

Praying to the Father

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[0 : 00] In the passage we read together in Luke 11, we read that Jesus very often rose early in the morning and went to pray.

And also, he had been praying all night. He was praying in a certain place. We know that prayer was very important to Jesus.

And after he had been praying this time, his disciples said, Lord, teach us to pray. It was as if they were saying, Lord, how can you spend so long in prayer?

And teach us to pray. Teach us to pray. And Jesus gave them the passage that we know as the Lord's Prayer. And I looked at this passage the last time I preached here.

We looked at it in Matthew. And we saw that prayer was part, is part of the Christian's life. It's the first thing a new Christian will do.

[1 : 08] He or she will pray because he wants to speak to his heavenly father or her heavenly father. When Saul became a Christian, when he met Jesus on the Damascus Road, and the Lord spoke to Ananias and said, Go and see Saul.

Go and see Saul. Because he prays. He's praying. The first thing we know about Saul, who became Paul, was that he was praying. A Christian who doesn't pray is as hard to imagine as a living person who doesn't breathe.

And we saw in that passage in Matthew chapter 6, that when Jesus taught them to pray, the first thing he did was to teach them what not to do.

He said, when you're praying, don't pray to impress others. That's not what it's about. Don't pray long prayers, thinking you'll persuade God by going on and on and on.

And don't be preoccupied by methodology in prayer, thinking if I just get the words right, God is bound to answer, as if prayer is like magic.

[2 : 16] All of these are misunderstandings of prayer. And I want to think again about prayer. I want to carry on down and look at the first line of the Lord's Prayer, as it is in Matthew 6.

In a moment we'll have a look at that. Because prayer is communion with God. Prayer is the highest activity of the human soul because in prayer we're in communion with our Maker.

Someone has said that man is at his greatest and highest when on his knees he comes face to face with God, his Creator. And when I say this, I feel very small indeed.

And I'm very insignificant on this scale because I'm very definitely a beginner in the school of prayer. Robert Murray McShane, who many of us have heard of and have read his stuff, he apparently once said, if you want to humble Christians, ask them about their prayer life.

Ask them about their prayer life. And how true that is. Nothing tells the truth about our Christian life more clearly than our prayer life. Everything we do is easier than prayer.

[3 : 40] It's easier to preach than to pray. It's easier to preach about prayer than to pray. It's easier to put yourself out to help others than to pray. It's easier to give money than to pray.

It's easier to speak to others even than to pray. So it's a good thing from time to time to return to the foundations and to ask with the disciples, Lord, teach me to pray.

Lord, teach me to pray. In Matthew 6, verse 9, after teaching them what not to do, Jesus said, when you pray, pray then like this.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done. We know the prayer very well. And Jesus didn't mean simply we should repeat this parrot fashion over and over again.

It's not that. It's a template, a pattern, a model for us covering all the elements of prayer because prayer is worship.

[4 : 50] When we come to God, hallowed be your name. Prayer is confession, confession of sins. Prayer contains a concern for God's glory.

Your kingdom come. And prayer also contains asking for our own needs. So it's not something to be repeated thoughtlessly.

It's just a pattern to remind us what we're doing and what we should be doing when we pray. And the first line of this prayer, this is all we're going to get done today.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. It reminds us, first of all, who we're praying to. Our Heavenly Father.

Our Heavenly Father. God, the creator and sustainer of all things. The one who sits and throned in the heavens. The one who, in the beginning, created the heavens and the earth.

[5 : 54] That's who we're coming to in prayer. The one before whom the angels veil their faces. And yet we come to Him and Jesus said, come to Him and call Him your Father.

Now we find Father is used for God all through the Bible. In the Old Testament, right back in Deuteronomy, we read, Do you thus repay the Lord, you foolish and senseless people? Is He not your Father who created you, who made you and established you? Those well-known verses in Psalm 103, As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord shows compassion in those who fear Him.

For He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust. So, in the Old Testament, God is called Father. But mostly, He's called Father in the sense that He's the creator of all things.

