

Praying Jesus' Way

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[0:00] And as you are seated, please grab your Bible and turn back to Luke chapter 11 as we continue our series through Luke's gospel.

Well, a couple of weeks ago I shared a blast from my past in terms of a piece of music. I thought I'd do another one today, this time by a rapper called MC Hammer.

Take a look. We pray, we pray, we pray. We got to pray just to make it today. I said we pray, we pray, we pray.

We got to pray just to make it today. We pray. So next time, choir, we're coming to get you up here. I know we're going to go for it.

No, no, no, we're not, we're not. But you got the chorus though, didn't you? You know, we got to pray. Pray. And I'm not going to do that. I can't do the high hallelujahs either. But pray for what?

[1:06] And why? Is it just to make it today? Well, last week in chapter 10, verse 38, if you've got your Bibles there and just flick across, Ricky reminded us that Jesus and his disciples were on their way, as it says there.

That is, they were on their way to Jerusalem. And along the way, Jesus will not only face opposition, but he will teach his disciples.

Last week, he taught Martha about the priority of listening to Jesus's word. And this week, he teaches his disciples about praying Jesus's way.

But first, what is prayer? Which is point one on your outline. We often describe prayer as talking to God, which is a good description, because it emphasizes the relationship we have with God, doesn't it?

And the Lord's Prayer will emphasize relationship too. But just to get a little bit technical with you, in the Bible, technically, prayer is asking God for things.

[2:12] This is more obvious when we use old English, like, you know, the Jane Austen novels and so on, when they say, I pray you to do this, it really means I ask you to do this.

And in the New Testament, there are three different words in the original that can be used for prayer. And they all appear in this one verse from Philippians 4.

Prayer, petitions, requests. And you notice how petitions and requests, they're all about asking, petitioning, requesting, asking, aren't they? Of course, it also says we should ask with thanksgiving.

It's easy to forget the thanks part, isn't it? But technically, prayer is asking God. And so talking to God can include a number of things.

It can include thanksgiving. Well, it should include thanksgiving, giving thanks. It can include praise, which is saying how great God is. It can include lament, which is crying out to God for help or why.

[3:19] And it can include the obvious, prayer, which is asking God. But notice that prayer is also part of the Christian life. In verse 1 of our passage, we read, One day Jesus was praying in a certain place.

When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, The Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples. Notice the context here. Jesus was praying.

And so that's why his disciples asked him to teach them to pray. This is a different setting to Matthew's gospel, where we also find the Lord's prayer.

In Matthew's gospel, it was part of his Sermon on the Mount, if you remember. Which means that Jesus taught this prayer at least twice on two different occasions.

And it explains why there are some variations. Like in Luke, it's missing a couple of lines, did you notice? Like your will be done.

[4 : 21] It's not in Luke's version. But also notice the obvious, that even Jesus prayed. In fact, he prayed regularly, we are told, in Luke's gospel.

That is, Jesus regularly asked his father for things. He regularly depended on his father in prayer. And so if even Jesus himself did that, then how much more so ought we?

Prayer is part of the Christian life because it was part of Christ's life. We've got to pray. But notice also how Jesus begins in verse 2, where he said to them, When you pray, say, Father.

Now, this doesn't mean we can never pray to Jesus himself. There are four examples in the Bible where people do that. But the usual way is to pray to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.

But the word Father also reminds us of what an extraordinary privilege we have. That God is not distant or disinterested, but he's personal, relational.

[5 : 41] In our first reading, even Moses knew that Israel had a privilege in prayer, as we read from Deuteronomy 4 on the screen there, that God was close to them.

But we have an even greater privilege because Israel never called God Father. But we can. We have an even closer relationship with God, one that comes with direct access anytime, anywhere.

We don't have to go to a priest at the tabernacle or the temple. We can pray directly to God anytime, anywhere. It reminds me of that classic photo of J.F. Kennedy Jr. with the President and his dad.

