

The Need for the Closet

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 February 2025

Preacher: David O'Shea

[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. It's good to see you all this morning. And this morning, we're turning to Matthew's Gospel.

And we're going to start reading from Matthew and chapter 6. And we're starting around verse 5. So Matthew chapter 6. And verse number 5. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men.

But verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet. And when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy father, which is in secret. And thy father, which see it in secret, shall reward thee openly.

[1 : 13] And when ye pray, use not vain repetition as the heathen do, for they think they shall be heard by their much speaking.

But not ye therefore, be like unto them. For your father knows what things ye have need of before ye ask him.

After this manner, therefore pray ye. Our father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[2 : 12] For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, if you're anything like me, I suppose the first place you came across the Lord's Prayer for me anyway was in school.

I learned that at the time I was told that the emphasis really was on the speed you could say it and the repetition.

As many times you could say it, the reward was in how many times and how fast you could say it. But you know, that's totally not what Jesus said.

And in the passage before us in verse 7, he tells us the opposite. He tells us not to use repetitiveness, but we're to think about what we're saying.

And Jesus says it's not the way that man does it that we follow, standing in the crowds and thinking we'll be heard by our repetitiveness.

[3 : 19] But it's the way God sees it that matters. And God sees what we do in secret when we go in to the closet and we shut the door to pray.

And I was thinking, when Jesus says about the closet, what is he describing? And I came up with this answer.

I think it really is any place that you can shut the door on the distractions of the world. And it doesn't have to be a literal door.

Because if we were to look at Mark chapter 1, there we would see, I think it's verse 35, that Jesus left the house and he went up the mountain to pray.

He went to a quiet place. So it's any place that you can have quietness to be alone with the Lord. It was said about a certain woman that she just put her shawl over her head and her family would know she's in the closet.

[4 : 27] And there's a great need for us all today to spend time in the closet here, as described in chapter 6 and verse 6, in prayer to our Father.

And I want to think today, we have many needs. And we come to God with many needs. But I want to think today, especially of three needs that we have, that are mentioned in chapters 4, chapters 5, and chapter 6 of Matthew's Gospel.

And in chapter 4 and verse 4, an easy verse to remember, Jesus there tells us that man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And, you know, that is such a great need for us to take hold of today. That we need the word of God in our life. And, you know, it took 40 years for the children of God wandering in the desert to learn that lesson.

Deuteronomy chapter 8 and verse 3 tells us that God led them around the wilderness for 40 years in order that they might learn the lesson.

[5 : 52] That man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And I was thinking, for us, it may take 40 or 50 years.

But it's a lesson we should learn and we should never let go of. That we need the word of God in our life. And then if we were to go to Matthew 5, we would see another need there.

And the need in 5 and verse 45 that we're to be like our Father in heaven. We are children of our Father, it says, and be like your Father in heaven.

And we do this by living our life by the effects of the word of God upon our life has an effect on our life. And the Holy Spirit living in us, we live our life reflecting God in our life.

And then in chapter 6 and verse 6, what we read this morning, is there's a great need to come to God in the closet and shut the door.

[6 : 51] And to be in the closet with God, being cut off wherever that place is. In your house, in your garage, in your car, wherever it is. Being cut off from the world. Because there is a message from the world that you're hearing every day.

And that message, whether you, psychologically, it's having an effect on you. And the message is that you don't need God's word. That you don't need to be living your life for God.

And that you don't need the closet. Because the message of the world is telling you that you're living by bread alone. And the things you can gather for yourself, the material things of the world, is all that matters.

And you, the message is, you can be self-sufficient. You don't need time in the closet. You have everything. Just look at your phone.

Just look, and you're looking in your phone. And you're looking, how many people liked what I said? How many friends have I got compared to someone else? And so on.

[7 : 56] The message comes true in your television, in your newspaper. It's everywhere. And you need to shut that message out. And you need to look in God's word. Because you need God's word.

And you need God in your life. And it's the most important thing in your life. And Jesus said, when you are in secret, pray in this manner. In other words, this is like a template for your prayer.

And he does not say to pray this prayer word for word. But that each line matters. I mean, the thing is, you can pray this prayer word.

