



Lesson 10 February 8th, 2025

Kingdom Forgiveness

Study Scripture – Matthew 6:5-15

Background Scripture – Luke 11:1-13, Ecclesiastes 5:1-6

Key Verse:

“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it be in heaven.”

Matthew 6:10

INTRODUCTION

We are now studying about our communication with God. This of course forces us to consider the nature, the character, and the desires of the One to whom we are communicating. We call this way of communicating prayer.

One writer laments on the temptations we face when we pray and our reactions to this temptation. He tells us that of the church sets up a Retreat or hosts a lecture on theology the place would be filled with over hundred people. But if the Church hosts a prayer meeting only five people would show up.

But the request of the disciples asking Jesus to teach them to pray so that they could follow His practise of His prayer life was an incredibly important change in how they regarded life and their associating with him. They realized prayer had the potential to change their life and their relationship with God.

Jesus therefore undertakes to teach His disciples to pray as part of what we call the Sermon on the Mount. In this collection Jesus teaches about righteous living. One scholar points out what this righteous living meant:

“They deal with anger (5:21-26),
And adultery (5:27-30),
Divorce (5:31-32),
Oaths (5:33-37),
Retaliation (5:38-42), and
Love for enemies (5:43-48).

The teachings of 6:1-18 move us to the next level by helping us to understand the attitude needed for pious deeds (almsgiving, prayer, and fasting).”

The context of Jesus’ teaching and the model prayer He will give His disciples the key determinant,

“Unless your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, there is no way you will enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (5:20)

Now Jesus in this Chapter speaks of hypocrites and describes Scribes and Pharisees among those ***“who do your charitable giving before men to be seen by them. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward-- and who “sound a trumpet” to announce their alms (6:2)— and “stand and praying the synagogue and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men” (6:5)—and who put on “sad faces” and “disfigure their faces, that they be seen by men to be fasting”. (6:16).***

Note Jesus is teaching us our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and we must not

“Let (our) left hand know what (our) right hand does, that your charitable deeds may be in secret and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you” (6:3-4).

Note most importantly what this scholar points out:

“Essentially all of chapter 6 (with the possible exception of vv. 22-23) is a treatise on faith. In verses 1-18, Jesus teaches us not to solicit human praise for righteous deeds, but rather to trust God (to have faith in God) to reward us.

The emphasis in verses 19-21, 24-34 is similar to that in verses 1-18, even though verses 19-21 and 24-34 deal with attitudes about material possessions, rather than human praise.

The main thrust of chapter 6 is that we should trust God to reward us (vv.1-18) and to provide what we need (vv.19-21, 25-34).

Note that this teaching does not contradict the teaching in 5:16 to let your light shine before men so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Faith predominates this lesson on prayer.

We are dealing with personal piety, the doing of pious acts with no intention to impress other people. That kind of motivation and behaviour is selfishness and is self-focused.

So note what the prayer that Jesus teaches is not about what we normally think.

Note that in Matthew 25 Jesus applies the divine principle which pleases God and He extends this principle when speaking of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting.

On the Day of Judgment Jesus separates people to the right and rewards them for doing acts of righteousness such as giving food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, visiting prisoners in prison. But note they had no idea they were doing remarkable things. They were surprised at Jesus commending them for what they had done and the rewards for these unselfish acts. But for those acts with that kind of motivation, God would give blessings.



We have to remember what this kingdom of God is. One writer tells us:

“This is simply the absolute, sovereign rule of God throughout His universe. He is God, and I am not. He is the one who is in control. King Jesus, His son is the Lord of His kingdom, and we owe our loyalty to Him”.

We in this Study as we examine what we call the Lord’s prayer, but which in reality is a prayer which we might pray “after this manner”, remember that God the Father knows all things, and He sees us at all times. He sees everything.

