Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

A ‘mondegreen’ is a mishearing or misinterpretation of words that result in a wrong meaning. Perhaps the most common example is pop song lyrics. You thought the singer was singing these words only to find out, later, that he or she sung something quite different.

Well, the same thing can happen with biblical concepts; we can think they mean one thing when they actually mean something else. And it may be that this request of the Lord’s Prayer is an example of this, at least for some of us. It is a short request and one we will surely have prayed often: “*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*” But what are we asking for when we pray these words? What exactly is meant by the will of God? Are we praying that *God* would do His will, or something different?

Well, this morning our text was from 1 Peter 2, and we went way back into the Old Testament to see how the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament ‘add value to’ our understanding of that New Testament passage. And this afternoon, we will do the same thing in reverse. We will begin with this Old Testament verse, Deuteronomy 29:29, in its context, and then we will follow the theology of Deuteronomy 29:29 into the New Testament to help explain and fill out our understanding of **what it means to pray “*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*”** So, no carefully alliterated points this afternoon, just Deuteronomy 29:29 and then its New Testament reflections.

1. We begin then with **Deuteronomy 29:29**.
	1. So, in terms of the context, the people of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land. Moses had read out the entire law of God. And Moses told the people that when they entered the Promised Land, half the people were to stand on the side of Mt. Ebal and half the people were to stand on the side of Mt. Gerazim. And then the Levites were to read out the curses for disobedience and the blessings for obedience that Moses lays out in chapters 27-28. And the worst curse would be invasion and exile – being sent away from the Promised Land.
	2. And then comes **chapter 29**. And here Moses reminds the people about their deliverance from Egypt by God, and how He miraculously provided for them during their wilderness journey and defeated kings and armies for them.
		1. And it is because of all these saving works of God that Moses says, in **verse 9**, “*Therefore keep* *the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper in all you do.”* And Moses then explains that this covenant would also include future generations, not just those standing there that day.
		2. And from **verse 16**, he warns them about the dangers of worshipping idols like they had seen done by the people in Egypt and Canaan. And he says, if you also worship idols, God will punish you. And from **verse 20** onwards, Moses describes the calamities that the Lord will bring on the land and the people if they fall into idolatry, even to the point of invasion and exile. And he ends the description of those calamities in **verse 23** by saying that the Promised Land will look just like Sodom and Gomorrah did after the Lord had rained down fire and brimstone on them.
		3. And then in **verse 24**, Moses describes the surrounding nations as seeing this devastation and wondering why the Lord did this to Israel? “*What caused the heat of this great anger?*” And in **verses 25-28**, the answer the nations are given is that God’s covenant people had abandoned “*the covenant of the Lord*,” meaning that as a nation they had stubbornly and continually disobeyed the law of God.
		4. Now, there is a name for what we read in chapter 29; it is called the Old Testament. For, by and large, the Old Testament is the record of exactly what we read here – Israel’s slide into an ever-deepening idolatry that ends with exile.
	3. Well, that brings us to **verse 29**, our text: “*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law*.” So, what are these words all about?
		1. Well, try and put yourselves in the sandals of the people of Israel who had just heard chapter 29 read out. It’s pretty detailed isn’t it; it’s pretty specific, isn’t it. You heard the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience, and then this long, detailed, if you do this, then I will do this and this and this, and you will be exiled, and the nations will ask why? and I will tell them why! It sounds much more like what definitely will happen rather than what might happen. So, you can imagine the obvious questions in the mind of the people: **Why?** Why would the Lord allow all of this to happen? Why would He allow things to get so bad that He had to send us into exile? Or, another question might be: **When**? When will this happen, Moses? 10 years? 100 years? 1000 years? When?
		2. And verse 29 is God’s answer to questions like that. And the answer is, basically, That’s none of your business!
		3. And this is where we start working our way towards understanding this third request of the Lord’s Prayer. You see, the term that theologians use to describe “*the secret things of God*” is God’s **will of decree**.
			1. God’s will of decree is everything that He planned and purposed to do in regard to Creation, the Fall, Salvation in Christ, and the New Creation.
				1. **Psalm 135:6** says, “*The LORD does whatever pleases Him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths*.”
				2. **Matthew 10:29-30** says, “*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered*.”
				3. So, because God is sovereign and almighty, what He has willed is what comes to pass.
				4. And the Bible reveals that God decreed all of this before the world was even created.
				5. And these are things that belong only to God. He doesn’t always reveal to us the *why* and the *when* of His will of decree. So, it was not Israel’s business, nor is it ours, to wonder about the Lord’s will of decree – “*the secret things of God*.”
			2. But the verse goes on to talk about the “*things that are revealed*” belonging to “*[us] and our children forever, that we may do all the words of the law*.” And the term that theologians use to describe “*the things that are revealed*” is God’s **will of command**. And God’s will of command is the laws or commands in the Bible – everything that God has laid out in black and white about what we must do and what we must not do.
		4. So, what God was saying to Israel in verse 29 was, the *why* and the *when* of the events just described are my business. You don’t need to concern yourselves with them. What you need to focus on is obeying the laws you have just heard.