There's nothing wrong with that, word for word. But each line and each word is really a great Bible teaching in itself. And even today, I think when we touch on the Lord's Prayer, we can only just touch on the surface.

You can go away home and start looking deeper and deeper into it. Because if we go deeper into it, we'll be here a long time today. So each word is embedded into the word of God.

[8 : 57] Each word has a Bible teaching. Each line has a Bible teaching in it. And the more we know of God's word, because man should not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God, the more we know of the word of God, the greater effect and the greater meaning that this prayer has for us.

And the depth it gives us. And Jesus starts off and tells us to pray in this manner, Our Father, which art in heaven. And I think, you know, if we were just to go into the closet and say, Our Father, and then to just sit there quietly and think, what is God saying to us in that?

Because prayer is not all about us talking. God speaks to us as well through his word. And I think we should be taking in the word of God, like the Lord's Prayer, a psalm or something from God's word in with us into the closet.

And then God is speaking back through that. And he's telling us our words that we said, Our Father. They're amazing words because we were the enemies of God.

And now we're coming through what the Lord Jesus has done. And we're saying, Our Father. We have been brought and made his children through the death of the Lord Jesus and all that he's paid

for us on the cross.

[10:18] And what a subject for our prayers in the closet. The fact that we're no children of God should fill us with joy. It should fill us with wonder, amazement, adoration, all that God has done.

We weren't able to do anything to save ourself. And he's done it all. So we should be full of adoration for our Father, which art in heaven. And that speaks that God is sovereign over everything.

He's ruling everything. He's above everything. And he's directing everything from on high. And he's able to undertake for us whatever we ask.

Our Heavenly Father, he hears us. And it reminds us as well that we're down here and we're on this journey, but our home is not here. Our feet are not to be rooted here.

We're to be looking above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Our Father, our home, our true place is in heaven. That's where we're headed. And we're looking to say, Hallowed be thy name.

[11:23] We're hallowing the name of God. 1 Peter 3 verse 15 says, to sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. That we are desiring to just magnify the name of the Lord.

And we're also praying, thy kingdom come. We are praying for the future coming of the Lord. We're looking forward to that. When the Lord shall come.

And you know, the kingdom of the Lord, we're praying also, that that would come into our lives in a greater way.

And spending time in the closet will result in that. That the kingdom will come deeper and stronger into our lives.

That our lives would be full of the blessing and the power of God. And of the Holy Spirit being evident in our lives. And also in our church.

[12:22] And when we gather together. That the kingdom of God would be real. And that it would be changing us. And when the word of God is preached.

That it would be changing the lives of people who would hear it. And you know, that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed. And that the kingdom of God would be advanced.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus told us to pray. That, you know, whatever God has decreed to happen, will happen. God is in control of everything.

Even the sparrow that falls to the ground. But we long that ourselves and others. Who are the children of God here on earth. Having the Holy Spirit.

We are still in our flesh. And we long that his word. And his Holy Spirit. That we might, through those.

[13:21] We might know his will in our life. And that we might live our lives. Under, in the will of God. And to understand it. If we were to turn to Ephesians.

Chapter 5, verse 8 to 17. It speaks about that. And then we're praying. Give us this day our daily bread. We're asking the Lord.

We all need. We're in the flesh. And we need to eat food. And we're praying to God. For that food. For our daily bread. But also for our spiritual food.

Which God gives us through his word. I remember one time. I heard this story. It was about a woman.

It was told actually by a shopkeeper. Who was a very old man at the time. When he told the story. And he was saying. It was in the time following the second world war.

[14:20] He was a shopkeeper. And into his shop one day walked this woman. And she was tired and worn out looking. And she said to him. She said. I'm looking for enough food.

For a meal. And to the true story. I'm looking for enough food. To feed myself. And my two children. And he said. That he was only interested in money.

And he said to her. Well how much do you have? And she said to him. Well she said. I have nothing. Only a little prayer. And he just.

When he heard. She had nothing. He said. How will I get rid of her? So he said. Go away. He said. Write out your little prayer. On a piece of paper. And bring it back. And then. We'll see what has worked.

And so. To his surprise. She put her hand in her pocket. And she brought out a little bit of paper. And she said. I wrote it down last night. When one of my kids was sick.

