. than my three o'clock in the morning, and I can't sleep, times of torment.

And I'm vastly more loved by the triune God than I can ever possibly imagine. Why is this whole story?

We can begin to see that Jesus' prayer is not just hurtful foolishness, it is deep and beautiful wisdom. And this becomes even more clear as we wrap up, and we're going to conclude with a prayer in just a couple of minutes.

Look at what continues after verse 37. And he came and found them sleeping. Remember, he asked them if they would watch and pray with them, and he found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep?

[33 : 44] Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And again, Jesus went away and prayed, saying the same words.

And again, he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, are you still sleeping and taking your rest?

It is enough, the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going, see my betrayers at hand. See, there is nothing more empowering than being loved.

And to seek power without love is disempowering, but to be loved is empowering. To have a friend who understands you is empowering. To have a good purpose and a meaning in life is empowering.

To die, to always having to be number one, because you know there are times that for justice's sake and goodness's sake and beauty's sake and love's sake, you must choose to be number two or number five or number 15 or even way down the ladder than that, is profoundly empowering.

[35 : 07] And the Canadian cultural story will never lead you to that truth, but the gospel will. And it also says something very helpful. If you could put up the next to last point, you know that thing about you're sleeping, there's temptation, the spirit is willing and the flesh is weak.

Here's the thing, Jesus drinks this cup for ordinary people like me and you, and this line is for Christians. This is part of the emotional power and beauty of the gospel.

Until you see him face to face, you are weak, and you're complex, and you're divided, wounded, and you're held in the palm of his hand.

I am weak. Sometimes I want to do things and my body just gives out on me as I get older. The body gives out on you more and more. And then I am both doing good things and I do sinful things.

I'm divided. I'm divided. You know, the models of human beings is if somehow you can pick one thing in you and build your whole identity around you, that's just a foolish understanding of what human beings are like.

[36 : 14] Human beings aren't just one thing. We're not just their skin color or the sexual desires of the week or the month. We're not that. We are weak. We do get tempted.

We are complicated. We are divided. That's what human beings are. And here we see that Jesus knows all of that. And we know that if we are his, we are held in the palm of his hand.

I'd like to invite you to stay, stand, please. If you could put up the final thing, yes, I'm going to invite you to pray this prayer with me. I'll read it out first. And in some ways, what I've just tried to do is I've tried to summarize this prayer of Jesus in light of this story.

And it's, you know, for some of you, if you've never given your life to Christ, this is a conversion prayer. And for those of us who have known him, this is just a deepening prayer. To pray, Abba, Father, from the depths of your love, your son drank my cup of sin and your just wrath at my sin.

Please fix my heart on his once-for-all sacrifice, so that I will pray boldly, knowing that all things are possible for you, and that I will pray humbly, saying, yet not what I will, but what you will, in Jesus' name.

[37 : 38] I invite you to pray that with me right now. Let us pray. Abba, Father, from the depths of your love, your son drank my cup of sin and your just wrath at my sin.

Please fix my heart on his once-for-all sacrifice, so that I will pray boldly, knowing that all things are possible for you, and that I will pray humbly, saying, yet not what I will, but what you will, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Father, may this prayer grow as a prayer of our heart, and we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please take up.