

PM Matthew 6:1-18

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Preacher: Rev Duncan Peters

[0:00] To read together from the Holy Bible, from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6.!

It's quite a long sermon. It's not long. If you read it compared to the sermons we have in church, it's not that long. But it takes up quite a bit of Matthew. It begins at the beginning of chapter 5 and goes all the way through to the end of chapter 7.

So we're reading the middle section of that from chapter 6, verse 1 to 18, on page 978 of the Church Bible. Jesus says, Truly I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.

[1:55] Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Pray then like this, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

[3:12] And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces, that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others, but by your Father, who is in secret.

And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you. May God bless to us that reading of his word. Let's join together again in prayer.

Lord our God, we give you thanks for your word. We thank you that we have it so freely available to us in our own language, and so easily accessible.

Thank you that we can join together as a company of your people to read and reflect upon it. And we do ask for your help in that. We ask for your help in that this evening.

[4:19] We ask for your help for that individually as we daily read your word, that we would understand it and grow in our knowledge of your word and of you from it, and in also how it applies to us, and that we would seek to live and order our lives according to your word.

Lord, we do pray for your blessing on this congregation. We thank you for it, and we ask that you would bless each person, each family connected to it.

Lord, you know us. You know our needs, our burdens, our concerns, and we would lift before you any who have particular burdens this evening for those who are unwell, those who are struggling with their health, those who have other concerns, anxieties, maybe at work, in their families, or in whatever situation.

We pray that whatever our need, whatever our burden, that you would draw near to us, and that we would be able to cast our burdens upon you.

We would pray also for the outreach of the congregation into the surrounding town and area.

[5 : 42] We remember the drop-in on Wednesday, and we pray for that, for the people who come to that, and pray that there would be opportunity to share from your word, to share your good news in just some way or other, and also just by, through deeds, that those who come would see and experience your love for them through your people.

And we pray that you would bring those who come to salvation. We pray for others who may have taken literature from the literature table or heard open-air preaching, those who came to the carol service last month.

And in different ways, different places, those who have come into contact with your people, we do pray that your spirit would be at work in many lives, and that you would add to your church, that you would build up your church here.

We would pray that for other congregations in the town too. We also pray for those I mentioned earlier, for the two A's, and for S.

We pray for them. We pray that, as they have maybe more knowledge of the scriptures than most other Muslims, we just pray that you would open their eyes to see that the Bible is your word, the word of God, and that its great theme is the Savior, Jesus Christ, and that they would put their trust, their faith in him.

[7 : 24] And we pray that you would also work in their families, draw their families to faith in you, we pray. We also remember the situation this evening in Iran.

We do pray for that land. We pray for an end to the violence there. And we do pray for peace, for a just peace, and for good and just and righteous rule in that land.

And for a situation where your gospel can thrive. We thank you that in many ways it is thriving, that many have come to faith in Christ. But we pray that you would also change the government, either changing the government or changing their mind and heart to allow people to follow Christ freely.

And so we do pray for that land and lift it before you. We pray for a neighboring Afghanistan where there has been such trouble, such violence, such turmoil for decades now.

And we pray for peace in that land. And we pray for your people there. And we ask that you would protect them and bless them. we know that there are many other parts of the world where there is trouble, where there is turmoil, where there is devastation from war.

[8 : 48] And we pray for these places, for the healing of the nations, for the healing of the nations through Jesus Christ. And so Lord, we bring these matters before you.

We ask that you would continue with us in our time together. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. I'd like us to turn back to the passage that we read to Matthew chapter 6 on page 978.

And we're going to focus just on words in verse 10. Part of the Lord's Prayer. The petition, Your kingdom come.

And then on earth as it is in heaven. The Lord's Prayer is perhaps the best known part of the entire Bible.

Even people who know very little might know or have heard of the Lord's Prayer. It's just 57 words in the Greek of Matthew.

[10:05] It's just a very brief prayer, a model prayer. But it is vast in its scope and profound. It is of course about how we should pray.

And it is a model prayer. Jesus says, pray then like this. It's not that we, because it's good to pray this prayer, but it's a model for how we should pray.

But also, it outlines our priorities. You normally pray for what matters to you. Your prayer reflects the priorities that you have in life.

True prayer involves commitment. It's not just a passive thing, but a commitment to seek and to do all that we can to advance the thing that we are praying for if it's within our power to do so.

So for example, in this prayer we pray, your kingdom come. And then a bit later in chapter 6 verse 33, Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom of God.

[11:14] So our prayer reflects our priorities for life. And in fact, the Lord's Prayer reorders those priorities.

There are seven requests in the prayer. And the first three are concerned with God, with God's name, God's rule or kingdom, and God's will.

