

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father in heaven...

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Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0 : 00] Good morning and welcome to our online service for Sunday, July 5th, 2020. My name is Kent Dixon and I'm the lead pastor of Braemar Baptist Church here in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Welcome this morning to people from our church who are tuning in. And I also want to welcome others who are watching or listening this morning. Check out the summary information below the video, as I always mention, because there are links and email addresses and things in there that can help you get more connected with our church.

And this morning we'll also be celebrating communion together. So I encourage you to gather some simple elements that you could use to take communion with later on. So choose some bread and crackers, some juice, water, another beverage that you have handy for when we reach that point in the service and I'll give you some notice.

And as I've said before, don't feel like you have to have Welch's grape juice. It's not somehow a deficient communion for you if you don't, but if you have it, that's fun too. So I'm going to start this morning by reading three passages of scripture that were in my devotions this morning.

It really resonated with me and I want to share those with you. Romans 8, 38 and 39 says, For I'm convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

[1 : 32] Romans 8, 38 and 39. Psalm 56 verses 3 and 4 says, When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God whose word I praise, in God I trust, I will not be afraid.

What can mortal man do to me? Psalm 56 verses 3 and 4. Isaiah 43, 19 says, See, I am doing a new thing.

Now it springs up. Do you not perceive it? I'm making a way in the desert and streams in the wilderness. So if during this time of pandemic and isolation, you're feeling isolated, you're feeling alone, remember that God, I say this so much these days, God is still in control.

This is not a surprise to him. And he is in control and in control of your life and your circumstances. So be not afraid, as scripture tells us.

Be encouraged because God is with you. God has your back. So now we're going to join together in singing some worship songs this morning. And we'll be singing two real great classics.

[2 : 43] Be Thou My Vision and Just As I Am. And I encourage you to reflect on the words of these great songs of our faith as we sing them together. And you'll be able to follow, as always, the lyrics as they appear on the screen.

So let's praise God through singing this morning. Be Thou My Vision Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart Not be all else to me, say that Thou art Thou my best thought by day or by night Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light Be Thou my great father and my heart Be Thou with me, my Lord of my heart Be Thou my wisdom and Thou my true word

Be Thou my wisdom and Thou my true word I ever with Thee Thou with me, my Lord of my heart Thou my great father and I Thy true son Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one Thou my great father and I with Thee one Riches I heed not Nor man's empty price Thou mine inheritance Thou and Thou with me, my heart Thou with me, my heart

Thou and Thou only be first in my heart High King of Heaven My treasure Thou art Hiking of heaven after victory won May I reach heaven's joys, O heaven's sun Heart of my own heart, whatever befall Still be my vision, O ruler of all Still be my vision, O ruler of all

Just as I am without one plea But that thy blood was shed for me And that thou biddest me come To thee, O Lamb of God, I come I come Just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blood Just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blood

[7 : 15] To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot O Lamb of God, I come I come Just as I am, thou wilt receive Just as I am, thou wilt receive We'll welcome heart and cleanse relief Because thy promise I believe O Lamb of God, I come I come Just as I am without one plea

Just as I am without one plea Just as I am without one plea But that thy blood was shed for me And that thou biddest me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

How wonderful to worship our God through singing this morning in this way. Okay, so we're beginning a new sermon series this week, and I have a confession to make to you as your pastor. I had a hard time landing on a direction for our next sermon series. I thought about it, I had some ideas, but I struggled a little bit. Because there was never any question in my mind that I wanted to preach about prayer.

But I wanted to explore the concept of prayer itself. I wanted to explore the types of prayers, how we can pray for ourselves and others, some of the things that we can pray.

[9 : 39] Some of the challenges that we may have with prayer. Yes, believe it or not, I would admit that I have challenges with prayer sometimes too. But I also wanted to explore the Lord's Prayer as the model that Jesus himself gave us to guide us through our prayer life.

And knowing that I will preach on both topics at some point, I just finally flipped a prayerful coin and came to a decision. So this morning we're starting a new series that will continue on July 12th and July 19th as we explore the Lord's Prayer together.

The Lord's Prayer is found as part of the longest continuous teaching of Jesus recorded in the New Testament. And it's known as the Sermon on the Mount.

And this is another sermon series that I want to preach one day. So I get teased by the elders of our church sometimes because I tell them, Oh, I've got this year planned and I've got future ideas for different things down the road.

So being a new pastor has its benefits. I'm keen to preach lots of different things. So the Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew chapters 5 to 7.

[10 : 50] And it includes some of the best known teachings of Jesus. It includes the Beatitudes and it includes the Lord's Prayer. And we find the Lord's Prayer in Matthew chapter 6 verse 9.

And I love how Jesus leads into this prayer. Because he recognizes human tendencies when it comes to prayer. The bad tendencies. That we talk too much sometimes.

