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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 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, that we who cannot do any thing 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.

For this reason, 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 think these gifts are like superpowers, only for the great saints of old, or Bishops and priests, or maybe 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, to help us lead a Christian life.

St. Paul exhorts us today neither to be ignorant of the gifts that God has given us, nor to neglect them. The Gospel holds up to us the image of Jesus weeping 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 Gospel is also a warning of what happens when we go off and try to do things on our own without God and without keeping His commandments. The prophecy and warning of Jesus in the 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. All of this was done for the salvation of Jerusalem, and we should be thankful that for most of us God is always working out our salvation also, though will less severe and exacting means.

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. Being fallen human beings, we often ask for the wrong things, or the right things in the wrong way. Being fallen human beings, we often ask for the right things in the right way and still seem to find only silence and non-responsiveness from God. Of course, our human standpoint is entirely limited and narrow in comparison with God's eternal providence. Today's Collect teaches 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, in His saving Will for us. We must remember that there will be no salvation for us, neither will we pray in the right way for the right things, unless we surrender ourselves, our souls, and our bodies to Christ. The biggest hindrance keeping us from growing closer to God is ourselves. Our acquired tastes, our bad habits, and our ingrained sins, keep us from

surrendering ourselves wholly to God, and from being able to receive the gifts that God wants to give us. Amen.

Finally, when we ask that God may make us to ask such things as shall please him, we are asking for spiritual sight and discernment to understand truly what is best for our souls and bodies. We pray that God may draw our hearts towards him in love. Then, as a loving child who has come to see that his Heavenly Father knows what will make him eternally happy, we may gladly surrender our will to our Loving Father and desire only to ask such things as will please him. In Jesus Christ, we have been shown beyond a doubt that what pleases God is our happiness and salvation. Let us pray that we may come to see more clearly that pleasing God is our only happiness.