Before coming to our needs, our needs of food, forgiveness, and protection from evil. And so the Lord's Prayer is a God-centered, God-focused prayer.

And for many of us, that may involve a radical reordering of our priorities. Nicholas Copernicus lived from 1473 to 1543.

And up to his time, people believed that the, obviously in Europe, they believed that the earth was at the center of all things. And that the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets revolved around the earth, with the earth at the center.

[12:32] But in 1530, Copernicus said that, from his observations, from his study of the skies, said that, no, the sun was at the center of our solar system.

And that the earth and the other planets revolved around the sun. And so from Copernicus, there was a revolution. There was a new center.

And that's what the Lord's Prayer does for us. It gives us a new center. Our tendency, our nature is to be self-centered.

And that can even be reflected in our prayers. We can go to God and pray, and it's all about me, all about my needs and what God can do for me. But the Lord's Prayer reorders all of that.

It says, no, you're not at the center. I'm not at the center of things. God is at the center. Everything revolves not around me, but around God. And so, the first three requests are concerned with God.

[13:38] God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will. God is addressed as our Father in heaven. And the disciple of Jesus Christ has a relationship with God as, that is like a child's relationship with a father.

father. Now, some people may have a negative experience of fatherhood, maybe a bad relationship with their father, maybe a father who was abusive or absent or distant.

And so, father is qualified by our father in heaven. He is the perfect father, the father who is absolutely perfect in his love for us and his relationship with us.

And that relationship is expressed in the prayer, throughout the prayer. We seek to honour and obey God as our father. And we look to him for provision, provision of our daily food, for protection from evil.

We also seek to forgiveness, forgiveness of ourselves, but also of our own forgiveness of other people, so that there are harmonious relations in the family of God.

[15:04] So the fact that he's our father in heaven reminds us that though in some ways he is like the very best of human fathers, God's fatherhood is also different.

Of course, it's not a biological fatherhood, but it's heavenly, it is perfect, it is neither harsh nor overindulgent, but perfectly wise and caring and loving and compassionate and just.

So the first three requests focus on God, on God's name or reputation, God's honour, and then on his kingdom or reign, and then on his will.

And these three requests are followed by words that are easily missed, on earth as it is in heaven. And that's not just about the immediately preceding request God's will being done, but it's about all three of these requests, God's name being hallowed, God's kingdom coming, and God's will being done.

And it tells us that God's name is hallowed, his kingdom does hold sway, and his will is done perfectly and completely and fully in heaven, in God's own realm, God's own dimension.

[16:24] But here on earth, we see that God's name is not hallowed. It is ignored, it is misused, it is even mocked, or perhaps even worse, that it is co-opted to back human plans and schemes and empires and ideologies.

And we see that his, on earth, that his kingdom is rejected, and his will is flouted. But the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray for what happens on the earth.

And that tells us that God is concerned for this earth, and we should be too. God's plan is not to scrap this planet and take our redeemed souls off somewhere else to heaven.

God's plan is to redeem and restore earth, this place, and to restore it and renew it to the original harmony that he created, and to restore it to be a place where his name is honoured, where his reign holds supreme, and his wise, good, and just will is done.

we live in an age of ecological crisis and anxiety, and we hear many dire warnings of environmental catastrophe, and of course these should be taken with the utmost seriousness, and yet I think many people in our society are in a state of environmental despair, ecological despair, despair, despair, over the state of our planet, they think it's finished, there's no hope for it, and yet here we find that God has not given up on planet earth, he has an agenda, he has a plan, and so earth has a future, it has a hope for healing, and for harmony and wholeness, and a flourishing, abundant life, and we have a part to play for that, a part to play in that, through our prayers, and our actions, and in the way we live our lives.

[18:44] So as we come to this request, your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, I just want to note three things, first of all, just God's eternal and universal kingdom, or kingship, reign, second, the rebellion against that reign, and then third, the return of the king.

king. So first, God's eternal, universal kingdom. The Lord Jesus frequently spoke about the kingdom of God.

In Matthew, that's usually, it's usually the kingdom of heaven, whereas in Mark, Luke, and John, it's usually the kingdom of God. To remember that all these books, the New Testament was written in Greek, whereas Jesus probably spoke most of his teaching in Aramaic, so it's all translation, and Matthew translates it kingdom of heaven.

But over 60 times in the gospel accounts, we read of Jesus speaking about the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. So right at the beginning in Mark chapter 1 verse 15, Jesus says, the time has come, the kingdom of God has come near.

Repent and believe the good news. What did Jesus mean by the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven? Well, in one sense, God always was, he is now, and always will be king.

[20 : 21] His reign is eternal. So, for example, and there's many examples we could have used, but from Psalm 10 verse 16, it says, the Lord is king forever and ever.

