

Bringing Heaven Down To Earth

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[0 : 00] Scripture lesson this morning comes from the gospel according to Matthew chapter 6 verses 9 and 10. But it's always good when taking only a few verses of scripture to read them in the larger context.

So our text today will be Matthew 6 verses 5 through 15. If you are able, will you please stand for the reading of the gospel. Jesus is speaking to us.

This is the midpoint in the Sermon on the Mount. And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners in order to be seen by others.

Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore, do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

[1 : 08] Pray then in this way. For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. You may be seated. I have this word deep in my soul.

I don't even soul. I don't know where it is. It's just deep. And I can't get it into words. That make sense?

No, it doesn't. Don't shake your head. It does. It doesn't make sense. To me, anyway, yet. Those of you shaking your head, you tell me how it did. But there's this message brewing in me.

It's very simple. And it's all-consuming. It has been for some time. But I'm having trouble getting it into articulate words.

[2 : 36] Those of you who've been with me now almost these two years, you know that I work hard on having everything in nice, neat structure and nice, neat introductions and all of that.

And I can't put it that way now. Something, I guess the best thing I say is something is birthing in me. And I guess I'm just going to have to live with the fact that it just isn't going to completely come. It didn't come first hour. Did it? It didn't, did it? No, it didn't. And someone came up to me afterwards and said that was okay because it's a birthing process.

And inherent to that is some time. It's going to take for whatever it is that God is saying to become more articulable.

So I've got this word I'm going to try to get out, okay? Okay? Okay.

[3 : 40] And I guess the best way to start is I can, one of the things I have to live with is that I can see the message before I can write it. I see my sermons long before I can put them into words.

And so at the beginning of the week when I'm working on something and I see it, I go, oh, I've got it. I can do all these other things and I'll come back to that. And then I sit down to write it and I can't all the time.

This definitely can't. But I can see it. Okay? So I'll tell you the word I see. It's a simple picture. And in your bulletin you can find a white piece of paper there so you can write it down.

You can draw this with me. It's very simple. I'm almost embarrassed to put this out. But it's the picture that comes to me from this part of the Sermon on the Mount. Okay?

And then I'm going to try to put some words to it. And we'll see where we end up. Start down here by drawing the curve of the earth. Oops.

[4 : 44] You see it. Okay there. And on this, just draw a whole bunch of cities. Here's Glendale. Here's Burbank.

Not as, well, yeah, the Disney Tower is pretty tall. You've got all these cities on the earth. People in them. Okay?

Then over here you draw like a cloud kind of thing. And you put the word heaven. What Jesus is telling us in the Lord's Prayer, in this section of the Sermon on the Mount, is that when we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are granted the privilege of participating in bringing heaven down to earth. The prayers go up. Heavenly Father, Father in heaven, won't you? And as a result, heaven is brought back to earth.

Bring brought down to earth. The center of the Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's Prayer. And the center of the Lord's Prayer is this phrase, On earth as it is in heaven.

[6 : 10] On earth as it is in heaven. Which means then the center of the Sermon on the Mount is that little phrase. On earth as it is in heaven. To pray the Lord's Prayer is to participate in bringing heaven down to earth.

Blaise Pascal, who is a 17th century mathematician and philosopher, says that in prayer, God is giving human beings the dignity of causality.

The dignity of causality. When we pray the Lord's Prayer from our hearts, we are granted the dignity of being part of the process by which what is happening in heaven is then brought down and begins to happen in earth.

There's the first three lines of the Lord's Prayer. Our Father who art in heaven, your name be hallowed, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This little phrase, on earth as it is in heaven, goes with all three of those prayers.

And I would encourage you as you pray the Lord's Prayer by yourself to make sure to insert that. Our Father who art in heaven, your name be hallowed on earth as it is in heaven.

[7 : 36] Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus is saying that in heaven, the name of the Father is already hallowed.

In heaven, the kingdom of the Father is already experienced. In heaven, the will of the Father is already done. And the great privilege and the great dignity and the great role that he is giving us in the Lord's Prayer is that we are now invited to go to the Father and ask the Father to make happen on earth what is already happening in heaven.

The phrase is not, in my heart as it is in heaven. Although that's true, we want it to happen in our heart. The phrase is not, in the church as it is in heaven. Although that's true too, we want it to happen in the church.

The phrase is, on earth, on this planet, on this broken, chaotic, rebellious, troubled planet, cause what is happening in heaven to happen on earth.

The verbs in these three lines, hallowed be, come, be done, those three, hallowed be, come, be done, are in the imperative mood in the Greek there.