As President, people had limited access to J.F. Kennedy, didn't they? Not everyone could visit him in the Oval Office, could they? But Junior could.

Why? Well, because the President wasn't just the President. He was also his father. Here's the other classic photo of him poking his head through the bottom of the desk.

[6 : 47] Or so, too, do we have priority access with God because he's our father. Of course, this access was not cheap. It cost Christ his life to give it to us, didn't it?

For his death pays for our sins so that we could not only be forgiven, but also then given a place in God's family where God becomes our father.

Such that we can call God the God of the universe. Like, think about that, the God of the universe. Dad. And we can have priority access to him anytime, anywhere.

You see, the word father reminds us that we have an extraordinary privilege. That we can come to him as our loving father. And so, it's a privilege we'd be crazy not to make the most of, wouldn't we?

We've got to pray. But for what, point two? Well, Jesus gives us some things in the rest of verse two. Jesus goes on to say, Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

[7 : 56] The first request here is for God to hallow his name. And the word hallow literally means to make holy. Holy means to set apart as distinct, different, special.

And so, to pray that God would hallow his name is to ask God to work in the world so that people would set apart his name as special, distinct in their lives, as their only true God.

And that people would stop using God's name as an expletive, you know, oh my God, and start to revere God's name instead. This is one of those big prayers where to pray.

Not just for the car parking spot, which we can pray for as well, but that God would work to convert people so that they would set apart him in their lives as their only God.

This is a similar request to the next one, where Jesus teaches us to pray for God's kingdom to come. That is, to be fully established here on earth so that all people would live under his loving rule.

[9 : 06] According to the website World Population Review, there are about 2.23 billion Christians in the world at the moment. It is still the world's largest religion.

And so that's 2.23 billion people who claim to live under God's loving rule. But there are billions more who are not yet saved, aren't there?

And so Jesus says, pray that God's kingdom would grow, that more people would become Christians and live under God's loving rule, that they would be part of God's kingdom.

And those who already claim to live under it like us would live under it more and more. It's another big prayer. And it's actually even bigger than that, because for God's kingdom to be fully established, then God's people not only need to live under God's loving rule, but also in God's perfect place.

And so to pray for God's kingdom to come is also to pray that God would send his son and with him the new creation, where there'll be no more suffering and death.

[10 : 19] Then his kingdom will be fully established, for then we'll all be God's people, all living perfectly under God's loving rule, in God's perfect place.

Can you imagine that day and how good that will be? Such harmony and bliss. So we got to pray. Jesus then misses the other line about God's will being done, most likely because it's similar to God's kingdom coming.

And so Jesus moves on from focusing on God and the world to God and his church, us. And so he says in verse three and four, to pray, 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.

And so firstly, we're to ask God each day for our daily bread, our provision. And notice the emphasis of each day and daily. It's meant to highlight a dependence on God, where we keep depending on him for our provisions, like Israel depended on God in the wilderness for manna, for their bread each day.

We're also to ask for forgiveness of sins, but with a humble heart that forgives everyone who sins against us, which is not always easy, is it?

[11 : 49] But if we've understood that our forgiveness costs God his only son, then it ought to humble us so we're willing to forgive others when it costs us much less, doesn't it?

Our forgiveness is much bigger and costs God much more. And if we've understood that, we will be willing to forgive others, the much less.

And we ask God to lead us not into temptation, but away from it. Or as Jesus says in Matthew's version, to deliver us from the evil one.

Because it's actually the evil one who tempts us. God never tempts us. The Bible says, James chapter one. It's the devil who does that. In church, of course, we often say save us from the time of trial, don't we?

And that's because the word tempt can also mean test or trial. And when our faith is tested, you know, when we are suffering, we can be tempted to give up, can't we?

[12:56] To not follow God, to not obey him, to not trust in him. And so this request is for God to lead us, not into temptation, but away from it.

To deliver us from the evil one. By giving us strength to resist those temptations, whenever they come, even in a time of trial. That's how he saves us from that time of trial, by giving us strength to resist temptation, and keep trusting in him.