So right through time, God is king. His reign is eternal. And it's also a universal reign. Again, just one example. Psalm 47 2, the Lord most high is awesome, the great king over all the earth.

And so right through time, right through space, God's, God is king. His reign holds sway. But then second, we come to human rebellion.

And the state of our world today shows that God's reign of justice and righteousness is not accepted by everyone.

People are in rebellion against that rule. They reject God's reign. And in our world today, we see so much violence and injustice and cruelty.

[21 : 32] We see war and selfishness and apathy. We see the pollution and spoiling of God's creation. In other words, we see evil.

And creation itself has gone badly wrong. There are diseases. There are natural disasters, or what we call natural disasters. Perhaps we should call them unnatural disasters. There is decay and there is death.

death. Now, most people in the world acknowledge the existence of evil. If you went and did a brief survey of people in the streets of Dumfries, probably most people would say, yeah, I believe that there is evil.

And they would perhaps be able to point you to things that they think of as evil. That something is badly wrong with the world. And yet, most people don't know or don't acknowledge that its cause is revolt against the world's true king who is God.

And God did not make the universe like this. After creating everything, God declared it all good. He declared it all very good at the end of Genesis chapter 1. And that same chapter tells us how God made humans rulers over the rest of creation under God's supreme rule.

[22 : 53] to manage it, to develop it, to experiment, to plan, to work the creation. And yet, the first humans, Adam and Eve, disobeyed the command of God.

And in so doing, they rebelled against the reign and the authority of God, the maker. And as a result, not only Adam and Eve, but the whole of creation over which they had been appointed rulers, was impacted and affected by that.

Adam and Eve's descendants also were affected and inclined towards evil. We see that in their two sons, Cain, murdered his brother Abel.

And it's like as if Adam and Eve were captains of a huge oil tanker which they steered onto the rocks. It wasn't just Adam and Eve that went down, the whole tanker went down with them.

And that is the origin of the brokenness that we experience in our world today. And so God is king, but his reign is rejected by human beings and the whole of creation is affected by that rebellion.

[24 : 07] If you imagine a country in which there is a rightful and legitimate government, but there are many rebels, many insurgents who refuse to accept that government and are fighting against that and sometimes they're fighting, it seems to dominate the country.

And that is like the situation of our world in relation to God's rule. But third we come to the return of the king. So it's against this background of rebellion that God through his prophets promised a time when God's reign would come in completeness, when all obstacles to that reign and all the enemies of God would be overthrown, when even death would be reversed, and when God would restore everything to the original perfection he made in the garden of paradise.

That is the great biblical hope. We see it in seed form in God's promise to Abraham. God promised Abraham blessing and that through him all the nations, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

And blessing of course is the opposite of curse. It's an undoing of the curse that is promised there. And then from Abraham's descendants the Israelites are formed and God makes a covenant with those people.

And really what a covenant is, a covenant can be described as a treaty, the treaty of the great king. God is the great king. In the ancient Near East, kings would make covenants with peoples they had conquered or kings that they had conquered who would become vassal kings.

[26 : 03] And they would make a treaty. And so the whole idea of covenant is very much connected with the idea of the kingdom of God, the kingship, the reign of God. God is the supreme king, the great king.

And he made a covenant with his people Israel. But of course Israel repeatedly again and again broke that covenant. Then from the Israelites we read through the Old Testament of the emergence of the kingship.

first of all Saul and then Saul is deposed and David is made king. And God promises to David that his descendants will reign forever.

And David's kingship and his offspring's kingship in some way represents God's reign, God's kingship. But of course David and his descendants repeatedly failed to live up to that.

And that led eventually to the exile in Babylon in the 6th century BC when the Davidic line came to an end, at least as rulers over the land and nation.

[27 : 16] And the temple, the house of God was destroyed and they were ruled and oppressed by pagan nations. And indeed that was still, although empires had come and gone, that was still the situation at the time when Jesus Christ lived.

They were then under the Roman empire. But God through his prophets promised restoration, the restoration of the reign of God, that the Lord himself would return to Zion to reign.

Sometimes that was depicted as being through the Messiah, a Messiah figure, a representative king who would come, who would be in the line of David. Sometimes the prophets spoke of God himself returning to Zion to reign, to rule.

And you can read of that books like Isaiah and other prophets. So they spoke of the age to come when God's reign would be complete and unopposed.

When God would completely overthrow evil and put the world to right and rescue his people from their pagan enemies. When sins would be forgiven, when the exile would be finished, be over, and when the whole of creation would be renewed, and even death put into reverse.

[28 : 38] And in line with this, the Lord Jesus taught that God's kingdom, the kingdom of God, would come in completeness at the resurrection, at the end of this age. That was the glorious hope of the majority of Jews at that time, and Jesus taught that himself.

