



The Prayer of Jesus

Study Scripture: Matthew 6: 9 – 15

Background Scripture: Matthew 6

Lesson 12 February 15, 2020

Key Verse

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6: 9 & 10

INTRODUCTION

In an analysis of what is commonly called the Lord's prayer we tend to forget that it is firmly fixed in the Sermon on the Mount which is really an exposition of the messianic Kingdom and hence Kingdom behaviour. It is therefore a prayer which anticipates the coming of the Messianic kingdom or the kingdom of which the prophets in the Old Testament spoke frequently. They looked forward to the time when the Messiah would come and establish a Kingdom on earth and reign.

Jesus' prayer is therefore a model prayer and Jesus has so designed it that it is a primer for believers as they address their Heavenly Father. We should note that it is not designed to be the prayer where we keep repeating using the same words over and over again. Jesus made clear what He intended when He said, "**After this manner therefore, pray ye**".

Now it should be understood that it is not really beneficial for our congregation to repeat this prayer week after week especially if they do not understand its true sense. The danger is that when we keep repeating these things by rote over and over again the petitions become largely meaningless. It is easy for us to really make things into a formula which has a magic like meaning. One funny story, but a story with serious implications, is recounted by one of several writers who comments on the fact that people do not really understand what the Prayer is really saying:

"I remember the story of two men who were talking about spiritual things, and finally, the subject of some of the familiar passages of the Word of God came up. And one of them made a rash bet that he could repeat the Lord's Prayer. The other person said, "I'll take you up".

So they made a wager, and he began to repeat. He said, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen".

The other fellow Listened very intently. He said, “I didn't think you could do it. Here's your money”.

It is obvious that even though they might have heard this Lord's prayer repeated many times in the congregation it did not mean anything of great significance to them. It is therefore important that we do not just repeat this Prayer by rote but teach people in the congregation and in our homes what it really means so that they will treat it as a model or a pattern and fully understanding the true faith it represents.

It is really called the Lord's Prayer only because Jesus is the author of the Prayer but it is a prayer Jesus could never have prayed for in it we read “***Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors***”.

Jesus had no sin so this petition could not apply to Him.

Actually it is generally felt that the High Priestly petition in John 17 should best be appropriately called the Lord's Prayer. But it is still fine for us to use the historically and commonly accepted name for this Prayer.

We should note carefully however that this Prayer was intended to guide the disciples and us. The time this Prayer was given was the time when Messiah had come and the kingdom would be offered to the nation of Israel so that the promises to the fathers would be confirmed. So this beautiful part of the word of God was offered as a guide for the prayer life of the disciples and it contains many lessons for us.

Note that it is divided into two parts, the first part containing petitions for God's glory, so that it has to do with God and the second part containing petitions for the needs of man. It had been previously stated we are to pray not like the way the Gentiles prayed but disciples and believers are to pray privately so that the Father who is all good, all- powerful, all- knowing would see and hear.

It is of course not the only way to pray for the Apostles prayed in many other ways but this model prayer is particularly structured to contrast with the meaningless, repetitious, long-winded prayers of the Gentiles. It is deeply rooted in the awareness that our Heavenly Father knows what we need even before we ask Him.

So therefore, as we go through the struggles of life having to deal with financial and emotional difficulties, and difficulties which come from sickness and from mental illnesses that we often have, let us be deeply into this model prayer which looks forward to the messianic kingdom in which we will be a part. We remember therefore that this kingdom has its own set of rules and its own agenda centered on King Jesus. He will be the absolute sovereign of God through His universe.

Our response therefore should be to choose wisely how we live, make sure we spend time developing intimacy with God, trust God to supply all we need to do what He calls us to do and believe without hesitation and deviation that His way is best.

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THE TEXT

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Jesus had exposed the corruptions and errors in the exercise of prayer in the Judaism of His day and sets out here a standard, a model, a template for His disciples to follow in their prayers.

Historically this passage (vs. 9-14) is known as the Lord's Prayer, though some have pointed out that it is in fact the 'Disciples' prayer. Matthew presents it as an example of prayer that pleases God; Luke however begins, "*When ye pray, say ...*" (Luke 11:2), so it appears it can be both a pattern for prayer and a prayer to be repeated. Of course Christians must guard against mindless repetition of this prayer and it becoming a prayer by rote.

Jesus gave this prayer as a contrast to what he had just condemned, namely, lengthy prayers which sought either to impress the onlooker or to wear down the defences of God. His own public prayers were generally brief. Though brief, the prayer is comprehensive and as one writer notes:

While the prayer itself is short, the subject matter is very broad. It deals both with God's program and with man's needs. It seeks divine forgiveness for past sins, provision for present needs, and the future establishment of God's Kingdom on the earth. There is a balance between God's purpose and man's needs. There is also a priority given to God's purpose above our pressing needs.

Its petitions relate first and more immediately to God and His honour and then to our own concerns, both temporal and spiritual. The method of this prayer teaches us to seek first the *kingdom of God and his righteousness*, and then to hope that *other things shall be added*.

Verse 9. *After this manner...our Father..*

Note that the entire introduction makes it clear that there is a privileged relationship here. He is our Father generally as the Creator and in particular to Christians by adoption through Jesus Christ. As man's Father, He sustains him, and provides all that man needs. This opening (*Our Father*) sets up an authority and dependency structure and intimates that we must pray, not only alone and for ourselves, but with and for others.

The use of the word "*Our*", the possessive plural pronoun, immediately after Jesus told us of the importance of private prayer in our closet or private space by ourselves, now reminds us that God has more than one child. Even when we pray alone we recognize that we have brothers and sisters in relationship with God and in relationship with us, so that we are part of a community of 'the loved'.

We are also taught to whom to pray, to God only, the God that occupies Heaven. This is clearly not a local god restricted to a specific region, who could bless you if you are in that special area. In ancient times you had the god of a hill, specific mountains, a lake, a region, the sea and so on.

This God however, is over all, transcendent with complete authority. We are also reminded that our citizenship is in Heaven, and our Lord will come from there. The New Jerusalem will come down to the earth from Heaven and we will live in that remarkable city.

There are three petitions that are about God, and they come first, addressing God as He really is, arranging everything around His priorities and values, and then come three petitions that are about us. The passion in prayer is for God's *name, kingdom, and His will*, for they are top priority.

Hallowed. This first petition in the prayer is about God and establishes the priority in prayer, namely: the praise, glory and honor of God and this trump our needs and all else. To 'hallow' is to render or pronounce holy and God's name is holy. The idea is that the petitioner seeks or ask of God; that God's Name "***Our Father***" be celebrated, honoured, esteemed as holy everywhere and that that this name of God, or God Himself, should be held in proper veneration. The above may also be taken as adoration. The root meaning of this word is, "***Thy name be sanctified***" and sanctified means "**set apart**", so the petition is really aimed at setting apart this name from the other names of God.

It is critical to understand that it is only because of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ that we can call God Father. If you have never responded to this work of redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ you cannot call God Father. God had created all men and in that sense God is the Creator of all and all men are His offspring but only the faithful, such as the disciples and believers can call God Father for that word introduces a redemptive relationship caused by the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

It is often pointed out that the reference to God as Father is found only about 14 times in the Old Testament and this is always used in a collective sense and never in the sense of an individual praying and speaking to God as his Father. So when you're a believer this becomes a friendly universe for you know who you are and where your citizenship is.

Note, The Pharisees made their own name the chief end of their prayers (Matthew 6:5, *to be seen of men*), in opposition to which we are directed to make the name of God our chief aim.

Verse 10. This verse is further to the desire expressed above that God's name be esteemed. The ultimate realization of this will occur when the Kingdom of God is established on the earth in the millennial reign of Christ. The Kingdom is further defined as the time when the righteous reign of God upon the earth is as comprehensive and complete as it now is in Heaven.

This really means that God should have no rival at all, no opposition. The love of money, pleasure, human strength, human ingenuity, and all things opposed to God, should be thrown out for they deny the sovereignty and majesty of the transcendent God.

Do not therefore ever believe that you are God. He *is* God, and you are *not*. He has full control and you do not. This reminds us that there's an infinite difference between the nature of God the Father, the nature of the Son and the nature of the sons and daughters of God. He is in Heaven and is separated

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from sinners. His Nature is completely unique and different. The Book of Hebrews therefore tells us that **“He is separated from sinners; holy, harmless and undefiled”**.

Note that contrary to how we in this part of the world regard a “name”, for the people in that part of the world where Jesus lived the “name” meant something different for it referred to the nature or character of a person.

We therefore read in the book of Revelation that Jesus is referred to as the Alpha and Omega, the Alpha being the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega the last letter of the Greek alphabet and so He is the beginning and the end, before the beginning and after the end being therefore the eternal, and self-existent God.

But also note that Jesus at the end of His High Priestly Prayer in John’s Gospel said, **“I have declared Thy name”**, indicating that He Himself in His ministry is the greatest revelation of the name of God.

We recall in Scripture the names and descriptions of the remarkable character and nature of God. One writer spells out some of these names showing God’s character and nature for us:

“He is called *El Shaddai*, the shuddering name the Hebrews said, because it speaks of him in his mighty power.