[9 : 05] They're in the imperative mood. That's the command mood. Think about that. Jesus puts on our lips commands. Be hallowed, come, be done.

It's put in the passive because it's a little bit too much to handle to think that the son of the father is putting, allowing us to give commands to the father.

And so it's put in the passive. It would be too bold for the prayer to be, our father in heaven, hallow your name, make your kingdom come, and do your will. That's a little bit too bold. But the verbs are in the imperative to come pretty close to that.

They're in the passive to kind of protect it, give this reverence. And they're in the passive for another key reason, and that is that only the father can make his name be hallowed.

Only the father can make his kingdom come. Only the father can make his will be done. You see, if I have it right, most of us pray that Lord's Prayer in a different way, and it comes out this way.

[10 : 13] Father, help us hallow your name. Right? Father, help us make your kingdom come. Father, help us do your will.

Now, those are important things throughout Scripture. That's taught. We are to hallow God's name. We are to be part of the bringing in of the kingdom. We are to do the will of the father. But that's not the point of this prayer. The point of the prayer is, Father, you have to do it.

Only you can hallow your name. hallow your name on earth as it is in heaven. Father, only you can bring in your kingdom. Bring in your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Father, only you can do your will. Cause your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. This word goes beyond words.

It goes beyond even pictures. How do you get your hands and mind around this? On earth as it is in heaven.

[11:21] Say that phrase with me. On earth as it is in heaven. Do it with me with your hands too. On earth as it is in heaven. Boy, that's transforming stuff.

11 years ago in June of 1984, I had the privilege of spending two weeks in Seoul, South Korea. I went to attend the first ever international prayer assembly. First time in world history that people from all over the world were gathering in one place to pray for world evangelization. It was sponsored by the Luzon Committee on World Evangelization. We met in the sanctuary of the Young Knock Presbyterian Church in Seoul, which at that time was the largest Presbyterian church in the world.

It still is the largest Presbyterian church in the world. At that time, I think they had 92,000 members. 92,000 members. Now, in order to be a member of that church, you have to profess your faith in Christ, you have to write a creed, you have to demonstrate that you're in some kind of ministry, and you have to be in a small group.

[12:29] So, 92,000 real members. Right now, I believe the membership is up to about 192,000. That's not as big, of course, as the other church in Seoul, which is the biggest church in the world, the Full Gospel Church on Yodo Island, which at that time, I believe, in 1984, was about, I don't have my numbers real clear, but in 1984, I think the membership of that church was 350,000, and now it's closer to 750,000 members.

Huh. Something's going on in Korea. So, anyway, you can see why it was called to have this meeting on world evangelization and prayer for world evangelization in Seoul.

We met in the beautiful sanctuary of the Yung Nhat Presbyterian Church, and I can still remember the first night when we all gathered in that room from 76 different countries of the world and sang, All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name.

The song leader led us along until the last verse of the song. He asked us to sing it in our own languages, and to hear 76 different languages sing, Oh, that with yonder sacred throng we at his feet may fall, will join the everlasting song and crown him Lord of all.

I thought I died and gone to heaven. It was a wonderful experience. Well, during that two-week time, we had a presentation, and then we would pray another presentation, and we would pray, and go like that for two weeks, and as the time went on, I was becoming more uncomfortable, and I wasn't sure why I was becoming uncomfortable.

[14:00] I thought maybe my heart was hardened and was full of sin, and I wasn't entering into what the Holy Spirit was doing here, and I did a lot of beating of myself in my private times, but something was wrong, and what it was is each of the talks on prayer was becoming more strategy-oriented, more technique-oriented, more, now, if we do this, and we do this, and we pray this way, and pray this way, and pray this way, and then we do this, and then at this time, and then, see, you've been to those kinds of things where after a while, you go, I don't even want to be part of this.

This is more work than I can possibly do, and anyway, I was getting more frustrated. Towards the end of that time, we were given the privilege of going up to the Prayer Mountains, which are along the demilitarized zone, Jack Chisholm used to talk about the Prayer Mountains, I'm sure, the demilitarized zone between the South and North Korea, each of those big churches had a major conference center where people would gather to pray.

By the way, the average Korean takes one of his or her two weeks of vacation a year and spends one of those weeks at Prayer Mountain fasting and praying for world evangelization.

Is it any wonder that per capita, Korea now sends out more missionaries than any country in the world? Anyway, we were on the bus on the way from Seoul up to the demilitarized zone, up to the Prayer Mountain, and I was just really disturbed.