That we're trying to say perfect, beautiful words that other people will marvel at. The tendency that we may have to brag as we're praying or show off as we're praying.

But Jesus wipes the slate clean of all of that. When he comes to Matthew 6 verse 9. And Jesus cuts right to the chase here. This is how you should pray, he says.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.

[11 : 54] Forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from the evil one. So if you ever attended a Catholic Mass, a Catholic service.

Or learned the Lord's Prayer exclusively through scripture. That's it. That's where the prayer stops. So most of you are probably saying, but wait a minute Pastor Kent.

That is not how it ends. You missed all the end part. You missed for yours is the kingdom. The power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. Right? That's what I missed.

So it's not somehow wrong to end the prayer the way it did as I read it. The way it ends in scripture. That's not wrong. And even though it doesn't end that way in the Bible.

It's not wrong to continue on as many of us have learned it. Because some scholars suggest that most prayers would have ended with some kind of closing doxology.

[12 : 56] Some kind of ending section that praises God. And that's what that final section of the Lord's Prayer that we most often say when we recite it is.

It's a doxology. And other scholars suggest that the ending may have actually been borrowed from King David's exaltation of God.

In 1 Chronicles 29 verse 10. Which includes phrases that you'll recognize here. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor.

Powerful language David uses. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom, David says in another place. And he says in another yet again, from everlasting to everlasting.

So you see how those three combined chunks that David uses in his own doxology. His own praise of God in 1 Chronicles.

[13:54] Has been kind of woven together into that closing portion of the Lord's Prayer as we recite it. So we can see how this flavor came to be selected in, if you want to call it, the extended version.

The extended remix of the Lord's Prayer that many of us are most familiar with. And I want to recognize something else this morning. That the Lord's Prayer is a template.

It's not a script. If you look through scripture, I encourage you to scour scripture and look for anywhere that Jesus says, Alright everybody, make sure you get this right.

Memorize it word for word. Pray these words exactly. Or you're not praying. Or pray this prayer a specific number of times. Or you're not praying.

Jesus doesn't say that. So we're not left with that perception from scripture. Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer as a model for us to recognize the elements of it, of prayer.

[14:54] And to focus our prayers, to help us focus them. Some scholars have suggested a better name for it might have been the Disciples Prayer. Because Jesus gave it to the Disciples.

And not just at that time, but to all of us as Disciples for all time. But I'm going to leave that to people to discuss with Jesus exactly in person when you see him.

But I believe I've talked about it in the past. There's a particular structure in biblical writing that's called a chiasm. And that's a weird word. But the ideas and the flow of a passage in a chiasm, or in this case a prayer, the Lord's Prayer, are chiastic.

And so a chiasm forms in structure essentially an X. The ideas begin more broadly, come together at the center, and then expand outwards again towards the end.

And the Lord's Prayer reflects the same structure because it's got three petitions or groupings of your kingdom, your will, and so on.

[16:05] Or requests that God act according to his greater plan for all creation. And then as the chiasm, as the X expands outward again, there are three groups of our provision requests.

They are our daily bread, our trespasses, things that relate to us personally. So at the center of the prayer then, we find a transition phrase.

On earth as it is in heaven. And we're going to unpack all of this a lot more over the next couple of weeks. But let's begin with the first phrase of the prayer. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Our Father. To me, that phrase indicates two things. First, that the God to whom Jesus tells us to pray is not just his Father, but our Father as well.

Through Jesus, we have a family connection to the Creator of all things. With Jesus having made that possible for us then, we would simply be sinners without a Savior if he hadn't made that possible.

[17:20] Mortals would have no hope for eternity. But Jesus is telling us through the opening of the Lord's Prayer that his Father is now our Father too.

So by association then, we have a family relationship with Jesus himself. As well as with other followers, other disciples of Jesus across time.

We're part of a greater family of disciples and pilgrims who've experienced many of the same joys and challenges of the Christian life. Many of the things that we experience ourselves are not new.

So as we continue in the prayer, the prayer recognizes God as being in heaven. Gee, that's kind of obvious, isn't it? God's in heaven. But as we've explored before, heaven is not merely some vague place out there.

Some vague place up there. There's likely more complex concept to thinking of heaven as another dimension that exists all around us.

[18:28] Heaven is not just a place on earth that we can't see right now. Heaven is not just up in the sky and unattainable to us right now. It's so much more than that.

It's so much more rich. Than that. And there's another series I'm going to do. I want to talk and explore the concept of heaven together over time. So to say God is in heaven then is to suggest that he is all around us.

He's with us everywhere we go and in every circumstance of our lives. But as we recognize that God is in heaven, this is the part that aches sometimes.

We also recognize that we are not. At least not yet. At least not yet. So the words our father in heaven come as an invitation from God to turn our eyes from our temporary exile on earth to our intended future.