We should be honest with ourselves and admit we are as one writer says are:

“Distracted people, becoming ever more distracted. We are becoming a people unable to focus long enough to pray”. And he adds this:

“With the TV remote, you could now easily sample 100+ channels, without ever risking position of the most comfortable chair in the room. And after you have cycled through all the channels, it was time to go through them all over again, always in the goal of finding something better to watch ...

We are now at a point where our technology is reconfiguring our brains in its own image. There is always something new to jump to, something else to give our attention to forever decreasing amounts of time. We are, to use computer terminology, completely interrupt driven. As I have tried to make sense of our world from my own limited perspective, I have concluded these; we live in an Age of Distraction. And Distraction is the enemy of prayer”.

Jesus gave to Israel the correct interpretation of the laws that govern the Kingdom of Heaven, and these laws apply to us, for He highlighted the “heart” condition that pleased the Father. This was not the same as the purely external performance of religion that was the order of the day which the rabbinic and Pharisaic traditions had developed over time.

Ostentation in doing religious deeds Jesus warned, showed a bad spirit and it confirmed that those guilty of this practice were really hypocrites involved in theatre. The reality was the people’s outward behaviour stood in direct contrast to their inward state. The mask of piety that they wore hid their true intent which was to garner the praise and esteem of on-lookers.

Despite the example of Israel and their failures, even though some Rabbis denounced the kind of practise Jesus denounced, Christians are not free of that kind of “denounced” behaviour, for we create all kinds of images of ourselves, so that we will be regarded as great Christians and good persons. So we too have created distinctives in the area of music, worship styles, the way we speak, the way we walk, the way we dress, which Bible texts and translations we prefer, and so on.

One scholar gives an interesting comment which applies to the religious leaders and the cautions also applies to us:

“What is striking about this is the fact that the Mosaic Law did not demand these things of the Pharisees. In the Mosaic Law, for example, nothing is said regarding fixed times for prayer, but the Pharisees and other Jewish people were particularly known for their times of



prayer. In the Law of Moses, but one only (reference) is made to the practice of fasting. On the Day of Atonement the children of Israel were to afflict themselves and fast in token of mourning over sin and repentance for it ...

I am sure the Lord Jesus would not have disputed the cardinal significance of any one of these practices. It is evident from the study of Scriptures that fasting is perfectly proper. As a matter of fact, fasting is proper in the present age. We have instances in which the apostles mention it, and in which the apostles engaged in it.

Giving, of course, has some parts in the New Testament devoted to it, and giving was something that ancient believers were also engaged in.

And for, as far as prayer is concerned, we have many, many exhortations to pray.

But unfortunately, these three things which are of cardinal significance, and which our Lord would surely have approved, are things that easily lend themselves to wrong motives. Many pray, but they may pray ostentatiously. They may pray lengthily. They may pray in order that other men may hear their prayers. You often, when you listen to prayers, get the impression that some people are trying to give you a system of theology in miniature while they are praying, and that it is really more directed toward people than God, who has a fairly good grasp of theology himself.

And then, of course, it is possible for us to fast for praise of men”.

THE TEXT

Verse 1. The question of exactly what place alms had in the religious life of Israel has been discussed often. Jews appeared to consider alms giving as an act of righteousness. These acts also included fasting and prayer. The common people and rulers seemed to have believed that alms giving contributed to their justification. Psalms 17:15 was translated by one Rabbi as this; "I shall behold thy face in righteousness, after this manner, I shall behold thy face because of alms." Another said;

"This money goeth for alms, that my sons may live, and that I may obtain the world to come." The Babylonian Talmud is full of such sentiments. Alms was considered to have justifying and saving virtue. In Pharisaic writing the words for 'alms' and 'righteousness' were one and the same (tsidekah).

Jesus was probably mocking this Pharisee doctrine in Luke 11:41 when He said to them ***"Yea give those things which ye have in alms and behold all things shall be clean to you."***

Many of the Pharisees were clearly deceived by the efficacy of alms giving, as well as by becoming clean by such practices as the frequent washing of hands.

