

# **1“Your Will be Done, on earth as in heaven”**

**March 15, 2009 – 3 Lent**

**Rev. Paul Johns**

Mark 3:31-34

We have been praying for Frank Ausland. He has been in the hospital for almost two weeks. On Thursday his wife, Karen, told me, ‘we have good news; there will be no second operation.’ It caused Frank to express a little of his humor which went like this, “The economy is in such bad shape that the Johnson & Johnson Company had to lay off one of the Johnsons.”

There may be a little bit of humor in the words of Jesus when he says, “Who are my mother and my brothers. You here sitting around me are my mother and brothers. My mother, brothers, and sisters are those who do the will of God.”

Jesus is certainly not putting down the blood family, but the blood family begins in marriage, something not related to blood. At the beginning of the Bible and in the teaching of Jesus are these words, “For this reason shall a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife. They two become one.” Marriage is the foundation of society and out of marriage come children, and the whole concept of family relatives.

The word “family” is a powerful word in the Bible. It appears 246 times. Yes, family is certainly family and relatives. But the Bible makes it clear that “family” is more than blood relative. In 1966 I was traveling in a taxi from Amman, Jordan through the desert to the ancient mines of King Solomon. A car was stalled on the road. It was 115 degrees Fahrenheit. When he came back to the car, the taxi driver said, “I had to stop. He was my desert family. We are not blood family, but I must care for him as a member of my family.”

The Lord’s Prayer says, “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Martin Luther explains that the will of God is definitely done in heaven, but we pray in this petition that the will of God might also be done here on earth. And what is the model of heaven? It is that the lion and the lamb lie down together. They help, not hurt.

The first guideline for the will of God on earth is care for people as family.

The second is forgiveness. Here, again, is a powerful word. It is used 148 times in the Bible. Family – 246. Forgiveness – 148.

When I was a kid growing up we sang a song in Sunday school which went like this:

***Around the throne of God in heaven,  
Thousands of children stand,***

***Children whose sins are all forgiven,  
A holy, happy band – singing –  
Glory, Glory.***

***Again, what does heaven look like? Yes, there will be Mary, the mother of Jesus, but not just because she gave birth to Jesus. Even before Jesus was born Mary sang the beautiful Magnificat with rejoicing in God my Savior. She was forgiven.***

***And there will be other forgiven persons like Peter who denied Jesus but who also wept bitter tears as he prayed for forgiveness.***

***And, yes, there will be the one person whom Jesus specifically mentioned as, “Today, you will be with me in Paradise.” And who was that person? Yes, the criminal on the cross who said, “we suffer justly, but this man, Jesus, has done nothing wrong. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And Jesus replies, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”***

***There is one characteristic of all of these people. It is not, “You, over there; you rate a ten, but over there, you rate a three.” No, it is as our first reading from Isaiah, hundreds of years before Jesus says, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.”***

***Forgiveness first of all for oneself. Then recognize every person as either forgiven or a candidate for forgiveness.***

***Thy will be done, on earth as in heaven. First of all, care for others as family. Secondly, the foundation of forgiveness. And now, thirdly, faithful with fortitude.***

***About 3-4 weeks ago I spoke at confirmation class. I started by telling about road construction in western North Dakota. We had to wear boots because of rattle snakes. We also had to keep an eye open for bulls. One day a road construction guy noticed a bull bearing down on him. There was a lone tree up ahead. 'Maybe I can get there.' He ran and the bull was snorting at his feet. There was a branch hanging out from the tree. He leaped. Unfortunately, he missed it, but he caught it on the way down.***

***This was a favorite road story, but it underscores energy and enthusiasm. Heaven in the Bible is a place of singing and joy. It is faithful with fortitude.***

***Thy will be done, on earth as in heaven. Family, Forgiveness, Faithful. Amen.***