A new heaven and a new earth. And in those few words, that simple phrase, our father in heaven, we're powerfully recognizing both our heritage and our eternal destiny.

[19 : 41] So continuing on in the first section of the Lord's Prayer, you get stuck on hallowed. The word hallowed, let's unpack it a bit, means to be made holy, to be consecrated, greatly revered or honored.

That fits, right? That Jesus tells us to begin by recognizing that God's name, and God tells us this over and over in scripture himself.

That his name is to be set apart, to be consecrated, to be made holy, to be hallowed. So why should we begin by setting God's name apart somehow?

Because that's what Jesus did over and over in scripture. John 17 is full of examples of this. The Bible says in John 17 verse 1, And lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus said, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify your Son, so that your Son may glorify you. Jesus continues in John 17 verse 4, I glorified you on the earth, having accomplished the work you gave me to do.

[21 : 03] And what was that work? Well, Jesus says in verse 6, I manifested your name to those you gave me out of the world. I have made your name known.

So Jesus teaches us to pray, Hallowed be your name, because that is what he prays. That is what he lived and died to see happen.

That God's name would be glorified. That God's people would turn to him. That God's plan for humanity would come to be on earth as it is in heaven.

As I was reading and studying this week, something really interesting and new struck me. You ever considered the Lord's Prayer as you've considered it?

Have you generally thought of the petitions that come through the first half of the prayer? Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

[22 : 05] Have you ever considered those things to be somehow something that we can make happen by praying those words? Or to put it another way, do we think of it in terms like, God, I want these things to happen.

I want them to be true. I think it's important. So I'm asking for that to happen. So this gets to happen because I'm asking for it. In the sense that we somehow might pray for someone to heal from surgery, someone might get a new job, is there a sense that we're somehow giving permission to God to do these things?

That by asking, we're helping somehow to make his name holy, helping to make his kingdom come, or helping to make his will come to be, that's possible from some perspectives.

But consider this for a moment. Ultimately, only God can make these things happen. So I believe there's a different way that we can look at these ideas.

In our phrase this morning, Hallowed be your name, we're actually telling God in active language to make his name holy.

[23 : 20] Does that make sense? We are telling God, we're, if you will, almost commanding God, using active language, for him to do it.

For him to make his name holy. In effect, we're saying, God, make your name holy, as only you can. The first half of the Lord's Prayer includes three petitions like this, where we ask God to act, to draw attention to himself.

Sure, there's definitely a sense of us personally recognizing our own desires, our desires for God's name to be holy, we should desire that, for his kingdom to come, absolutely, and for his will to be done, I sure hope so.

But do you see how it's so much more powerful than that? We are calling out God to draw his people back to himself, to bring about his plans for creation, by his power, and according to his will. Have you ever thought about, here's another one, this may make you uncomfortable, have you ever thought about the words, your kingdom come? With those words, we're not simply saying, God, we know you're going to do stuff, so, you know, do it.

[24 : 40] We're calling for God's ultimate plan, God's ultimate judgment, the end of death, and suffering, and disease, and war, sorry, joking up, and all the things that heaven is not.

that eternity with God is not. We're asking God to bring his kingdom to earth. We're essentially asking for God to end this current existence, as we know it.

I don't know about for you, but whenever I pray the Lord's Prayer, I consciously slow down, when I reach this point. These are heavy and powerful words.

These words have eternal and reality-altering implications. As we continue in the prayer, do we recognize that the depth of our submission that's required for us to say to God, your will be done? Are we actually okay with that? Are we actually committed to that? Over the past few weeks, we've explored the idea of biblical stewardship, and we've recognized that all we are, and all we have, comes from God, and that none of it was ever ours to begin with.

[26 : 12] It really seems like a similar idea to me when we ask for God's will to be done. We're indicating that we are bowing to him. We are submitting to his will and his plan for our lives, no matter what that means, for our will or our plans.

Are you ready to be sidelined? Not out of God's will, but have your own will set aside in favor of God's. And not just God's will for all creation, but God's will for you.

Because my friends, he has a plan for you. Try not to get in the way. I don't know about you, but the older I get, the more I realize that, left to my own devices, I really likely make a big mess of things. As author Daryl Johnson put it, I look back on a number of turning points in my life, and now I rejoice that my will was not done.

As good as it might have been, Johnson says, my will was not as informed as I thought. Can you recognize the will of God as the driving force in your life?

[27 : 33] Can you recognize particular times in your life when you allowed that to be, when you got out of the way? Do you remember what that looked like, or what it felt like? Personally, I've found God's will for my life to be pretty good as I reflect on it.

As Paul said in Romans 12, verse 2, do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

When the primary focus of Jesus' life was to do the will of his Father, and Paul went out of his way to remind the early church of that constantly, should the focus of our lives be any different?

