

## **"Teach Us to Pray" Matthew 6:9-15**

### **Wednesday 7/24/19 – Jeff Lyle**

The most famous teaching on prayer found in the Bible was actually part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Though Matthew does not disclose this detail, Luke 11:1 lets us know that Jesus released this teaching on prayer in response to some disciples' request to be taught how to pray. Often called The Lord's Prayer, this simple teaching from the King helps us to grasp the heart of how Jesus desires for us to communicate in prayer with God. While there is not necessarily anything wrong with memorizing and repeating this prayer, Jesus was not teaching us to only pray these words. This prayer offers us a healthy heart-posture for our own prayers, which enables all the words we pray to God to become fruitful, honorable and powerful. Let's learn how to pray all over again by taking an in-depth look at Jesus recommended approach to dialogue with the Father.

#### **I. The Heavenly Confidence of Prayer (9a)**

**"Our Father which art in Heaven..."**

To think of God as a Father was uncommon in Jesus' day. The Aramaic word *Abba* is the word Jesus would have used when He spoke of God as His Father. For the more religious people who were listening, this idea of God as *Abba* might have seemed to be too casual. Yet, Jesus was there to remove religious barriers between God and His people, and to install relational pathways. There is something more inviting about our belief in God as our Father and we as His children than there is in the religious context of primarily interacting with Him as creator or Master. While Jesus never reduced the reality that God is a sovereign, glorious and authoritative Lord over all, He did want to remedy the legalistic, rigid approach to God that had become common in the religion of His day. God is our Father. Our Father cares, He listens, He understands, He protects, He teaches, He answers, and He gives. A Father loves His children in spite of flaws, failures and sins. He leads and loves His children. He pursues our hearts. He shepherds us from Heaven *above us* but is also intimate as a Father *among us*. Jesus wants all His followers to know God as Father.

#### **II. The Holy Reverence of Prayer (9b)**

**"...hallowed be Thy name..."**

As Jesus introduces the concept of God as our Father, He in no way reduces our thinking to some cavalier, base or common view of Him. Because the Father is

holy, He is worthy of: our awareness, our purposefulness, our full attention, our submission, our worship, our sacrifice, our obedience, our utmost dedication, and our own pursuits of practical holiness. God is *altogether other* than we are. His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. His name is sacred - it is hallowed in our hearts. Because His name is attached to His character, Jesus wants us to hallow the name of God. Our thoughts, words and actions must be in alignment with the glory which defines Him. What flows forth from our lives will reveal over time just how hallowed we believe His name to be. Jesus wants us to rest in God's kind fatherhood, but He never allows for a casual familiarity to be the predominant atmosphere in which we relate to God. His name is sacred. Jesus wants us to remain aware of that at all times.

### III. The Humble Deference of Prayer (10)

**“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.”**

Here is the brightest burst in this instruction on prayer. Jesus calls us to confess our surrender, submission and deference to the will of the Father. We are not building our own little kingdoms. We are advancing the kingdom which God has established for His own glory. There is only one enduring Kingdom - the Kingdom of God, which is the subject that is taught in the entire Sermon on the Mount. When Jesus teaches us to pray to the Father, “Thy kingdom come...” He is revealing that our own kingdoms must be done away with. No personal, political or religious kingdom is to be allowed to compete with the power and truth in the Kingdom of God. We die to self, and we crucify ourselves to all competing loyalties. When the Kingdom of God comes to an individual, it will cost that person his or her own personal kingdom and the right to rule his or her own world. Then Jesus adds the game-changer phrase, “Thy will be done...” - these are some of the most exciting, yet challenging, words a believer can speak. It is one thing to want to see God's glory expressed in God's Kingdom, it is an altogether different thing to live in constant surrender to Him bringing that reality about in His own ways. His will is not be presumed to always align with our own will. He is the God of paradox, which means that operates counterintuitively to human logic and reason. Truth be known, if we thought we could get away with it, we would be prone to advise God on how He should do things. We have a plan. We have ideas. We have strategies. Yet, as a Jesus-follower and kingdom citizen, we can only honor the Father by constantly declaring that His will is best and that we are best served by aligning with it, even if our own will evaporates in the process.

