

AM Matthew 6 The Lord's Prayer

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[0 : 00] I'm going to read from God's Word now from the Gospel of Matthew at chapter 6. I'm going to read from the Gospel of Matthew at chapter 6.

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.

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.

[1 : 58] 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.

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, that 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. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The eye is the lamp of the body, so if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

[3 : 14] If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.

Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing?

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

[4 : 14] But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat?

Or, What shall we drink? Or, What shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Amen.

May the Lord bless to us the reading of his own holy word. To his name be the praise. Let's look back now at Matthew chapter 6, and we're going to read verses 5 to 13.

Matthew chapter 6 at verse 5.

[5 : 30] 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.

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. Amen. As I mentioned earlier, and as you might know already, I work with the Turkish Church, and the main part of ministry that I'm involved in, main area of ministry, is that we prepare Bible study materials.

[6 : 52] But it means that I spend a lot of time in Turkey, and at Turkish Church services. And one of the customs that many of the Turkish churches have, that I like, is that at the end of every service, they sing a version of the Lord's Prayer together.

All the Turkish churches use the same songbook. So this version of the Lord's Prayer ties them to one another. It's not all the churches, but most of the churches sing the same version of the Lord's Prayer at the end of the service, right before they leave.

And of course this ties them to Christians all around the world, because there are many churches which say this prayer as part of every service.

I also go to Romania, to Transylvania, and spend time with the Hungarian Reformed Church. And even if they have a morning worship, they will always say the Lord's Prayer as part of that.

And of course, at every actual church service as well. Many believers around the world, many families around the world, say the Lord's Prayer every day together.

[8 : 06] So this morning, I'd like to look very briefly at the background to this prayer, and then at especially the first few words of it. In this passage, Jesus tells us that there are two wrong ways to pray, and there is one right way to pray.

First, in verse 5, we have the way of praying of the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners.

These people loved to pray. But isn't that a good thing? Isn't it a good thing to love to pray, to love spending a long time in prayer?

What could possibly be wrong with somebody who wants to pray? Well, Jesus calls these people hypocrites. And I'm sure many of us will know that the word hypocrite, in Greek, in the original Greek, it meant a play actor.

And this is where these people were going astray. Their prayer wasn't real. They were acting. Yes, they loved prayer. But they didn't love the God they were supposed to be praying to.

[9 : 26] They loved themselves. They loved to have people think they were so spiritual. They did this to be seen by others.

The reward they were looking for is the praise of others. And they, of course, they are going to get it because nobody is going to look at somebody who seems very spiritual, who spends a long time in prayer, and not think that's a good thing.

But what small ambitions they have. They have the chance to talk to God himself, the living God, the creator of the universe.

And instead, they are only focused on what others think about them. It's interesting to notice that in Luke chapter 11, in the parallel passage to this one, we read, 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. This shows us that Jesus probably taught the Lord's Prayer to the disciples on their own,

before he taught it to the crowds in the Sermon on the Mount.

[10:42] Because here in Matthew 5, we read, of course, we're reading in the Sermon on the Mount, so Jesus was surrounded by crowds. But this must have been the second time that he taught this prayer, because we know that he taught it to his disciples quietly on their own.

Because yes, there are times when we pray in public together, but there is also a time for prayer on our own, with our Father in heaven, in a way that strengthens our relationship with him.

Another thing that we notice about that passage in Luke is that the disciples were obviously there, quietly and patiently waiting until Jesus finished praying, before they came to ask him, Lord, teach us to pray.

Although he's talking here about hypocrites who loved to be seen praying, it's not as if Jesus always tried to hide what he did. It's not as if he tried to hide it from the disciples.

It's not as if he was embarrassed about it. But for him, prayer was just a natural part of daily life.

And we need to keep that in mind as we look at these verses here.

[12:02] Yes, we do have to be careful of praying, of being hypocrites, of praying like the hypocrites, of wanting other people to think we are so religious.

But that doesn't need, it doesn't need to mean that we hide from others that we do pray. The second wrong way of prayer we find in verse 7 and verse 8.

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

What's being condemned here is not so much the many words. Because repeating something in prayer is not always wrong.

Jesus says here, pray then like this, before he teaches the Lord's Prayer. He does give us that prayer as a model. But what he's talking about in verses 7 and 8 is, the way the NIV translates it is, babbling like pagans.

[13:16] Babbling. It's as if these people weren't even really listening themselves to what they said as they prayed. These people have a totally wrong view of God.

People sometimes think that God must be pleased with prayer for its own sake. Just because we pray. If we say lots of prayers, we must be very religious, and of course that's always a good thing, isn't it?

And God is always happy with us for that. But think though about a father being asked for something by a child. Maybe the child wants some ice cream.

And they ask for it once. And the father knows that it's going to be dinner time soon, so the father says no. But then the child asks again.

And the child asks again, and again, and again, and again, and they pester the father, thinking that if they keep on hassling their father, then they will get it. That's the sort of thing that Jesus is talking about here.

[14:17] These are people who think that if they pester God long enough, he will give them what they're asking for. It's so disrespectful to God.

It shows that we don't really understand his character. We don't understand that he is a loving, caring father who will give his children what is best for them.

That's why we have verse 8. Do not be like them, for your father knows what you need before you ask him. We are not to be like them because we're not to think of God in that way.

But if God knows what we need anyway, why bother asking him in the first place? Well, this is when we have to remember that prayer is not just asking for things, although there's nothing wrong with that.

