

Rogation Sunday

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Date: 05 May 2024

Preacher: Father Randall Russell

[0 : 00] Amen. Here again a portion of this morning's gospel. And Jesus said, Most assuredly I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen. God is not magic. Magic involves manipulation. Magic is all a matter of saying the right words, casting the right spells, or mixing the right ingredients into a boiling cauldron in order to get a desired result.

But God is not magic. He cannot be manipulated. God is a person with a mind and a will all his own. Therefore, in the Lord's Prayer, we pray, Thy will, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. For in the Lord's Prayer, we do not pray for our will to be done, but for God, for God's will to be done, even and above and beyond our own.

[1 : 20] For we trust that God knows what is best. And that, that is very different from magic. Which is important to keep in mind when we hear our Lord say things like, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.

Because sometimes, sometimes God tells his children, no. For example, in 1 Chronicles chapter 28, King David tells the people of Israel that he had it in his heart to build a house for God, the first temple of Jerusalem.

But that God told King David, no. For God said, it is your son Solomon who shall build my house and my courts, and not you.

And in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, the Apostle Paul prayed three times for the Lord to remove a thorn in his flesh.

And three times, God told the Apostle Paul, no. For God told St. Paul, my grace is sufficient for you, and my strength is made perfect in weakness.

[2 : 43] And of course, who can forget how in the Garden of Gethsemane, our own Lord prayed, Father, if it is your will, take this cup from me.

But of course, it was the Father's will that his son should drink from that bitter cup, which is to say that it was the Father's will that his son should suffer the pain and agony of the cross for our salvation.

So in a sense, God the Father told his son, no. No, I am sorry, my son, but it is my will that you suffer all the pain and agony of the cross.

But you know, maybe, maybe the reason God told King David, no, was because David just didn't know how to pray.

And maybe, maybe the reason God told the Apostle Paul, no, was because St. Paul just didn't have enough faith. And maybe, maybe the problem with our Lord and Savior's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane was that, I'm going to stop there.

[3 : 59] I'm not even going to finish because that is just ridiculous. There was nothing wrong with our Lord's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And the Apostle Paul really did have enough faith. And King David, you know, that guy who wrote half the Psalms and the Psalter?

Well, King David really, really did know how to pray. So if the problem wasn't with them or wasn't with any of their prayers, then maybe the problem is with this idea that prayer can get you whatever it is you want.

But if that's the case, then what did our Lord mean when he said in this morning's gospel, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.

Well, again, praying in the name of Jesus is not some kind of magical incantation where whenever the name of Jesus is invoked, God has to, has to give us whatever it is we want because that's not prayer.

[5 : 20] that's magic. It's manipulation. But praying in Jesus' name means that we are praying like Jesus, praying to become more Christ-like, praying that our will will align with God's will, praying, Father, not my will, but your will be done.

for I put my trust in you and I knew that whatever you choose is best. And any prayer that is prayed in that manner, in Jesus' name, will be answered in the affirmative.

For praying in Jesus' name does not mean that we will selfishly get whatever it is we want, but it does mean that whatever good things God has planned for us, we will most certainly receive. And praying in Jesus' name does not mean that every cross will be lifted and every hardship instantly overcome, but it does mean that God's grace is sufficient for us for his strength is made perfect in weakness.

and praying in Jesus' name does not mean that life will always be easy, comfortable, or even fun.

[6 : 53] But it does mean that life will always, always be filled with purpose and divine meaning, even if that purpose or divine meaning is not always felt or even seen on this side of glory.

for as St. Paul explains in Romans chapter 8, and we know that all things, all things, not just the good things, not just the things that we think are best, St. Paul says, we know that all things, we know that all things, work together for the good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

For what shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or even sword?

As it is written, for your sake, we are killed all the day long. We are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet in even all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. And so our Lord ends this morning's gospel with these words. These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace.

[8 : 31] In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. I have made you more than conquerors.

For our God is greater than magic. And our God is even greater than all of our selfish wants or desires. For our God is God.

And in Christ Jesus he is also our heavenly father. And even though like all good fathers, God might from time to time tell his children no.

Or might from time to time tell his children no. Not now. Just wait. But that is only because our heavenly father loves us.

And our heavenly father truly does know what is best. For it is his will and his desire to always, always give his children whatever it is they need in order to truly live and to thrive and to reach their full potential in Christ, in Jesus' name.

[9 : 54] All we have to do is ask, be patient, and trust that God's good and gracious will for us is done on earth as it is in heaven.

In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen.