

Teach Us To Pray

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Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] Alright, well this morning we're continuing our way through Luke. Luke's Gospel, the story of Jesus. And we're in the Gospel of Luke chapter 11. So, just as a reminder, the last two things that we heard were the parable of the Good Samaritan that Jesus told to the religious lawyer.

And we heard about this visit of Jesus to Mary and Martha's house. Both of these incidents had to do with relationship with God and relationship with Jesus.

Well, this morning we get to continue on with that theme. Because what follows in Luke's Gospel is all about that. Let me just read our verses for us in Luke chapter 11, verse 1 to 4.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.

He said to them, When you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name.

[1 : 19] Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins. For we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation. This prayer is very familiar.

Even for some who don't attend church regularly, they may know the words of this prayer. Maybe they were taught it as a child or remember hearing it in church as they attended with a parent or grandparent.

As we look at this prayer in Luke's Gospel, maybe one of the first things that we notice is that there seem to be some words or phrases missing from it. And why is that?

Well, we have to notice the setting. Go back up to verse 1. Luke tells us that Jesus was praying in a certain place.

[2 : 24] And when he finished praying, one of his disciples said this to him, Lord, teach us to pray. Just as John taught his disciples.

That would be John the Baptist, John the Baptizer. This is the occasion that gave rise to Jesus' teaching on prayer. So Jesus himself was praying and his disciples maybe were watching this or perhaps even overheard some of what he was saying.

And then they make this request. Teach us to pray like you do. But there's actually another occasion on which Jesus taught about prayer.

And we read about it in a different Gospel. We read about it in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 6. So in Matthew chapter 6, we have the longer version of this same prayer.

the one that we're more familiar with in verses 9 to 13. And you'll notice those phrases and words that seem like they're missing from Luke are here.

[3 : 30] We also notice, if we're looking in Matthew's Gospel, that what Jesus taught here, this is actually a different occasion. Jesus wasn't praying right before this.

He was actually teaching about prayer. And then if we look at what comes after in Matthew's Gospel, we see that he continues teaching. But his teaching is different than the stuff that comes after in Luke's Gospel.

In fact, we know where we're at in Luke, chapter 11. The Sermon on the Mount has already taken place back in chapter 6. And so what we've got going on here is two different occasions where Jesus taught about how to pray using very similar words.

One of those occasions, he used a little bit more words and had a few extra phrases and words in there. And on the other occasion with his disciples later in Luke's Gospel, there's a few less words and phrases.

And we've already said this before, but Jesus often taught the same things over and over again in different places to different people. He wanted everyone to hear the same message, the same good news of the kingdom, the same instruction, the same teaching.

[4 : 51] And sometimes he used a little different wording here than there. Now you might be wondering, is there any relevance to all this? I think there is.

One of the questions that we have is what are we supposed to do with this prayer? Does Jesus want his disciples to pray this very same prayer, these exact words?

And how often, how frequently? Every day? Or is this prayer a sort of template, a guide, an example of how we should pray?

And I think the answer to that is kind of proven by the fact there are two slightly different versions of it. If Jesus himself didn't feel obligated to use the exact same words on both occasions, it's evidence that this is a guiding prayer.

It's an example of how we should pray and not the only prayer that we must pray word for word all the time. In some churches, the reciting of this prayer is done so often, it's become a very strong tradition.

[6 : 08] And there's a sort of danger that can go with that. Not that we shouldn't use these words often, but we can become like the lawyer that we heard about back in chapter 10, where we're able to recite the prayer perfectly and flawlessly from memory.

But as we recite it, are we actually praying from our hearts to God these words? Or are we just mindlessly rattling off the same thing again and again?

Because if that's what we're doing, this prayer can become a religious ritual rather than part of a meaningful relationship that we have with God.

And the last thing that God wants from us is for us to just sort of rattle this thing off over and over and over again without even thinking about what we mean when we do it.

Well, let's take some time to work through the phrases of this prayer and just reflect on what these words mean. What does it mean to pray according to this example prayer?

[7 : 21] Well, the first and perhaps the most surprising thing, right at the beginning of this prayer, Jesus teaches us to address God as our Father.