He is called, *Jehovah Jireh*, or *Yahweh Jireh*. That, of course, is the name that speaks of him by virtue of the ministry of redeeming love, providing all of the needs to those who are related to him.

He is *Jehovah Rapha*, the healer.

He is *Jehovah Nisi*, the Lord my banner.

He is *Jehovah Tsidkenu*, the Lord our righteousness, because he is all representative having accomplished the work of atonement for those for whom he came to die.

Be forever thankful for Jeremiah for listening to the Lord at that point, and giving that to us.

He is *Jehovah Shalom*, or, the Lord our peace.

And he is *Jehovah Shammah*, the Lord who is there: a reference to the restoration, finally, when God’s people shall dwell with him”.

It should be therefore clear to you the extent of the evil of idolatry for that is substituting some other name for the name of God. It is a basic evil for all idolatry intercepts the idea of God by looking at God through the lens of presenting a creature or a thing that partially resembles God.

You cannot change, breakup splinter, or distort the idea of God by anything in creation for if you represent God by anything apart from His name you are distorting God.

So note therefore that the petition ***Hallowed be Thy name***, is one of the greatest and most important of the petitions.

The *will of God* is that men should obey His law, and be holy and righteous, the condition on earth in the millennium, (Isa.11:9). There should be no half-heartedness when we respond to God. We must do what He calls us to do, abandoning ourselves to His control, and be happy that He gives us an opportunity to obey Him. One writer says:

“In Heaven, the Angels adore obedience. They long to know what God thinks so they may do it instantly. The prayer is that on earth we will long to be that way, too.”

We are therefore to pray that the things that we do on earth are really pleasing to the Lord just as those in Heaven where things are done exactly as He wills. It is amazing that even though we know what the “name” of God mean we still find it difficult to willingly submit to the will of God.

Note as Daniel prayed for the deliverance of Israel, when he understood that the time of deliverance was near (Daniel 9:2), even so Christians should pray earnestly for the realization of God’s kingdom, as the signs point to the time.

Verse 11. God’s priority and interests addressed, it is now appropriate to submit personal petitions, thus we look to the providential Father to meet our material needs represented by our food.

Daily bread...note the ongoing collective dependency and daily need for this prayer. The ‘us’ suggests a family group, as this is the natural unit that could participate together in this prayer on a daily basis. God is the one that meets our physical needs and this he does in a wide variety of ways. We owe our being to Him and our lives are in his hand.

...when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust, Psalm 104:29.

You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. Psalm 145:16.

We ask for *our* bread; that teaches us honesty and industry: we do not ask for the bread out of other people's mouths, not the bread of deceit (Prov. 20:17). The Greek scholars tell us that the word “*daily*” means just that for the word was used in connection with a woman's grocery shopping list. So the word used *epiousios* means just that, daily.

We pray that God would give us this day; which teaches us to renew the desire of our souls toward God, as the wants of our bodies are renewed; as duly as the day comes, we must pray to our heavenly Father, and reckon we could as well go a day without meat, as without prayer.

When Jesus says bread, he means real bread, and we should not spiritualise or allegorize this. God is interested in the simple, mundane, everyday things of life and He wants us to pray about them to Him. He does not want us to pray only for religious things. He wants us to pray to Him about ordinary things that concern us. He really cares. One writer reminds us that He might even be interested that we pray to Him that our car will not run out of gas before we reached the next station.

Verse 12. *Man shall not live by bread alone....* in addition to our material needs, there are spiritual necessities which are as vital as our physical needs. Foremost among these is our need for forgiveness. Regardless of our faith and maturity, we have an ongoing need for forgiveness and although this has been achieved for all our sins, past, present and future by Jesus at Cavalry, we experience this forgiveness only as we confess our sins to the Father (1 John 1:9).

The thought that our forgiveness by God is linked to us forgiving those who have wronged us does present some difficulty. Still we are not being asked to do what is beyond us, though in our natural state some forgiveness might be difficult, if not impossible. God has graciously dealt with our situation by giving us a new heart and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, so it becomes a matter of exercising our volition in the matter of the forgiveness of others. God forgives our sins as we forgive others!

One writer holds this view:

On the surface it would appear that we experience this forgiveness only in return for our forgiveness of those who have wronged us. God’s forgiveness is not in exchange for ours. Far from it. Rather we are forgiven only when our request for forgiveness is sincere. He who asks for forgiveness but refuses to grant it to others is not sincere in his request. He who refuses to forgive fails to sense the magnitude of his own sin, and the magnitude of God’s forgiveness. Such a spirit

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of unforgiveness reveals an insincerity in asking for divine forgiveness. As such this (hypocritical) request is denied. Such is the parenthetical explanation of verses 14 and 15.