Jesus began His assault on the doctrine and practice of the Pharisees by simply condemning alms giving or any other works, done mainly so that favourable personal publicity would be gained. Good done with the primary intent of gaining a reputation was not acceptable. Vainglorious worship was never acceptable. This kind of worship was so defined as doing required acts of righteousness with the view or intention of drawing the attention of men.

It must be noted that Jesus required His followers to let their light so shine before men, that they would see their good works and glorify the Father in heaven (Matt 5:16). However we cannot do good works to glorify God, while at the sometime glorifying ourselves. Duty to God



must be done with the sole aim that He will recognize it. If it is not done for Him only, God will not accept it. If He does not accept it, there will be no reward. That is the general principle. Doing righteousness is very important. Psalms 106:3 said, "**Blessed is he that doeth righteousness at all times.**" But we should be aware of the warning that Jesus gave "**Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven** (Matt. 5 :20). Actions of righteousness in our life - the expression of the fruit of the Spirit is necessary to glorify the Father.

In verse 2 Jesus became specific in demanding what we should do in certain areas of "doing righteousness" or demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit. With respect to alms, he instructed the people not be ostentatious.

The expression "do not sound a trumpet" is generally taken to be a figurative expression. Some feel this is to be taken literally. In some parts of the East, a trumpet or horn was blown to collect the poor together to get the alms. Some feel this custom also prevailed in Palestine. Others point out that there is no record of such a literal practice in any Jewish writing. They speculate that it could refer to the public alms' chest, which had a wide hole at one end and a narrow hole at the other. Thus when money was thrown with force in these trumpet resembling holes, there would be an ostentatious jingle.

The style of behaviour connected with alms giving was condemned, and those who practised it were called hypocrites. Note 'hypocrites' are persons who pretend to be what they are not. These hypocrites act out their role playing, in the places of religious gathering, as well as in the places where people were accustomed to walk about. These public displays were designed so that they could get honour and praise of people.

Those who sought the honour of men, would get their reward in this world. Since they did not act for God's honour and glory, God was under no obligation to reward them, so " there would be nothing for them in the world to come. They had received the human applause they wanted and that was all they would get. The use of "Verily I say unto you", indicated this was a most definitive and awesome declaration by God himself.

Verse 3. The principle was then laid out plainly. There should be no display when doing works of charity. The thoughts should not dwell on it. A decision should be made, executed and then forgotten, else otherwise spiritual pride would swell up.

Verse 4 notes that though alms are to be made in secret, it should be remembered that the is on us at all times. He sees every act and knows every motive. When God accepts our sacrifice, our act of sharing with the poor, He will give us a fitting reward.

Prayer

The practice of prayer is also subject to hypocrisy. The pretenders are also active in this area. It is said that prayer uses the language of dependence. All who pray should be admitting dependence on God.

Those who do not pray want to live independently of God. When a person prays, this is a pouring out of the soul to God, expressing the desire to know, love and serve Him. Prayer is considered to be an offering to God.

There were serious consequences for hypocrites or counterfeits. Jesus warned His followers not to be like them.



In Jewish society, one generally prayed while standing. This practice made it easy to be seen, while praying. Pious Jews prayed at certain times of the day and their standard prayers were long. Some would arrange to have these prayer times catch them on the street where they would then be obliged to pray. The people would see them and praise them for their piety. Note it is not that public prayer is condemned. Prayer must always be determined by the true purpose of that prayer. It can be offered anywhere, and its offer depends on the occasion. There are examples in the Bible of public prayers that were acceptable to God. These were not offered for ostentation or for personal glory.

Vs.6. **thy closet...** Jesus describes the sincere, unhypocritical prayer practice in extreme terms as well; prayer should happen in **a closet** The Greek word refers to a room not intended for social purposes (Matthew 24:26; Luke 12:3). To **shut the door** prevents the possibility of even an accidental crowd.

Prayer therefore should be secret and private between one's heart and the heart of God. It should be done in private. Note that prayer is to be made to the Father. The Father sees in the closet for nothing is secret to Him. The Father sees all and will reward openly.

The prayer does not have to be eloquent or perfect, only sincere (Romans 8:26) Senseless repetition and frequent words are to be avoided. God shall reward such praying by listening and caring openly. We are not to seek the approving nod of men, but to desire intimate fellowship with God.

It is said, prayer is more of the heart than of the tongue. For acceptable prayer, simple faith, fervent desire, and simple language is quite sufficient.

Verse 7. Jesus now expanded His teaching on prayer beyond that of hypocritical practices. His next target was those that had adopted certain heathen practices in their prayers. God is able to do all we ask if we ask simply and directly. A multiplicity of words, repetition of God's glories and attributes, a listing of His creations and His names, is really a pagan way of praying. This superstitious approach is found in many religions and will produce the same results as those produced by the prophets of Baal at the Mount Carmel encounter with Elijah. One theologian summarizes it thus, "**Unmeaning words, useless repetitions, complimentary phrases in prayer, are in general the result of heathenish, hypocrisy, or ignorance.**"

Vs.8 stated that God the Father knows everything. He does not need us to inform Him of the things we need. Our concept of God is not the same as the heathen's. Our Father does not need to be convinced of your need. He already knows them (Matthew 6:31.32).

Some have logically asked, "Why then, ask God for anything since He already knows what we need?"

Prayer is a way of developing a relationship with God. Essentially, we pray for the same reasons children speak to their parents, that is, to share concerns, to have fellowship, to get help, and to express gratitude, among other reasons.

Surely God is not psychologically needy, desiring for us to ask to satisfy something lacking in His personality. The point is that praying helps us to learn to trust that He already knows what we need **before we ask.**

We do still bring our petitions before the Lord. But what are proper things to ask God for, and what are improper?



We dare not treat prayer as if we are on the lap of the department store Santa Claus, giving him our Christmas list (James 4:3). Yet we should be bold to ask God for those things we need (Hebrews 4:16).

We ask God because we believe that He cares. We ask because it positions us properly within His will. It meets His desire that our relationship with Him would grow and flourish. God wants us to share our hearts with Him.

Note the peculiar and unusual kind of teaching that Jesus now does as Jesus describes the Father as "your Father ", indicating He was addressing His disciples. Clearly, their Father has their own interest at heart, and He did not need reminders. At the same time God wants His children to pray to Him, and draw near to Him, constantly communicating with Him. Note the exhortation not to be like the heathen or hypocrites.

To ensure that no heathenism crept into their prayer life, the disciples were given emphatic instructions on how to pray. This is a form of prayer, but it is also a model. Specific instructions are given on how to start the prayer, namely, the disciples were told to begin, "Our Father. ...". A look at the Book of Acts or the writing of the Apostles does not show a superstitious use of this model prayer. Some scholars make the case that this prayer given by Jesus is not original and that all the petitions are to be found in the Talmud and other Jewish liturgies.

Clearly some clauses in the prayer such as "Our Father who art in Heaven ", "Hallowed be Thy name " and "bring us not into temptation ", occur in many Jewish prayers.

But other clauses in the prayer such as "Thy will be done, as in Heaven, so on earth.", or the clause for daily bread', as well as the petition, 'that we may be forgiven for our sins as we forgive, are significantly different from Jewish forms.

Other clauses such as "Thy Kingdom come", and " deliver us from evil" bear only a faint resemblance to elements in Jewish liturgies.

Being Jewish and the originator of Jewish prayer customs, one should expect some similarities. The prayer, as a prayer, is quite unique; it is brief but extremely comprehensive.

The Prayer

Vs. 9 The use of the plural "Our" Father is striking. Jews had always felt that a person should not pray as if alone, but always should use the plural to include all followers of God. Prayer involves prayer for all the people of God and not for oneself alone.

A brotherly heart is thus clearly stressed. The idea that God is our Father is the greatest idea and is the basis for our petitions. Tender and respectful love for the Father must be our starting positions when we pray. We must also have strong confidence in the love this pure and perfect Father has for His children.