[15:15] And she handed him. The piece of paper. And he kind of thought. Well what am I going to do now? And people had come into the shop. What am I going to do now? So he. He got an idea.

And he said. Okay. Let's see what your little prayer has worked. So he went to the scales. And you know. Those scales where you balance. One thing goes up. And the other thing goes down. And he dropped.

The piece of paper into one side. And then he got a loaf of bread. And he. Dropped it in the other side. And he knew what would happen. But.

To his utter. Amazement. And shock. The scales. Stead straight. So he got a pound of butter. And he dropped it in.

Alongside the bread. And to his utter. He was scratching his head. At this stage. The scales. Stead straight. So he got a third item. And there isn't much in those baskets.

[16:09] On the scales. The basket was now full. And he dropped it in the third item. And the scales. Stead. Straight. And he just shook himself. And he said. Okay.

He said. Look. He said. I have other customers to serve. Take your items. And go. And. He caught a bag. And he threw her.

The bag. And. Then. First. He started serving someone else. And whenever he looked. The woman was putting her three items. Into the bag. And the bag looked big.

And the items didn't look that big. And suddenly. Compassion. Came over him. He said. And. He just got a roll of cheese. Behind him. And he.

Rolled it along the counter. Said. Take that as well. For you and your children. And the woman thanked him so much. And she put the cheese. And. She went out the door. With the bag.

[17:03] And he never. Ever. Saw that woman again. And he said. Afterwards. When everyone was gone from the shop. He went looking at the scales. And he noticed the scales. Had broken. And he was telling this story.

And someone said. Well. I would. I had a shopkeeper. All my life. I never see. Those set of scales to break. And he said. Well. I didn't either. I never. Ever saw it. And then someone else said to him. Well. You know.

You're probably. You're. You're. What age? You're. 80. 90 years of age. You probably. Just imagined that story. Because. Those scales didn't break. And he said. No. No.

He said. I did. I didn't imagine that story. That story really happened. And he said. I know it. Because he said. I took that note of paper. Off the scales. And I put it in my wallet.

And I've kept it there ever since. And he reached in his wallet. And he. He. brought out the bit of paper and he handed it to the person who was talking to the people you were talking to and someone opened up the paper and read it and it said dear lord give us this day our daily bread and you know that story just reminds me that that night before that woman came into the shop she knew that she had a great need and you know sometimes we come to god and we don't really see our need but she saw her need and she saw her need was god and she knew that she had no sufficiency in herself and she saw that in god's word you know the lord jesus she knew the prayer that he had prayed and she took the word of god and she wrote it down and she took that prayer with her as she went out the next day and you know i think in that story we see something that spending time in the closet brings result bring results that we do not come in up coming out of the closet the way we went in that when we come out of the closet things happen in our life when we go in with a great need we come out having given our need to god and we come out differently and you know i was thinking about that in relation to the old testament the character of nehemiah that when he heard about god's people and jerusalem he fasted and prayed for many days and i see that as him being in the closet that he went into the closet as such and he was praying to god about the whole situation and then in his life the king one day said to him you're very down what do you want and he before he answered it said he prayed to the lord god and then he said to the king then he spoke to the king because the result of the closet was that he was praying without ceasing and i think in our life when we're spending time in the closet when we're coming out we are coming out differently and we are ready in our lives every day to really in every situation to pray into it there and then praying about without ceasing to me is actually not just praying all day but it's living your life but in so tune with god because you've spent time with god that god comes into different situations in your life and that you're ready to know that you go straight to god he didn't even answer the king nehemiah he prayed and then he answered the king and you know which is an example for us um and then jesus goes on and he says and forgive us our trespasses and you know he uses the word

and there in relation he says give us this day of daily bread and forgive us there's a connection there and i think it is one connection there is that it's daily it's a daily thing and this is a daily example of a prayer give us this day that is a daily uh thing um and forgive us our trespasses that we are day we deal we daily need god's forgiveness uh for our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us but i suppose the first thought that might come into your mind there is why did jesus pray tell us to pray forgive us our debts forgive us our sins forgive us our trespasses um you know when we think of god as our judge and he weighs us on the scales as such um that our sin just weighs us down but god has broken