But these are Jesus's concerns for us. And did you notice each other too? That is, we're not just to pray these things for ourselves, but for one another in this room.

Because did you notice that Jesus doesn't say, give me my daily bread, forgive me my sins. No, he says, give us our daily bread, forgive us our sins.

It's corporate, isn't it? And so we're to pray, not just for ourselves, but also for each other. And so these are the things that Jesus teaches us to pray.

[14:10] So that does that mean then, we cannot pray for other things. Like little Sam, who said, dear God, I want to be just like my daddy when I get big, but not with so much hair all over.

Sam. Now, is he wrong to pray for that? Well, no, because remember our verse from the start. We're not to be anxious about anything.

In other words, we're to pray about everything, every situation. We're to cast all our anxiety upon God, whatever it is. And so we can cast our anxieties, even if they are for less hair, or perhaps more hair, or even the car parking spot.

But we ought to include these things here too. For these are Christ's concerns for the world and for us. But why these things?

I mean, if you had to pick your top five prayer points, would they have been these ones in the Lord's prayer? Top five prayer points for a lot of people would be health, wealth, happiness, family, work.

[15:17] I'm not sure I'd pick these five things that Jesus does here myself. But you see, all these things are about having a right relationship with God.

Where people become Christians who hallow God's name in their lives, and live under God's rule. Our prayer is about asking for forgiveness for sin, and help not to be led into sin, but away from it.

Because sin ruins relationship. Even our daily bread is about depending on God, each day, daily, for our provision. It's all about having a right relationship with God, isn't it?

Because this is what God created the world for, to have a right relationship with us. But we need his help, so we got to pray. Not just to make it today, but to relate rightly.

Today. Doesn't quite wrap as nicely, but theologically, it's right. Of course, if you're anything like me, my prayer life is up and down. And so Jesus now gives us some encouragement to pray.

[16:23] Point three, verse five. Then Jesus said to them, suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight, and say, friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because another friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.

And suppose the one inside answers, don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything. I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity, he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

Now, in Jesus' culture, as we heard from Ricky last week, as in Indonesian culture and many cultures, hospitality was huge. And so if a traveler calls in, even at midnight, you as the host were to offer something to eat, and even a place to stay.

But here, the host's cupboard is bare, isn't it? It's empty. This actually happened to someone in a Bible study group of mine two weeks ago. They are from a Greek culture, which is where hospitality is big, and they got some friends who rang her up late at night and said, oh, we're coming to visit.

And she goes, I've got nothing at home to give you. And so she had to go and knock on her mother's house late at night for food. But this host goes to his friend's house, who is understandably in bed.

[17:55] I mean, it's midnight after all. But in verse eight, we read that he will get up and help the host, not because of their friendship, but because of the host's shameless audacity in banging on the door at midnight, loudly, because being a host was more important than waking everyone up.

Now, in this parable, God is not the grumpy guy inside. We've already been told he's our loving father, and we'll see that again. And so the parallel is not between God and the grumpy guy, but between the host and us.

Jesus is encouraging us to pray, even with shameless audacity, with boldness, in other words, and even persistence, because, you know, continue the knock on the door late at night, persistently.

Well, that requires being bold too, doesn't it? And we need to hear this, because sometimes we may not pray, pray, because the prayer seems just too big.

After all, Jesus has mentioned some pretty big prayers, hasn't he? Like for God's kingdom to come, to grow. But according to the last census, it feels like God's kingdom in Australia is not growing, but shrinking.

[19:15] And so it can feel like an impossible prayer to pray. But we're to be bold and pray it, with shameless audacity. Or even if our loved one's health is so bad, it can seem impossible to pray for.

But be bold and pray it, with shameless audacity. Though our prayers for their health, ought to also be shaped by the Lord's prayer. Which means we should especially pray, that God would not lead them into temptation, but save them from their trial.