The image of God as Father is found in passages like Isaiah 63: 16; Psalms 103: 13; Deut. 32:6, as well as in many Jewish non-biblical writings. Jesus stressed this idea that God is our Father all through His ministry.

Note that in a sense, God is the Father of everybody but only believers in Christ can truly call God, Father, and call each other, brethren. See 1 John 3:1; John 8:42, and 1 John 3:4.

The Father is represented as being in Heaven. God of course is everywhere, but Scripture states His special abode and the place where He especially manifests His glory, is in Heaven. For true



believers, Heaven is not an object of worship, as is done in heathen faiths. Heaven is simply the dwelling place of God.

It is instructive to look at Scriptures such as: 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chronicles 20:6; Psalms 65:3; 11:4; 33:13-15; Isaiah 67:15. These passages teach us about God and His relationship to Heaven.

"Hallowed be Thy name" -The majestic God is thus said to be 'separate', distinguished from all pagan gods, and is to be distinguished from our carnal conceptions of Him. He is sanctified and exalted above earth and above all things.

"Thy Name" -means God Himself. The proper name of a person represented the entire character. The name was the same as the person.

The Jews carried this reverence for the literal name for God to such an extreme, that after the exile in Babylon, and after becoming fully conscious of the sins which had caused their exile, they refused to pronounce the covenant keeping name of God, given to Moses at the Burning Bush, lest they pollute the name and cause greater punishment.

Names such as Jehovah, Yahweh and Jah are therefore simply approximations of this name, the exact name being lost. The Jews substituted Adonai, that is Lord, for the original covenant keeping name.

Vs.10 **"Thy Kingdom come"** -All Jews looked forward to the Messianic reign, when there would be freedom and deliverance. See Isaiah 9:7; Daniel 7:44-27; Mark 15:43; and Luke 23:51.

Jesus was now proclaiming that this was near. The preaching of the coming of the Kingdom suggested its complete establishment was close at hand. We are therefore told that we should petition for the complete establishment of His Kingdom, and the time of His triumph over the evil ruler of this world. Then the kingdoms of the world would become the Kingdom of the Lord & Christ (Rev. 11: 15).

The petition continues with **"Thy will, be done."** We know that when God's infinitely good, wise and holy will is fully complete among men, earth will have a Kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy. Some theologians often distinguish between three senses in which the term 'God's will' is used:

1. God's will or purpose which will always come to pass, everywhere in Heaven, earth or in hell.
2. God's will or desire which does not yet always come to pass in earth as it does in Heaven. 2 Peter 3:9 states that God does not wish that any should perish, yet many refuse to repent and die in their sins. 1 Timothy 2:4 says God wishes all men to be saved, yet many are led away captive by Satan.
3. God's will or command, which is often disobeyed. Most people are not like David, who, as he stated in Psalm 40:5, delighted to do God's will.

In Heaven, everything happens in line with the wishes, desires and command of God.

Everything is done perfectly and is pleasing to Him. When God's reign fully comes, those on earth will behave in line with His will.

This is a great part of the prayer. We must especially desire it. Our life and energy must be directed to bring this Kingdom about.

The prayer then moves on to make petitions for ourselves. This section differs from the preceding section where we pray for several things to happen in line with God's providence. Those petitions were aimed at God, His Kingdom and His glory. But note that while the first petitions do not directly relate to us, great good will come to us through their fulfillment.



Similarly when God hears the petitions that seem to directly relate to us, this will work for God's glory.

Vs. 11 God is here asked to give us food, sufficient to sustain and support us. The Word used here for 'daily' bread is pretty unusual, and some writers feel that spiritual nourishment is meant as well as literal food. Prayer is a remedy that prevents anxiety.

Vs. 12 "Debts" is a term for 'transgressions' or 'sins'. Having 'Bread' is not enough; we need forgiveness of sins too.