When you pray, say, Father. This surprises us because we're used to the more lofty titles that God has. The Lord, Almighty, the Holy One.

But Father, I mean, that feels close. That feels affectionate. That's family language. And I think Jesus is introducing His disciples to a closeness of relationship that they have not known with God. A closeness that Jesus will bring between God and us through His saving work. Jesus has come to bring us into the family of God as dearly loved children.

This is a wonderful truth and amazing news. We read in Romans how He has come to secure our adoption as sons and daughters members of God.

[8 : 49] Very members of God's family. And so, Father fits the relationship that Jesus has come to bring us into with God.

Next, Jesus says, Hallowed be your name. Father, hallowed be your name. What does that mean? the word over the years as English translations are updated, they've been quite hesitant to touch this word and kind of give it a more familiar word.

It's so part of tradition that this is what the Lord's prayer is, that we're just used to it. Hallowed be thy name. But what do we even mean by that?

What does hallowed mean? the word used here is actually, it comes from the word holy. It's the verb form of the word holy.

[9 : 49] And it means to treat as holy. Or to set apart as special. The Christian Standard Bible has an excellent translation.

It says, Father, your name be honored as holy. Another translation says, Father, may your name be held in honor.

So what am I really saying to God if I use these words? I'm saying, God, I desire that your name be honored, be revered.

That all people would treat you as the holy God that you are. That they would praise your name and glorify your name and so before we can even really say these words to God, we really need to almost stop and think about, do I actually desire God's name to be honored?

Lord, is that the cry of my heart? That God's name be revered and praised by all?

[11 : 02] is at the desire of your heart next we read your kingdom come so father hallowed be your name your kingdom come Jesus teaches us to long for and desire the coming of the kingdom of God and if this is the first time you've ever heard anything like this you might even be wondering

what is the kingdom of God this sounds weird if you've been a Christian for some time and you've been reading in the Bible you'll know that Jesus spoke a lot about the kingdom of God and how it's come near but really the hope of the kingdom of God goes way back to before Jesus was even born back into ancient times the hope of God's kingdom comes from promises that he made to his people to put it sort of briefly and very simply the kingdom of God is the last kingdom of earth it's the greatest kingdom earth will ever see or know it's a global kingdom that God will establish through the one that he has chosen to be king and that one of course is his son

Jesus and it's a permanent kingdom a forever kingdom and the citizens of that kingdom will be all who belong to God and Jesus has lots to say about this coming kingdom many of his parables and teachings are aimed at helping us understand it better well here in this prayer Jesus urges us to desire the kingdom of God and even to ask God to let it come to express that longing to God and so again we have to kind of take a step back and ask the question do you long for the fullness of God's kingdom to come do you desire it do you long for Jesus the king to return the one who will reign in righteousness and justice over all the earth Jesus says express that longing to God regularly next we read give us each day our daily bread and it's amazing how much is packed into this one little request maybe before we even get to the words we notice that up until now we haven't really asked for anything for ourselves yet in this prayer and that's probably by design in other words according to Jesus before we start asking God for things that we need we should first acknowledge him we should first remember who he is we should first put our thoughts to his great end which is his kingdom and then come to bring our things that we are looking for from God into our prayer second we might notice that the word please is absent it just says give us each day our daily bread but even though please is absent humility and reverence is sort of implied we could even translate this as grant us each day our daily bread it's not a demand but a humble request in fact even asking God for our daily provision is really us admitting that we need him just to live it's us admitting that we're not self-sufficient but we require his sustaining provision day after day and so it's actually really very humbling thing to pray it's a declaration of our dependence on God give us each day our daily bread next we notice that word bread how many of you had bread for breakfast this morning I don't expect you to raise your hands but it's something that we eat to live but it's also symbolic it's used often in the Bible as sort of the representative food it's not just bread or food that we need to live it represents sustenance and so that's the principle behind I think what Jesus is saying give us each day our daily bread provide for us the things that we need and so we're not limited to asking for food we can ask for anything what is it that you need

God desires that we come to him by prayer and just ask him for those things whatever they may be it's also hard not to miss the daily emphasis here it comes through really strongly give us each day our daily bread and we can reflect on this there's lots here we could talk about whether God just provides us with what we need one day for each day at the beginning of that day or during that day one of the things I got thinking about here was how this sort of implies that we pray daily that we come to God and ask for each day's provision in other words Jesus is steering us toward a certain frequency of communication with

God our relationship with God as our father is intended to be more than an exchange of words every couple weeks or every Sunday this sort of implies that we talk with God about our needs each day doesn't it give us each day our daily bread our relationship with God as dependent children in his family is to be a daily relationship that's what he wants with us a daily walk with him what do you need from God today we might reflect on earlier this morning did we stop and take time to just ask God for the things that we need for today but more than that if daily is the frequency then it sort of makes sense that this be our habit that every morning at some point we take time to bring our needs to him do you do that perhaps one of the reasons we struggle with this is because we aren't always desperate and in dire straits in the toughest of moments when things feel out of our control it's easy to pray and ask

[19 : 11] God for help but we aren't always in dire need perhaps we even feel sometimes if we're honest that we don't really need God's help today or provision we can get what we need on our own and yet even the strength to get up and go to work and earn the next dollar it comes from God having anything at all ultimately is the grace and provision of God we are far more dependent on him for life and for everything else than we realize and so it really is fitting as Jesus taught to come to him each day and ask for each day's things that we need from him well next Jesus says when you pray say father forgive us of our sins forgive us our sins for we also forgive everyone who sins

against us

I couldn't help but notice the order of the things and how they come in this prayer we might have expected that this should be the first thing that we ask God for before we can even expect to receive anything else from God we need to first ask God to forgive us of our sins but the truth is it's not how it works in the family of God once we belong to him through Jesus we are part of his family this prayer for forgiveness I don't think is the first moment of repentance in a believer's life it's not the first time praying this prayer that we would ask for God's forgiveness I think it's here to show us that even after we already have confessed and repented and believed in the Lord we have to come back to God and confess our sins continually and regularly an ordinary human relationship works the same imagine what would happen if you went to a loved one in your family and you said would you please forgive me of everything that

I've done wrong against you and they said yeah I will but then as your relationship with them continues you continue to do things to them it's just like at home as your relationship with the person that you ask for forgiveness from continues you continue to do things to them that are wrong you continue to say things to them that are hurtful what if you never apologized or admitted anything that you did wrong to them again because you thought well I did that already that was good enough wasn't it they said they forgave me so what's the need well it's true that God has forgiven us through Christ of all of our sins past present and future and that when we repent and we put our faith in him that forgiveness is ours but that has to do with our status with

God our standing with him there is still that real daily relationship that we have with God where we need to admit to him when we've sinned and ask for his forgiveness that's how a real relationship works and so Jesus taught his disciples to regularly ask God for forgiveness for their sins and again this is a sort of general request but as with the bread I think there's a sort of principle here we ask sometimes just very generally would you forgive me of my sins knowing that we can't even begin to name or count or remember them all but I think the principle here implies that we would also at times confess specifics there's specific things you know that you've done wrong I think it's implied that here as we pray that would be the moment yes confess those things to God ask for his forgiveness and it's not stated here but I think it's implied it's also taught elsewhere that God does not withhold forgiveness from us when we sincerely ask for it he is gracious to forgive us when we confess our sins to him you see that in first

John 1:9 Jesus has made atonement for our sins once and for all and so God can simply grant us forgiveness whenever we ask what's particularly interesting about this part of the prayer this request is that unlike the other things asked for this thing comes with an add-on forgive us our sins for we also forgive everyone who sins against us there's this add-on it's maybe a little strange and unexpected we probably wouldn't put this into the prayer except that Jesus told us to we might be tempted to think of our relationships with other people as having nothing to do with our relationship with God and whether God forgives me of my sins when I ask him has nothing to do with whether I forgive others who sin against me when they ask me right those are two separate relationships aren't they but the way