I got to sit alone on the bus by myself and asking the Lord, what is this? What's wrong with me? We got to the center, went to these different places where two to four thousand people had gathered to pray all day or all week.

[15:39] I don't know how long they've been there. On these Prayer Mountains are these little bunkers that are scattered throughout the mountains and these little cubicles. And I'd hoped to be able to go into one of those cubicles.

They were all full so I didn't think I got to go in. I was wandering around and this small Korean man came out and motioned that I could use his cubicle for a half an hour. And I was delighted. I went in there and I'm telling you, they weren't very high so you can't stand anyway, but I would not have been able to stand anyhow.

The presence of God in that bunker was so overwhelming that I was down on my knees and on my face. And I started to pray about this. And Lord, what's wrong?

And I heard, not in audible words, but I heard in my head, I heard God say, it isn't that complicated. It isn't that complicated.

And then led me to the Lord's Prayer. And so for 11 years now, I've been working with the Lord's Prayer, trying to understand all that. I've read just about everything that's written, in English anyway, trying to understand what it is.

[16:46] And it's only a month ago that I think I finally saw. And it has to do with the little phrase, on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus, who knows the Father's heart, who knows the Father's mind, he's the son of the Father, comes into the world and tells us, you want to change the world?

You want to be a mover and shaker of history? This is how you do it. Say, Father in heaven, on earth as it is in heaven.

The world is transformed from the closet. History is changed from the closet. You know I like to preach.

I figure I've got 1,000, what did I figure out the other day? 1,392 Sundays left before I'm 72 when I figure I need to retire.

[17:58] I've got 33 series of sermons brewing in my head and mind. And I figure I can get them done in that amount of time. But you know, after what's going on in my heart, what this birthing thing, what's, as a result of that, I'm now convinced that I could quit preaching and change the world more profoundly from my closet by praying the Lord's Prayer the rest of my life.

Father in heaven, your name be hallowed on earth as it is in heaven. This verb, hallowed, you could translate as holy-fi.

It's related to the word holy. Holy-fi your name on earth as it is in heaven. And there are two nuances to this verb that we need to know about. They are honor and manifest.

Honor and manifest. Father, honor your name on earth as it is in heaven. Manifest your name on earth as it is in heaven. Name stands for character.

In your notes, you could just write that. Just put the word character over name. If in the Bible you knew a person's name, you knew that person's character or something of that person's character. If you know God's name, you know something of God's character.

[19:21] And so God gives us a number of names by and through that reveals his character to us. Father in heaven, won't you honor your character?

Won't you manifest your character right here on earth as it is already in heaven? Various names of God that we could meditate on.

El Shaddai, the powerful one. El Rofay, the one who heals. El Roy, the one who sees. The rock, the fortress, the fountain of living water, the fire in the midst of us.

The holy one, the gracious one, the merciful one, the patient one, the light of the world. All those names culminate then in the name Yahweh, which is the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The name Yahweh meaning I am who I am or I was who I was or I will be who I will be. But not in a philosophical sense. In a relational sense, I am who I am with you and for you.

[20:27] God says, that is my name. That's my principal name. I am there with you and for you. I am there as El Shaddai. I am there as El Rofay. I am there as El Roy.

I am there as the rock. I am there as the fortress. I am there as light. I am there as the fountain of living water. I am there as the good shepherd. I am there as light. I am there as the one who heals. And I am there with you and for you.

That is my name. And Jesus then gives us the privilege of recognizing that God's character is honored.

It is manifested in heaven. The angelic hosts enjoy that all the time. They get to see the character of the Father all the time. And Jesus tells us to pray, Father, just as your character is manifested in heaven, will you now manifest it here on the earth?

Whoa, that's transforming stuff. God's answer to that is yes, I will. Yes, I will.

[21 : 32] Ezekiel chapter 36. I will vindicate the holiness of my great name. I will prove myself holy in your midst.

only he can do it. And we are given the privilege of asking him to do it. Father in heaven, your kingdom come as it is on earth as it is in heaven.

Your kingdom come. The kingdom of God is a phrase to say God is reigning as the king. Kingdom of God doesn't refer to a place.

It's not a static reality. It's a dynamic reality. Kingdom of God, God is now reigning as the king. Now, it is true that God is king in a general sense.

The earth would not go on if God were not king. The universe would not go on. You and I would not breathe unless God was in charge and ruling in some sense. But the prophets long for that day when God would rule as king without rival.

[22 : 47] Come and rule in the earth as king without rival. Which then helps us understand and appreciate the startling thing that Jesus does when he comes into Galilee.