Never forget that when we are not ready to forgive, we are holding onto our bitterness toward other people.

We should remember that if we are prepared to ask God to remove the weight of failure from us and cancel out our failures, it is only right that as children in which God has imprinted His nature that we should forgive others, showing that in every respect we are like our Lord.

The fact that we are ready to forgive, does not necessarily mean that God has forgiven a sinner. In fact, forgiveness is not complete until there is repentance. But if a man sins many times against us and repents as many times, we should never be the obstacle.

Verse 13. This is a necessary plea, for temptations are to be avoided because of the danger of us being overcome. David prayed a similar prayer:

Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity... Psalm 141:4.

It can be understood in the sense of permitting, such as Lord do not allow or permit us to be tempted to sin. This shows God's control over us and the tempter, so as to save us from any situation if we call on Him.

Some translate this as asking to avoid certain testing, though testing strengthens and matures us. Some see the force of this phrase as meaning:

'Let us not be led into temptation.' This is particularly appropriate if we understand the second half of the petition ('but deliver us from evil') as a reference to the person of Satan. Therefore, we should understand verse 13 in this way: "And do not let us be led into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one".

Deliver us... whether from evil or 'the evil one', we certainly need God's deliverance from the multitude of things that would distract, deter or lead us away from our Lord and thus the plea is made.

It is God that reigns (*kingdom*), He has dominion and control, He has the power to accomplish our petitions and His glory will be displayed in meeting our requests. Prayers fittingly should end with a crescendo of praise of His majesty, power and glory.

...for... connects this doxology with the prayer and shows that the reign (*kingdom*), power and glory will be evident in the granting of our petitions. Our benefits then are incidental and the objective of our prayers and what we seek first when we approach Him in prayer should be that God's glory and perfections be manifested.

We should really be saying that we do not trust ourselves, for we are very foolish, and the Devil can easily take advantage of us except God leads us.

Amen is derived from a Hebrew word signifying *to be firm, secure, to be true and faithful*. It is a word expressing consent or strong approval, a word of strong endorsement. It means *verily, certainly, so be it*. It is probable that this word was used by the people in the synagogue as an assent to the prayer that was offered by the Rabbi and has been adopted in the Christian church, (1 Corinthians 14:16).

Verse 14. This verse reinforces the thought expressed in verse 12. Not that this is the only condition, there must be repentance and faith, with the confirming obedience and changed behavior. Having forgiven offences against us, we can then seek our own forgiveness with a clear conscience.

Our willingness to forgive must be equal to our need to be forgiven and there is no end to that need.

Simply put, we are like the Lord. If we do not behave like Him, we are showing that we are not really His. What He does we must do! The Spirit leads in a certain way, and we must show His leading. There is one fruit of the Spirit, and we must show all of the fruit, and not have any rotten portion.

Verse 15.

To be able to forgive others shows that you have the requisite conditions that the Father requires of you to be forgiven and also shows that you are part of the family of God. As Jesus who calls out to His Father, so we too who have been adopted into that family can freely and confidently call out to our Father in all circumstances, not just for mercy and grace but also in praising God.

To have grace given to us, we should demonstrate to others what God has demonstrated to us, and that is love and charity. Without this act, we cannot expect pardon from God.

Christ came into the world as the great Peace-Maker, with the goal of reconciling us to God, to one another, and in so doing this task, we must comply with him.

CONCLUSION

This prayer fits our situation and our needs Exactly. But his first and our needs are set and we must respond to God in this fashion.

Note also the extraordinary shortness of this prayer. It can be said in 30 seconds or less. Given that this is a pattern we do not have to indulge in very long prayers except when we are making specific and extraordinary supplications to God for precise needs.

But we should also note that Jesus has beautifully invited us to experience the kindness of a great Heavenly Father. It is His Father and He has invited us to share His Father with us. At great cost to Himself He has done what was necessary so that we can accept His invitation.

So if you want to do Christian ministry effectively this is how you can be an effective minister of the Christian faith. You have a Father in Heaven and you live in His power.

You cannot say, *Our Father* if you do not come to Him through redemption for only when you come to Him then you will receive the benefits of redemption by faith.

Are you distracted and desperate? Is regular prayer a struggle for you?

I know that the Father knows what you need. Jesus tells you that you need to pray more than you need to get what you pray for. Remember that the Father knows what you need even before you ask Him. He knows.

Pay attention to the fact that the Lord's Prayer, the model or pattern, is short and concise. You can begin with less than five minutes of focused prayer each day even if that is a huge step from not praying at all. As you pray in faith daily the Spirit of God will strengthen you and mature you and your habits and desires and will bring your will in line with the Father's will.

So in your own way thank and praise the Father that He has adopted you and brought you into His family.