[25 : 25] Jesus teaches us to pray here forces us to think right in the moment when we're asking for his forgiveness of how we're treating others it's almost as if Jesus is saying do not expect to receive forgiveness from God for your sins if you're not willing to grant the same to others who have sinned against you so every time you come to God asking for forgiveness think of those who have sinned against you and have you forgiven them basically we're praying father treat me as I have treated others forgive me just as I also forgive those who sin against me can you honestly pray this prayer if you're withholding forgiveness from someone if you're holding a grudge if you're keeping a record of wrongs and grievances and offenses in your heart with someone if there's one thing that God's children must be known for it's forgiving forgiving one another this is so significant that Jesus when he's teaching on the other occasion in the

Sermon on the Mount this part of the prayer he actually elaborates on this point and he says this in Matthew 6 verse 14 he says for if you forgive other people when they sin against you your heavenly father will also forgive you but if you do not forgive others their sins your father will not forgive your sins that's a scary thought isn't it if you withhold forgiveness from others when they sin against you God will withhold forgiveness from you this is one of those truths in the Bible that makes us squirm it unsettles us what about the many assurances we have of salvation what about the doctrine of eternal security well it seems to me that those offer no guarantees to the person who will not forgive

I don't know how else to take those words a true child of God must and will forgive those who sin against them if they persist in stubbornly refusing forgiveness then whether they truly know God and his gracious gospel is in question this is further reinforced by Jesus parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18 finally Jesus teaches us to pray these last words in the prayer in Luke's gospel lead us not into temptation what is it that causes us to sin in the first place how do we get to that place where we choose to do the wrong thing temptation is part of the process it's kind of somewhere in there on the way to doing it

James actually describes this quite vividly in his letter in James chapter one he says when when tempted no one should say God is tempting me for God cannot be tempted by evil nor does he tempt anyone but each person is tempted when they're dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed then after desire has conceived it gives birth to sin and sin when it is full grown gives birth to death James describes temptation as being dragged away by our own evil desires we might call it temptation from the inside but we also know that we can be tempted from the outside as well from other people and from the devil we heard earlier in Luke about how the devil tempted Jesus whatever the source of temptation whether it's inside or outside temptation is sort of the last moment of struggle before we sin and here

Jesus teaches us to pray and to ask God for help in those for those moments even before we're tempted to sin we're to ask God to watch over our path lead us such that we will not even get close to sin against you let me not be dragged away by my own evil desires steer me away from the moments and the places where I will be bombarded by external temptations such that I might give in and do what's wrong there's sort of an earnestness in these words just to please God and do what's right and not be taken captive again to do what we know is wrong this plea at the end of the prayer here it reminds me of some of David's moments of prayer in the Psalms I think of Psalm 119 verse 29 where he prays keep me from deceitful ways be gracious to me and teach me your law or Psalm 119 verse 36 where David says turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain you can almost hear the battle raging in

[31 : 46] David's heart as he prays this Lord turn my heart I think it's a similar prayer lead us not into temptation work in us that we go the other way do we pray and ask God regularly for help to overcome sin and temptation God is eager to give us that help so these are the kinds of things that we should say to God according to Jesus when we pray just in summary we should acknowledge him we should remember who he is we should express our desire for his name to be honored and for his kingdom to come we should humbly ask for each day the things that we need we should regularly ask for his forgiveness for the things that we've done wrong while also being mindful of how we're treating others we should ask for his help in our battle against sin and temptation these are the things that please

God these are the things that he wants to hear from us and as we do I think we need to just remember we can use these words exactly maybe you do frequently but we must guard against that sort of empty ritualistic recitation we must put our heart into these words as we speak them to God these words are here to guide us into relationship with him so let's just end by asking God to work these words deep into our hearts let's pray together father in heaven we thank you that you desire a relationship with us even though we have sinned so many times that we've lost count we thank you that you are merciful and sent your son into our world to draw us into this wonderful relationship with you that we now have and I pray that we wouldn't lose the awe and the wonder of that Lord remind us each one of us through this prayer of how we can continue to be in relationship with you the things we need to keep bringing to you whether it's our needs or our struggles with sin or maybe it's a relationship with someone who we're having a tough time forgiving press these words deep into our hearts the cry of our heart is for your name to be honored and for you to be praised and we know that these words are given for that reason so lead us in that we ask in Jesus name amen