We ask God to forgive us because we have nothing to pay -we are insolvent. Forgiveness must therefore come from the free mercy of God. Mercy paid what Justice demanded. Mercy is continually given to us. Since we are the branches, we therefore remain dependent on God - who is the vine.

"As we forgive our debtors" compares the forgiveness we show to others, with that forgiveness that we beg for ourselves. It clearly states the unforgiving cannot be forgiven.

Note that this passage does not say that it is because we forgive others that we are forgiven by God. Remember our forgiveness is not quite like God's forgiveness. We at best forgive imperfectly, while God forgives perfectly.

Forgiveness is not just "bearing no malice" or "abstaining from revenge". It involves great patience, long suffering and charitable judgement toward human weakness. Jesus instructed us on this in Luke 17:4, and Matt. 18:21.

But He also instructed us that it was our duty to deal with wrongs done to us and obtain genuine change in the party doing the wrong. In Luke 17:3 Jesus stated, **"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repents forgive him."**

In verse 4 He commands patience with the erring one. Remember God sends rain on the just and on the unjust, and we should act likewise. But God does not forgive men, in the sense of restoring them to His confidence and affection, until they sincerely repent.

Vs. 13 Forgiveness of past sin is not enough, we need to be preserved from sins we will commit in the future.

Here we pray not to be led in sore trials. Note God is regarded as doing the act even if He only permits or allows it. The thought here is that God orders things to bring us into trying circumstances which put our principles and character to the test.

This action by God does not force us to do wrong. We do wrong when we allow our evil desires to overcome us. See James 1:13-15. When we meet the circumstances properly, as Abraham did (Genesis 22:1), and Job did, we will strengthen our faith.

God therefore does not 'tempt' man in the evil sense (James 1: 13) but we certainly may be tested. Because we will face many tests, we are told to "count it all joy when we fall into diverse temptations ". Going through testing successfully will give us an eternal reward. One writer outlines the process of temptation as follows. We can escape by breaking the process as quickly as possible.

"First, a simple evil thought. Then second, a strong impression on the imagination by the thing to which we are tempted. Then third, we come to delight to view it. Then fourth, we consent with our will to perform it. Then lust is conceived, sin is finished, and death comes" (James 1:15).

"Deliver us from evil" ... This is often interpreted as a prayer to be delivered from the evil one, Satan. The phrase however probably refers to evil in the abstract. The Bible however associates



evil with the Evil one, who directs evil. "Deliver us" means break our chains, loose our bonds, snares and pluck us from evil and its consequences.

Vs. 14 The topic of prayer is now resumed and stressed from a positive and a negative position. This undoubtedly shows the importance of forgiving if we wish to be forgiven. A man who does not show mercy is vindictive and thus excludes himself from hope of eternal life. He seals his own fate since he does not want salvation on God's term. If he follows what God wishes, he will show mercy to men and receive mercy from God, with nothing hindering his blessing.

Summary and Conclusion

Hypocrisy entirely destroys the spiritual value in alms giving, prayer, and fasting, and make these appear to God as pagan perversions. Wishing the praise of the multitude will get you only that. That kind of religious exercise is vanity. You are not to take your own reward. God will give it to you.

The manner and aim of prayer is most important, thus showy displays must be avoided. When addressing God, the supplicant must be wholly concentrating his thoughts on God, and on petitions to Him. Perversions of prayer, such as vain repetitions are superstitious heathen practices, and these will gain no merit with God.

The Lord's Prayer shows how an infinite variety of wants and requests can be compressed in a few humble petitions. It encompasses every possible desire that one can pray for, and meets every spiritual requirement, every divine promise, every human sorrow and want, and every Christian aspiration for the good of others. The seven petitions exhaust every religious want. The prayer points to the primacy of a deep longing after the Kingdom of God. We must long for the perfection of God's Kingdom, for it's coming will be the solution to our every burden. We thus must constantly petition God for the removal of the obstacles we face as represented in the second part of the petition.