He comes announcing the gospel of God. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God has come near. To translate that, it would be the time has come. The time is fulfilled.

The time has come for God now to come and reign as king without rival. You better turn around and put your weight on this good news, he says. Now, what is entailed in the kingdom of God?

Two things, basically. The reversal of the effects of sin and the restoration of the whole of creation.

When God comes to rule as king without rival, he reverses all of the effects that sin has wrecked in the world and now he establishes the shalom of God, his perfect, original, creative intent.

That's what the kingdom means. And that's why we long for the kingdom. One of my favorite pictures of the kingdom is in the prophet Isaiah, chapter 35.

[23 : 59] If you have your Bibles, you might want to turn to that so you can see it for yourself.

Isaiah 35, a powerful picture of what the kingdom of God is about. The wilderness and the desert will be glad.

The Arabah, the desert, will rejoice and blossom like the crocus. It will blossom profusely. The desert will blossom profusely and rejoice with rejoicing with a shout of joy.

The glory of Lebanon will be given to it. The majesty of Carmel and Sharon, they will see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Encourage the exhausted, strengthen the feeble, say to those with anxious heart, take courage, do not fear.

Behold, your God will come with vengeance. The recompense of God will come, but he will save you. Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf will be unstopped, the lame will leap like a deer, the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy, for waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

Tremendous picture of the kingdom. Creation itself. Transformed. Human beings within that.

Transformed. And that's why Isaac Watts says what he does in his hymn Joy to the World.

[25 : 11] It was fun to watch your face by the way when we sang Joy to the World this morning halfway between Christmases. Joy to the World was not written for a Christmas hymn. He wrote that for an every Sunday hymn.

And I picked it because of the phrase he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.

He comes to remove the curse and he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.

That's what this passage is about. That's the kingdom. That's what Jesus teaches us to pray for.

Another picture of the kingdom real quickly. Isaiah chapter 19.

One we'll probably need to work on more but one that another one of those texts brewing in me.

Isaiah 19 verses 23 through 25. Listen to this carefully.

In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. Egypt and Assyria were the great world powers at that time and they are at war. You got to picture that.

[26 : 08] Egypt and Assyria are at war at this time. A highway will be there from Egypt to Assyria and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria to do what?

and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. Talk about transformation. In that day Israel will be a third party with Egypt and Assyria a blessing in the midst of the earth whom the Lord of hosts has blessed saying blessed is Egypt my people and Assyria the work of my hands and Israel my inheritance.

That's the kingdom. Enemy nations join together now because they're united in worship of the one and true living God.

That's the picture that John is given in the book of Revelation in chapter 7 when he sees gathered around the throne of the Lamb all these people from all these different tongues and nations gathered together in unity because they're one in Christ.

That's the kingdom. Father in heaven in heaven creation is being renewed human beings are being restored ethnic groups are being brought together and they worship together in unity with you.

[27 : 31] Father in heaven won't you now cause what is already happening in heaven to happen on the earth. Dignity of causality.

now that's dangerous stuff to pray that way. It's dangerous because when the kingdom comes there is resistance and things start to turn around there's it's topsy-turvy there's a lot of turmoil whenever the kingdom breaks in and hell will try to backlash against it but we can keep our heads keep our cools and keep praying father won't you cause that kingdom that is already experienced in heaven to be experienced right here in earth.

Am I making sense yet? Father in heaven your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Your will the word will here is the word thelema and thelema doesn't mean just this static decree but it has to do with the whole idea of good pleasure.

Father won't you cause your good pleasure to be done on earth? There's a note of joy to this word. What is the father's will? Well he's revealed that to us in the ten commandments and other places like that but the father's will go so much deeper broader higher than that.

You see the father's will is that every human being be set free from any form of bondage. The father finds no delight in anyone being addicted to anything.

[29 : 15] The father's will is that everyone be set free. The father's will then is that once we're set free that we be restored and put back together again.

The father finds no delight in any form of our brokenness. It is his great pleasure that we be made whole again. The father's will is that we know him.

That we know him in intimacy and in joy and in truth and that we know his son and that we know the spirit. The father's will is that we enter into the relationship the father has with the son.

The father's will is that we come to know the son just as he knows him. to love Jesus Christ just the way he loves him. And the son's will is that we come to love the father the way he does and to trust the father the way he does.

The father's will is that we enter into all of that joy and wholeness. The father's will is that is to give himself to us.

[30 : 24] To give himself as father and son and holy spirit to us in all of his fullness. All that it is that makes God be God. This is too much to contemplate. All that it is that makes God be God God wills to give to us.