On earth as it is in heaven. How do you imagine God's will is carried out in heaven? Do you think the angels argue?

Question? Choose their own paths because they somehow know better? As far as I can tell from Scripture, the angels bow their knee.

[28 : 56] The angels act immediately and instantly and decisively according to God's will. From what we learn about heaven in Scripture, it's a place of continual worship of God and where the challenges, grief, pain, and suffering that come from being mortal are gone.

Can you imagine that? It's very hard to imagine and very humbling and very, very exciting. Praying that God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven is our declaration that God knows best.

It's our declaration that we trust him and that we're willing to place our eternal destiny in his hands. To quote from Daryl Johnson's book again, he paraphrases this first section of the Lord's Prayer that we've looked at together this morning so beautifully.

And so hear this. Father in heaven, Father of our Lord Jesus, our own Father, make real your character and magnify your name on earth as it is in heaven.

Father, make yourself real on earth as you are real in heaven. Enhance your reputation in all the earth.

[30 : 28] Just as Jesus modeled for us how to pray, he left us with many examples, but another example that we're going to share together this morning and that's the Lord's Supper.

Communion. This morning as we celebrate communion together, we remember as Jesus called us to remember. When we remember, broken and damaged and dismembered aspects of our past lives are put together again.

Our mind, body, and soul in the present tense enjoy wholeness and helplessness in the face of the unknown future gives way to resurrection hope.

As we prepare to celebrate communion together this morning, you can be thinking about gathering your juice or your water or whatever you have and your crackers or your bread, but I'll share some words.

We gather at this table to celebrate life. The life of God in the world made flesh and blood in Jesus and embodied in us.

[31 : 39] We come to remember the body that was broken, the hands that touched the untouchable, healed the hurting and did no violence. The feet that got dusty along city streets and at the lake shore, the arms that welcomed the stranger and embraced the outcast.

The legs that entered homes and synagogues and danced at celebrations. The eyes that blazed dead injustice, knew how to cry and saw the potential in everyone.

The belly that shared table with unexpected people and shook with laughter. The lips that wove stories and painted pictures of a new community and a better world.

This blessed body that was broken, abused and rejected, we come to remember. For we are called to be the body of Christ.

As you, risen Christ, remember our lives, so we remember you. And not only at this table, but in our lives together.

[32 : 49] May we embody your kingdom and remember your life in the world. Now I'll share some words of thanksgiving. Let's pray together this morning. Oh God, we give thanks for this bread and this cup.

A timeless reminder of the flesh and blood life of Jesus. Broken, rejected, yet unstoppable. In Christ we see a life that could not be ended by death.

a purpose that could not be silenced by the forces of violence. A desire deep within you for the transformation of the world. As we eat this bread and drink the cup, we thank you for the acceptance and tenderness with which you have transformed our shame into dignity and loved us into life.

We thank you for cherishing the potential in us and for calling us to be partners in your vision for the world. As we eat the bread and drink the cup, we call on your spirit to come alongside us so that together in the company of your spirit we may give ourselves afresh to the task of remembering you, of being the body of Christ, of living your life in this world.

Amen. Now please gather your bread or crackers. This broken bread we share is the body of Christ.

[34 : 21] It's a sign of all that we live and risk together as the community of Christ. Let all who seek Christ take and eat. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. If you please gather your juice or your water.

This cup we drink together is the wine of the kingdom of God, the sign of God's undertaking for the life of the world. Let all who seek Christ take and drink.

Let's pray.

We have taken the bread and the cup into our bodies, Lord. Now may these hands of ours be the hands of Christ in the world. May they do no violence.

[35 : 36] May our eyes see those who are overlooked. May our ears listen to those who are unheard. May our voices be raised for the voiceless, lest our songs of praise be empty.

May these feet take us where Christ leads and may these hearts and minds be open to your spirit. Christ has remembered us.

May we remember Christ. Amen. As we close our service this morning, I think it's fitting that we recite the Lord's Prayer together. The prayer that Jesus taught us that we'll be looking at.

And I'll be using the version from the NIV translation as we read this morning as well as adding that closing doxology that most of us are familiar with.

But please, in your own home, feel free to pray the prayer, say the prayer in the version that's most familiar with you. If you like the vows and the thines, use them.

[36 : 37] Let's say it together. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen. My friends, my prayer for each of us is that we explore the rich, as we explore the richness and the meaning of the Lord's prayer together over the coming weeks, that we may develop a deeper and more intentional understanding and connection with the prayer itself.

Not something we've memorized that we recite just without feeling or connection, but that we would grow closer to it. And that through that, through that closeness, through that deeper understanding, that we'd also develop a deeper connection with the God, our Father, to whom we pray. My friends, go in peace, enveloped in your Father's love, and have a great week. Amen.