[21 : 48] the scales because jesus has he has placed on jesus all our sins and our unrighteousness has been placed on jesus at the cross and our debt has been paid so in that respect we could ask the question why does jesus tell us to pray forgive us our sins when we have been forgiven when we've come to god and we have been forgiven um you know we have come to god um and we have come to god as our great judge and he has dealt all our wrongdoing and put it on his son the lord jesus and the bible tells us that as far as the east is from the west so far he has removed our transgressions from us and we are sure that he will remember them no more and i think the hymn puts it well when it says my sin oh the bliss of this glorious thought my sin not the part but the whole was nailed was nailed to the cross and i bear it no more praise the lord praise the lord oh my soul so in light of that why does jesus say that we are to pray forgive us our sins and the answer i think is best summed up in this that jesus wants us to come to god as our father that we have come to god as our judge and we have been judged and all right we are now righteous in god's sight in the eyes of the judge but in the eyes we come to god as our father and jesus wants us to come to god as our father and and a good father always loves his children if you had a good father you'll understand that it'll be easier to grasp and that father can be pleased or displeased with his children and you wouldn't go back to a judge again but you'll go back to a father and say i'm sorry because each of us will slip up and we need to go back to our father and say i've slipped up and and that's why you know things in our life goes wrong and we do things that are not pleasing to father and we need to have that fellowship with the father that real fellowship in the closet and and so if we have something in our life that we said a nasty word to someone we need to go to the father and say father i was wrong there and the loving father will always forgive his child of that and the fellowship is restored it's just like a a fellowship between a father and son and daughter so it's just as children of god we are coming to confess and we need to you know first john tells us that that um that if we confess our sin he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness in relation to um god as our judge has judged us and put all our sin on the lord jesus and romans 8 tells us there is therefore no condemnation now for those who are in christ jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit and you know but there was a need for uh to have that fellowship with god in our life and if anything gets in the way to come to our father and say forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us brings us back to our need to live like our heavenly father in our life as verse chapter 5 verse 45

tells us we need to live our life as the children of god and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil or the evil one lead us not into temptation god is you know sovereign over everything that happens and you know when jesus said those words man shall not live by bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of god it was after the time that jesus was led by the holy spirit to be tempted of the devil and you know we will be led to be tested in this life many a times and you know jesus words should ring in our heart that we need the word of god we need every to know to know the word of god in our life and we need time with god and so lead us not in temptation is really a prayer that god would not allow us to be led into it because god has given us the means and the grace to us for us not to be led into temptation god has given us his word god has given us his holy spirit god has given us the closet that we can go to god and when we are seeing our need of these things when temptations come we will be able to overcome the temptations through the means that god has given us and i will say to you today that there will be times of testing in your life and in mine and you know at them times we really need the word of god we see job was tested and we see peter was tested peter depended on himself but we see the lord jesus being tested and the lord jesus in the test that he quoted back to to satan the word of god and you know james tells us that james tells us in james chapter 1 and verses 13 and 14 james tells us that god does not test that god does not tempt anyone he tests them but he does not tempt them that is what but god may allow satan to tempt you in the test and you need god to overcome that temptation you need the

word of god you need the spirit of god in your life and you need that fellowship with god to defeat that temptation to the power of god walking in you and you know the doxology of this word to us this morning is this that thine is the kingdom the power and the glory it's all god's kingdom power and glory and we're living for that in our life we're not living for the things of the world it's a wonderful thing to know god in our life as his children it's the greatest blessing we can ever get you know people when the storm come they were running for bread the shops were cleaned out but man shall not live by bread alone but on every world let there be a hunger in our heart and let us go on together you know lead us not into temptation i think that god has provided ways where we're going to be resistant to temptation one of them

is church meeting together as god's people because we strengthen each other one of them is the holy spirit in our life and if we feel that we are lacking the holy spirit in any way well god is going to give the holy spirit to those who ask so we can come into the closet and ask him what a great way to live your life when god is part of every day when you have that fellowship forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us when we're walking with god in the way we should be walking what a wonderful fellowship that is no matter what you face in your life the situation is going to be difficult but you're going to have a joy in your heart that's going to speak volumes to the lord god and it's going to say dine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever and ever amen now we're going to to finish with a hymn through