			1. And you know, we need to hear these words today also! For example, I can remember many times when I have been in a Bible study where we have spent ages debating the end times, or the ordo salutis, or the infra/supra-lapsarian positions, or a variety of interpretations about one or two words in the text, or some complex ethical matter, and then you get a question in the Bible study guide that asks something like: How can you better love others? And there is a prolonged silence followed by a “This is quite a personal question so maybe each of us should think about it at home.” And we all breathed a sigh of relief and closed the book and had a cup of tea. Do you know what I am talking about?
			2. But look at our text: “*The things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law*.” So, God wants His people to be diligent *students* of His commands, and diligent *doers* of them.
2. Now, just in case we are tempted to think that that is Old Testament, let’s **follow the theology of Deuteronomy 29:29 into the New Testament**, to help fill out our understanding of what it means to pray “*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*”
	1. Before we do that, though, notice again **how chapter 29 began**. It began with the Lord reminding Israel that He had delivered them from slavery into Egypt. It’s how the 10 Commandments begin also: “*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery*.” So, God did not give Israel the law so that if they obeyed it enough, He would deliver them from Egypt; He graciously delivered them first, and then gave them the law, so that they knew how to show their thankfulness for their ‘salvation,’ and how to live as His special people. And in addition to that, they had the promise of a Messiah to come in the future and all the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law that pointed forward to Him. So, keep that thought in mind as we head into the New Testament.
	2. And our first New Testament passage is **Luke 22:42**. And here is where we see the **example** **of Jesus** in relation to God’s will being done. He was in the Garden of Gethsemane and about to be arrested and crucified. And look how He prayed: “*Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done*.” And notice that these are similar words to the third request of the Lord’s Prayer.
		1. And with this prayer, Jesus was not praying , Father, you do whatever you have decreed to do! No. Jesus knew that He must soon face the cross and His Father’s eternal wrath. And it was a terrifying reality to face. So, Jesus was genuinely asking if there was another way that He could accomplish our salvation. But if the cross remained what the Father commanded of Jesus, then He was committing Himself to do what the Father commanded. So, when Jesus prayed this prayer, it was about His own obedience to the Father’s commands.
	3. Turn next to **Matthew 7:21**: Here we see the **words** of Jesus about doing the will of God. And Matthew 7 is a powerful part of scripture. Anyone who has the idea that being a Christian is just about *saying* that you believe in Jesus and nothing at all about how you live your life has not read Matthew 7! Verse 21 says, “*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven*.”
		1. Now, this is not teaching salvation by the things we do. **Romans 3:20** is crystal clear: “*For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight*.” We are saved by **faith alone**. We are saved by believing in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins.
		2. Jesus’ point here is that while we are saved by faith *alone*, saving faith is never *lonely*! True faith will be accompanied by obedience to God’s commands. You cannot profess to love Jesus Christ but have no interest in the church, or fail to love your brothers and sisters, or live in ongoing and unrepentant sexual immorality, etc.
		3. As **verses 15-20** put it, a good tree will produce good fruit!
		4. So, we see again how important it is that we obey God’s will of command – His laws.
	4. And we see this in more detail in the last of our New Testament passages – **Titus 2:11-14**: And this passage really is a parallel passage to Deuteronomy 29. We read, “*For* *the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works*.”
		1. Now, you could read this passage and immediately wonder: *When* will Jesus come again? *When* will the appearing of His glory be? And *How* will it happen? But that response would be just like the Israelites wanting to know the whys? and whens? of the exile. And what was God’s response? “*The secret things belong to the LORD our God but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law*.” So, if we have experienced the “*grace of God*,” spoken about in verse 11, salvation by grace alone, which trusts in Christ alone, which we receive by faith alone, and we understand and are thankful that “*Jesus Christ … gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works*,” then our focus should be on His will of command: “*training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age*.”
		2. If this is what Jesus died to make us, then this is what we will want to do! So, when you pray, “*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*,” you are committing yourself to obeying all of God’s commands; you are saying,
			1. Lord, I don’t want my life to be characterized by “*ungodliness*.” This is a general term for everything that is opposite to God’s commands. Instead, **1 Timothy 2:2** says that believers should strive to “*lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way*.”
			2. And neither will you want your life to be characterized by “*worldly passions*.” **Galatians 5:19-21** says, “*Now the works of the flesh [or worldly passions] are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*.” Instead, you will strive for sexual purity, whether unmarried or married, and self-control in relation to your temper and those things that can become addictions.
			3. **Philippians 4:8-9** says, “*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me- practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you*.” So, you will say, Lord, I want to *think* about these sorts of things and not the filth of the world. I want to *practice* these things. Please, by your word and Spirit, fill my heart with a yearning to live a godly life, to live like one of your special, set-aside, holy children, to do your will of command.
			4. This is what it means to pray, “*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*.”

And in closing, remember, that while God’s Old Testament people were expected to obey all God’s commands, because of deliverance from Egypt and the shadowy promise of a Messiah to come, you have Jesus Christ, crucified and risen! You have deliverance from slavery to sin! You have the complete Bible and the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you. So, may we increasingly be those who do our Father’s will on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.