**\*\*\*THE FIRST THREE CLAUSES IN THE LORD'S PRAYER INDICATE A HEAVENLY ROOTING THAT WE HAVE ALIGNED WITH. THIS ALIGNMENT & SUBMISISON TO THE CHARACTER AND WILL OF GOD MUST COME BEFORE OUR EARTHLY REQUESTS (WHICH FOLLOW IN THIS PRAYER) CAN BE PROPERLY ADDRESSED.\*\*\***

#### **IV. The Honest Dependence of Prayer (11)**

**“Give us this day our daily bread...”**

What is Jesus wanting to impart to us in this part of His instruction on prayer? Very simply, He wants us to keep our prayers for provision to be rooted in a satisfaction with sufficiency. The deepest type of faith is content with daily provision, and this type of faith trusts God to do the same for tomorrow when it comes. Jesus' original audience were literally dependent on having the right amount of food for each day. Unlike the modern era, early Christians were wholly dependent on God's provision of food so that they would physically survive. The fear of not having enough in future days might serve to terrorize and paralyze people who had not learned to trust in God. Jesus wanted people to acknowledge that they had enough for today. To live with anxiety about having enough for tomorrow betrays some level of distrust in our hearts. Most of the modern Western world knows little to nothing about relying upon God for daily provision. We are trained to provide for ourselves for decades in advance. Additionally, we are not merely storing up provision for needs, we store up provisions for luxury and ease. Modern believers do well to consider whether or not they are more conditioned by capitalist ideals than they are the ways of Jesus. Seeking to provide for your own future can cross the line into not trusting God for tomorrow's needs. Jesus invites us to petition God for our daily needs. To presume to live in an unbroken state of material or financial abundance is not a biblical virtue. While God may choose to bless us with wealth, the main reason for Him doing so is for us to take that abundance and invest it back into His kingdom. Daily bread is our promise. When He delivers on that, let us live thankfully.

#### **V. The Heartfelt Repentance of Prayer (12)**

**“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...” {see also verses 14 & 15}**

This is the place in this teaching from Jesus where we must truly slow down and consider what He is instructing us to pray. We all want forgiveness for our sins. We need God to move toward us in grace and mercy and let us know that our relationship with Him is not defined by what we do wrong, but what Jesus has done that is right. We are instructed by Jesus to ask for the Father to forgive us when we sin. We are not to presume upon His forgiveness. Because His name is sacred, when we sin against Him, we stop, we make an intentional moment to humble ourselves, and then we confess with our mouths as we ask for His forgiveness. This process helps us to never feel comfortable in sinning. It becomes a personal issue between us and our Father, rather than some non-relational breaking of a written rule. We should also notice that

Jesus attaches our experience of God's forgiveness to our own willingness to forgive those who have wronged us. Our debtors are those who owe us something they did not pay. They took and kept from us. They sinned against us. In many places in the Bible, we are commanded to give others. The context for our forgiveness of one another is that we have ourselves been forgiven so much by God. Jesus adds in verses 14 & 15, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." This is a stunning statement. In some manner, we have no right to presume upon God's forgiveness if we do not freely forgive everyone for everything that they have done against us. Jesus does not unpack nor explain this in detail for us. He simply states it as a Kingdom fact.

## **VI. The Honorable Conscience of Prayer (13a)**

**"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil..."**

Jesus instructs us to enlist the aid of God in avoiding sin. We should pray beforehand that we would not stumble into sin when it crosses our pathway. While God NEVER tempts us to sin, we often find ourselves in circumstances where the option to transgress stares us right in the face. We are to ask God to make us wise to know where we are susceptible to transgression. We must know our weaknesses and petition the Father to keep us safe from these places of frailty. When evil is all around us, we ask the Father to deliver us from the very presence of evil. Keep us immune, Father. Let us crush the head of the serpent under our feet of faith. Let us crucify the longings of our flesh. Deliver us from this evil culture, our fallen flesh and the satanic schemes of the enemy against us. Jesus does not ever desire for us to fight these battles on our own, in our own strength. He teaches us to incorporate regular requests for the Father to deliver us from evil so that we can pray with a clean, honorable conscience before His holy throne.

## **VII. The Hunger for Excellence in Prayer (13b)**

**"...for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen"**

Because of textual differences, many modern English translations do not include this portion of The Lord's Prayer. For me, it is the emphatic exclamation point on everything else Jesus teaches on prayer. Ultimately, this is the statement of the fullest possible surrender and submission to the Father. In essence, these words from Jesus empower our hearts to let go of everything - our expectations, our plans, our daily needs, our wants, and even our own lives. We lay them all down before the Father, no longer viewing anything as belonging to us. We are dependent upon Him in everything, and the declaration that His Kingdom, power

and glory are the chief ends of the purposes of His people is our own joyful, surrendered testimony. When Jesus includes the word Amen, He is saying, "So be it!" All that He instructs is to be the Amen over, not only our prayer-lives, but the entirety of our lives upon the earth until He comes again.