But Jesus also redefined this idea of the kingdom or the reign of God, by identifying it with his own coming and mission.

Just a couple of examples from his words in the Gospels. Luke 11 verse 20, Jesus says, If by the finger of God I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

So, saying there that in Jesus' own ministry of delivering people from demons, the kingdom of God has arrived. Luke 10 verse 1 and 2 and then verse 9, The Lord appointed 72 others and sent them two by two ahead of himself to all the towns and places where he was about to go.

He said to them, Heal the sick in that town and tell them, The kingdom of God has come near to you. So, in other words, wherever Jesus is about to go, the kingdom of God has come near.

[29 : 56] The kingdom of God comes near where Jesus is about to arrive because he is the king. The future reign of God has broken into the present with the coming of Jesus.

And notice that when the kingdom of God draws near, the sick are healed. The brokenness of this world, due to human and demonic rebellion, begins to be healed and put right.

God's reign of God. And it's just a wonderful vision that we have of God here. When God's reign comes near, in and as the person of Jesus Christ, what do we find him doing?

Not sitting in luxury in a palace, but among the sick and the broken and the desolate and those oppressed by demons and he's healing them.

people. I've used this before here, but I'll use it again in J.R. Tolkien's third in the Lord of the Rings trilogy, The Return of the King.

[31 : 00] The King is Aragorn. And there's one line in that book where it speaks of Aragorn. It says, the hands of the king are the hands of a healer, and so shall the rightful king be known.

And how true that is of the Lord Jesus Christ, of King Jesus. His healing ministry, of course we read of that throughout the Gospels, but all those healings, his healing ministry is a great trailer of when the reign of God will come in its completeness and there will be total healing.

So God's kingdom drew near when King Jesus came to this world and began his work. So the kingdom drew near with Jesus coming.

The kingdom actually arrived with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Of course that's a strange coronation. But Jesus is the Messiah, the long expected warrior king who would triumph over God's enemies, who would rescue his people.

And this was accomplished to everyone's shock and surprise by his death and then by his resurrection from the dead, in which he defeats evil and sin and the devil.

[32 : 31] If we go back to the image of a country in which there's a rightful and legitimate government, but there are many rebels who refuse to accept that government. we noted that's like the situation of our world in relation to God's rule.

But now with Jesus Christ coming and particularly with his death and resurrection, there has been a decisive victory won against those rebels. A victory that is a defeat that they will never recover from.

And yet those rebels are still active, causing disruption in the country. And that is like the world since the coming of the Lord Jesus. But then imagine a day comes when those rebels will be absolutely crushed and will no longer hold the country back with their revolt and disruption.

And on that day, the rightful government's rule will be complete and unchallenged. And something like this will happen one day in the future when Jesus Christ returns to this earth.

Then the kingdom of God will come in its completeness. Justice will be done. All wrongs will be righted. Creation will be healed. Death will be put into reverse.

[33:51] And all those who belong to Jesus Christ will be raised to eternal life. And so we today are living in between the initial coming and victory of the king and his future return to total and final victory in the future.

It's as if we're living between the dawn and the sunrise. The dawn is already broken with Jesus' first coming but we await the rising of the sun when Jesus returns.

And so when we pray your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, we are praying for the coming of that new age which will be ushered in at the return of King Jesus.

And we are praying and committing ourselves to seek and work for the advance and spread of God's reign in our world today. In fact it's very similar to the next request, your will be done.

We are praying that everything will be brought into submission to the will of the king. and we seek that, we advance that in any way that God's mission of healing and justice and compassion comes to the nations and even to creation itself.

[35:12] And our prayer is that people all over the world will come to acknowledge and submit and give their allegiance to King Jesus. At the end of this book, Matthew 28 verses 18 and 20, Jesus there speaks of all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

In other words, he's the king, the king of heaven and earth, the king of the universe. And therefore he commissions his own disciples to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded.

commanded. So in other words, the whole world needs to know that Jesus is king and to come into submission and allegiance and faith in him.

So to pray your kingdom come on earth is also to commit to bringing that small piece of earth over which I have real responsibility under God's kingship.

In other words, myself. And that goes for each of us. We each of us are our prime responsibilities for ourselves, for our own lives.

[36:38] And when we're praying your kingdom come on earth, we're praying that my life be brought into line with God's rule, into obedience to God's rule. is to pray to God, reign in me, reign in my life.

You are my Lord and my king. I give you my allegiance, my submission, my obedience, my love. And so in closing I ask, are you seeking first the kingdom of God?

Have you given your allegiance, your faith, your loyalty, your trust to King Jesus? Do we pray and pray meaning it, your kingdom come on earth as in heaven.

May God grant that it be so. Amen.