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The lessons for Trinity Season focus on our growth and maturity in the Christian faith, which is why the color of the season is green. One of the greatest steps in the lives of Christians which shows true growth and maturity is submitting ourselves to and accepting God's will. In last week's collect we prayed for God's will in what we do and think, *Grant us we beseech thee O Lord, the spirit to think and do always such things as are right*, recognizing that we who cannot do anything that is good without thee, may by thee be enabled to live according to thy will. This week we pray that our prayers will reflect such a life lived under God's will. We pray, *Let thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of thy humble servants, and that we may obtain our petitions, make us to ask such things as shall please thee*. Notice, the words, *thy humble servants* and *such things as shall please thee*, not that which shall please us. Perhaps we wonder then if this means that God only answers prayer only when the right prayers are offered? Does God only answer prayer when our prayers line up with his will?

C.S. Lewis, in his book *Letters to Malcolm*, writes of praying for God's Will, *at first, I took it exclusively as an act of submission, attempting to do with it what Our Lord did in Gethsemane. I thought of God's will purely as something that would come upon me, something of which I should be the patient. And I also thought of it as a will which would be embodied in pains and disappointments. Not, to be sure, that I suppose God's will for me to consist entirely of disagreeables. But I thought it was only the disagreeables that called for this preliminary submission – the agreeables could look after themselves for the present. When they turned up, one could give thanks.*

Lewis begins his journey into God's Will with Submission and self-surrender, just exactly as we begin today's Collect, by asking the merciful Lord *to hear his humble servants*. He is merciful, and in our humility we must submit our lives to his eternal and loving care. This is a challenge in and of itself. Faith is the initial requirement for prayer because we must truly believe that God is merciful. Until we are convinced that our God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving, and that he desires our salvation, we can have no true prayer. In his infinite wisdom God knows what is best for the good of our souls far beyond what we may think is beneficial for us. We must remember that his love for us is infinitely purer and more perfect than even our love for ourselves. To his love we may safely entrust our lives, soul and body, and the lives of our loved ones.

Yet, the Will of God is not some hidden and mysterious oracle, obtainable only to the clergy or super religious. Because of God's great love and wisdom, He has given us aids in knowing His Will in our lives. He has poured out His Holy Spirit on us in Baptism and Confirmation, giving each Christian the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He bestows upon us the gifts of *wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, and discernment*. We hear this list from the Epistle this morning and we compare these gifts to superpowers, reserved only for the great saints, or maybe for a few holy Bishops and priests, or maybe even for charismatics, but not for me. But this is not true, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to each Christian, and certainly not only to the clergy, but to help each of us lead a Christian life. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not superpowers to make us unique, but are to operate within God's perfect Will, and all for the benefit and building up of the whole Church.

St. Paul teaches us today neither to be ignorant of the gifts that God has given us, nor to neglect them. We see in the Gospel what happens when God's Will, life with the Holy Spirit, and

the Gifts of the God are wasted. Jesus wept over Jerusalem who neglected the good gifts that God wanted to give her, the gift of His very own presence, which she not only ignored but willfully destroyed. We can read throughout the Scriptures of the blessing of Jerusalem when she drew closer to God, kept His laws, and enjoyed His gifts, and we can read of the complete devastation of Jerusalem when they turned away from God. The prophecy and warning of Jesus in this morning's Gospel did come to pass when the city was surrounded eventually in 70 A.D. and sacked by the Romans. They besieged it, destroyed the great walls of the city, tore down the Temple, the crown jewel of Israel, leaving *not one stone left upon another*, and murdering the innocent people. And yet God is merciful, He used this experience to bring new life in Jerusalem and to work out their salvation through what followed out of the Acts of the Apostles.

God knows what is best for our eternal good even though the working out of our salvation may involve long periods of seemingly unanswered prayer. As fallen human beings, we often ask for the wrong things, or the right things in the wrong way. As fallen human beings, we may even ask for the right things in the right way and still seem to find only silence from God. Of course, our human standpoint is entirely limited and narrow in comparison with God's eternal providence. Today's lessons teach us that true prayer stems from trust and faith in God's mercy and love. No earthly or spiritual trouble can cause us to doubt the power of prayer if we believe in His saving love, and in His saving Will for us. Amen.