It's like talking with anyone else that we love. God loves to have his people talk to him. Yes, to tell him what we need.

[15:26] But also to tell him that we love him, that we appreciate him. To tell him about the things that bother us, that worry us. To bring to him our prayers for others, our intercession for the people that we care about.

By prayer, we can change things in ways that we can't understand. God does know what we need. And he does know what we're going to ask for.

But he still allows us to take part in his work in this world through prayer. He's told us that he will do the things that he's going to do because his people have prayed.

We don't need to pray as if we can harass God into giving us what we want. We respect him and we trust him. And we know your father knows what you need before you ask him.

So these then are two ways that we are not to pray. Not play acting, not showing off for those around us and not having a wrong view of God's character.

[16:37] What about the ways that we are to pray? Well, when we look at verse 6, that 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.

We need to remember here the kind of houses the people that Jesus was talking to would have lived in. The houses of ordinary people usually just had one main room. So when Jesus speaks about going into your room and shutting the door, someone's translated it as store cupboard. It probably wouldn't have been a very comfortable place. It wouldn't have meant that you could shut out all the noise. Many of us can feel at times as if our lives are so busy that we find it difficult for us to get privacy to pray.

But let's remember though that this was a culture where people were usually very much on top of one another. There wasn't any privacy. We shouldn't think that Christ is saying to us that the only time we can pray is when we can be absolutely certain we are shutting everyone else out of the place in which we are.

What he's saying here is find a place where you can try to be on your own with God. And in this private place the Father is waiting to welcome us and reward us.

[18:11] Store cupboards could also be used for storing things that were valuable, things that were precious. And of course I don't need to explain how that would apply to prayer and to our relationship with God.

So, now that Christ has dealt with how we shouldn't pray, he gives us a model for how we should pray.

And this is a beautifully balanced prayer. It goes totally against the two kinds of wrong prayer that we find mentioned earlier. In this first section we have a focus on God, on his name, on his will, on his kingdom.

And this is the opposite of the attitude of the hypocrite who is so obsessed with what people think of himself. And in the second half of the prayer we have three sections where we tell the Father everything we need.

And again, this is such a contrast to the babbling of the pagans. They pour out words to their idea of God to try to get exactly what they want.

[19:22] But we can tell our Father about all that we need in three short sentences. So as we come to God we remind ourselves exactly of who he is and what he is like.

Remember how short this prayer is. Jesus must have put into it exactly what he knows is most important for us to understand and what is most important for us to pray about.

And we see that the first thing we should know about who God is is that he is our Father in heaven. What does the Bible tell us about God as our Father?

Well, there are so many verses in the Bible that speak about this and here are just a couple. But now, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay and you are our potter.

We are all the work of your hand. That's from Isaiah 64. God is our creator. He's our maker. He's the one who formed us, who changes us, who cares for us and gives us all the good things that we need.

[20:38] God is merciful to us. We know Psalm 103. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

For he knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust. What's compassion? Compassion is mercy, it's kindness, it's love.

A good father loves his children and he will try to train them and that's what God does with us and the different things that happen to us. Yes, it can feel difficult at times, but we know that as we go through times of trial and testing, God will go through them with us.

So what Jesus is saying to us is this, as we come to God in prayer, we understand that he is our father. He is a real person.

He is our creator. He is the one who cares for us. He is merciful. He is the one who teaches us and trains us and he loves us. He is like the best kind of human father.

[21 : 49] Yes, unfortunately, sometimes our own fathers can be very bad examples to us. There are fathers who can treat their children very cruelly. But if we had the misfortune to grow up like that, well, if nothing else, we can come to the God that we see in scripture and we can have the wounds that we have from our past healed by realizing that this is what our heavenly father is like.

This is the way he cares about us, watches over us, protects us, guides us, the way a good human father should do. The best kind of human father.

So these are the most important things that we're to remember about God as we pray. God our father, he is also powerful. That's what in heaven is meant to remind us of.

He has the authority and the power as the creator and the ruler of all things. we come to him realizing that we are just one of his creatures the way that all human beings around about us are. Now we see that there is so much chaos around us in the world but we need to remember who our father is. He is the one who is in heaven.

[23 : 13] He is the king. He is the one who rules and leads us. We also because of this we can come to him in confidence that because of his tremendous power he is also able to do everything that we ask of him.

And he is able to do more than we ask. And then we see what we are to ask of him. Give us the stay our daily bread.

Our basic needs. The most simple of all the needs that we can think of. Our need for food. forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

We bring to him our relationship with others because again our relationships are fundamental. None of us can live in this world as beings who are totally isolated from others and particularly not in the church.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Again a very simple prayer, a very simple thing to pray for, for protection in times of temptation and times of trial.

[24 : 25] And that's it. These are the basic needs that Jesus tells us to ask for. So whether we use this prayer as a model or whether we do do as many believers around the world do and use it as something that we pray every day or regularly, it helps train the way that we think about prayer.

It helps us realise what Christian prayer is meant to be, prayer according to God's word. So there are two wrong kinds of prayer. Those who are not interested in meeting the living God, who are just praying to show others how spiritual they are.

And there are those who are concentrating on their own wishes, who think they can use prayer to nag God into giving them what they want. And then there's this, the right kind of prayer.

Done somewhere we can find the space, done in a quiet corner, done where we won't be distracted. Looking to our Heavenly Father, meeting with Him, strengthening our relationship with Him, bringing our needs to Him, and praying to our Father in Heaven.

Amen. May the Lord bless these thoughts on His Word. To His name.