That is, help them to keep trusting, and not fall into temptation, during their suffering. But even for their health, we can be bold and pray, with shameless audacity.

For this grumpy guy will answer the host, not because of friendship, but because of boldness. And if a grumpy guy will do it, then how much more so, a loving heavenly father? Which is exactly what Jesus goes on to say.

So verse nine, he says, Do you see what Jesus is saying?

[20:33] We can be bold, we can knock on the door at midnight, because God will answer. He will open the door. In fact, Jesus says the same thing six times, three in verse nine, and three in verse ten, just so we don't miss the point.

God will answer. Now at this point, I'm guessing most of us have thought now, but I have asked boldly, and he did not answer.

Unlike Joyce, who prayed, Dear God, thank you for the baby brother, but what I prayed for was a puppy. But the thing is, God has answered.

It's just that his answer may have been, no, or not yet. And there are a few reasons. Let me quickly give you two, because we've all experienced this kind of thing before.

At first, God can see the bigger picture, and we can't. And like Joyce's parents, perhaps he knows that Joyce will end up neglecting the puppy, and the parents will have to end up looking after it, like has happened with a pet rabbit I know of.

[21:41] We might think that God should do what we ask, because it's a no-brainer. Like, why wouldn't I? There's no problem. I can't see any problem. But that's the thing. We can't see any problem, but God can see the bigger picture.

We have no idea what sort of domino effects happen. A second, he may answer no or not yet, to grow us more like Christ. Imagine you prayed for a million dollars.

Actually, it doesn't go far these days, does it? Imagine you prayed for 10 million dollars, and God said yes. You're all thinking how good that would be, aren't you?

But would it be good? Over time, would that actually help you grow in trust and dependence on God? more or less? You'd be more likely to trust more in your healthy bank balance, wouldn't you?

I was talking with someone from church who was diagnosed with a degenerative disease last year, I think it was, or the end of the year before, and no doubt they prayed that God might heal them. And so far, the answer has been not yet.

[22:48] And it may be not yet until the resurrection, when they get a new body. But they told me, it's made them more thankful to God for the things they can still do.

And he said, this is what he said, the less I'm able to do, the more thankful I've become for what I can still do. How good is that? You see, God sometimes says no or not yet to grow us as Christians.

Whatever the reason, we can be certain, God always answers for our good. Because he only gives good gifts.

Verse 11. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion instead?

None of you, of course. So verse 13. If you then, you earthly fathers, though you are evil, still know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so, will your father in heaven, give the Holy Spirit to those, who ask him?

[23:58] Now we'd expect Jesus to say, how much more so, would your father in heaven, give good gifts to those, who ask him? And Jesus does actually say that, in Matthew's version. And so why on this occasion, does he say, give the Holy Spirit?

Well, because the Holy Spirit is an example, of a very good gift. But also because it helps us understand, what Jesus means by good. He means our spiritual good.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus' primary concern, is for our spiritual good, a right relationship with God. And the Spirit is the one, who helps us with that. Oh true, God's gifts are sometimes, for our physical good too, but they are always, for our spiritual good.

Even if we can't see it at the time. They're always to help us, keep trusting and growing in Christ, because that's what matters most. Our bodies, can only ever give us, limited life, can't they?

But Jesus gives us, eternal life. So which do you think, is more important? Peter prayed, dear God, please send Dennis Clark, to a different camp this year.

[25:15] I'm not sure how God answered, his prayer. But however he did, it will be for his spiritual good, to grow him. And we can pray, for anything. We can pray for anything, that concerns us.

But our passage today, reminds us, we are especially, to pray for the things, that Jesus taught us. And we're to pray with boldness, for God always answers, and his answers, whether they're yes, no or not yet, are always, for our spiritual good.

And so, we got to pray. Let's start, by saying, the Lord's Prayer. Together, Father, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today, our daily bread, forgive us our sins, as we forgive those, who sin against us, save us from the time of trial, and deliver us, from the evil one.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Thank you.