That's the father's will. Father in heaven your will is already being experienced fully.

Won't you now cause your will to be done on earth just the same it is in heaven. my my my you can't sit and pray the Lord's prayer.

How can we knowing that how can you sit and pray that you gotta stand you gotta jump you gotta do something with a realization of what's happening when we pray that way.

told Jeanette last night this could be the last sermon I ever preach because the father's will is to set creation free and be restored.

[31 : 51] You know this is a major theme in the book of Revelation in the fall we're gonna go through the book of Revelation on Wednesday nights. God willing. And one of the themes in the book of Revelation is that the sovereign God works out his plan in I'm gonna get in theological trouble here but in cooperation with the prayers of the saints of the people of God.

I don't know how that goes together. God is sovereign and yet somehow prayer fits into that. And this is brought together in the grand drama that keeps unfolding before John's eyes.

It really begins in Revelation 1 when he turns around and he sees the resurrected and glorified son of man, Jesus Christ. Then in Revelation 4 he turns and he's brought into heaven and he sees in heaven that there's this throne and on the throne there is this glorious one who is sitting there and in his right hand there is this scroll and the scroll is the unfolding of history, the meaning of history and it's sealed with seven seals.

And John begins to weep because there's no one in heaven and on earth who can open that scroll. None of us knows the meaning of history. None of us can make history flow. And he weeps and weeps and weeps and then an angel comes and says, an elder comes and says, you don't have to be weeping because look, the lion of the tribe of Judah, he has overcome, he can unroll the scroll. And John turns and he doesn't see a lion, he sees a little lamb, the little lamb comes and takes the scroll and he begins to unroll it. Seal 1, seal 2, seal 3, seal 4, seal 5, seal 6.

[33 : 24] And then we come to Revelation chapter 8 verse 1. And it says, before the seventh seal is opened, there is silence in heaven for one half hour. All this drama from chapter 1 on, all this movement of beasts and horses and you know, you start to get sick and dizzy by the time you get there.

Then all of a sudden chapter 8, silence. 30 minutes silence. And you go, what's that silence for? Well, you keep reading and in the next three verses you discover that during that silence there's this incense that comes up and goes before the throne. All this incense. And John says, what's the incense? And he's told the incense is the prayers of the saints.

The prayers of the saints, the prayers of the people of God. And John is told that that seventh seal, which then finally unfolds, moves toward the new heaven and the earth, does not get opened until all the prayers of the saints have been gathered in.

We can hasten the day of the opening of the seventh seal by spending the rest of our lives praying. Oh, calm down. You see what I'm saying? It isn't until all the prayers of the saints have been gathered that history then moves to the next step.

[34 : 47] History is changed in secret in the closet. Oh, it's changed by preaching. It's changed by good deeds. It's changed by all the things we're involved in.

But fundamentally it's changed in the closet. Eugene Peterson. It's coming. Eugene Peterson says in his book on Revelation, commenting on Revelation 8, the vision convinces the Christian of the potencies of prayer.

Prayer is access to an environment in which God is the pivotal action, center of action. All other persons, all other events, all other circumstances are third parties.

Existence is illuminated in direct relation to God himself. Neither bane nor blessing distracts from the center. Persons who pray, this is the line, persons who pray are not misled by the demons of size, influence, importance, or power.

They turn their backs on the gaudy pantheons of Cana and Assyria, Greece and Rome, and give themselves to the personal intensities that become awe before God and in intimacy with God, and they change the world.

[36 : 08] Now it turns out that Jesus who taught us to pray the Lord's Prayer is the answer to the Lord's Prayer. Jesus who taught us to pray this way turns out to be the answer to the prayer.

Father, hallowed be your name on earth as it is in heaven, and the Father says, I did, and there he is. That's my name. See him?

That's my character. Father, your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. And he says, it did. See? There he is.

There's the kingdom. Father, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And he says, it is. Look, there, there, there's my good pleasure, my son.

Look at him. Look. See? Jesus' whole ministry is around those three lines in the Lord's Prayer.

[37 : 13] He has come to hallow the name of the Father. He has come to bring the kingdom of the Father. He has come to do the will of the Father. And now he invites you and me to enter into that level of dignity and causality by praying, our Father in heaven, please won't you cause your character to be honored and manifested in this city as it already is in the city of God?

Father in heaven, won't you please cause your saving rule to be experienced in this city as it already is in the city of God?

And Father, won't you please cause your good pleasure to be worked out and established in this city just as it is in the city of God? Won't you?

That's what it means to pray. And that's how the world gets changed.