He's the creator of all things. But Jesus, in the New Testament, in the New Covenant, He came and He deepened that, our understanding of the fatherhood of God and enriched that term to reflect a much more personal relationship.

[7 : 12] For a start, He introduced us to forgiveness and adoption, that we're adopted into the family of God. Romans 8, 15, You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. So, one of the ways that makes the New Testament or New Covenant new and rich is the added richness that is revealed about the fatherhood of God.

The fatherhood of God and our adoption and our sonship are at the heart of that new covenant that Jesus came to reveal. J.I. Packer wrote, You sum up the whole of the New Testament teaching in a single phrase if you speak it as a revelation of the fatherhood of the Holy Creator.

So, we pray to our heavenly father. We pray to the one who made us but who is our heavenly father.

In John 1 verse 12 we read that all who receive Jesus who believe in his name he give the right to become children of God. So, in Christ we are children of God.

[8 : 44] In Christ we have the Holy Spirit who witnesses to our spirits Abba Father members of the family of God and we dare to call him Father because Jesus taught him to call him Father.

What wonderful love. See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God and so we are.

So, we are children coming to our Father in prayer. And the assurance the knowledge that God is my Father that I am his child that we are his children is the whole basis of Christian prayer.

It's what gives us confidence to come to God. In Luke 11 Jesus told the story about the man who was in his bed asleep and his neighbour came knocking on the door saying I have nothing to put in front of visitors.

Could you give me something? And the man doesn't want to get up. But he says even though he doesn't want to get up he will because of the man's need and the fact that he came and he asked him he'll get up.

[9 : 52] How much more? How much more? Will our Heavenly Father answer us? He's never asleep. He's never inconvenient.

He's always listening. And he said as well if you're evil and you know how to give good things to your children you wouldn't give a serpent if your child asks for bread you wouldn't give a scorpion if he asks for fish.

No, no. You would give him what he asks for. You'd give him food. How much more? Those wonderful words. How much more will your Heavenly Father give you good things and give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

What amazing love. What amazing love. What manner of love is it that we should be called children of God. A hymn writer wrote Father t'was thy love that knew us earth's foundations long before. That same love to Jesus drew us with its sweet constraining power and will keep us safely now and evermore. Pause my soul.

[11:04] Adore and wonder. Ask oh why such love to me. Grace has put me in the number of the Saviour's family. Hallelujah.

Thanks. Eternal thanks to thee. Grace has put us as Christians grace has put us in the number of the Saviour's family.

We pray to our Father. Now many people pray who don't know God as their Saviour and God as Jesus as the Saviour and God as their Father. But that isn't Christian prayer.

Some parts of the world people pray to the spirits of their ancestors. Our Muslim friends pray to Allah but they don't know him as a father or Jesus as a Saviour.

Some people say oh I always pray I couldn't live without prayer but they don't know Jesus as their Saviour. They don't know God as their Father. They sort of pray to an unknown God.

[12:04] They go through a kind of daily ritual. Only those who know Jesus as Saviour and Lord can call God a Father. Can call God a Father.

But this reminds us that we aren't naturally children of God. We aren't naturally children of God. we are born the children of wrath.

The children of this world rebels and strangers to God and we have to be born into the family of God. Into the kingdom of God before we can become children of God.

So this reminds us you see again that we've been adopted as believers. We've been adopted into the family of God and received that spirit of adoption and can say Abba Father.

If we haven't the spirit of adoption we can't call God Father. If we haven't come as sinners to Jesus and received him as Lord and Saviour we can't call God Father.

[13:11] But if we have when we have and for those of us who know Jesus as Saviour we do call him Father. There's a wonderful little incident after Jesus' resurrection when he spoke to Mary Magdalene and he said to God tell the disciples that he was risen and he said go to my brothers and tell them I'm returning to my Father and your Father to my God and your God my Father and your Father isn't that wonderful my God and your God Jesus our elder brother God our Father and Jesus calling us his brothers now he's the eternal son of God and we're adopted children but he calls us his brothers and tells us to call God our Father so we come to our Father we come to our Father in heaven we're bowing before the

King of Kings and Lord of Lords and we pray we're entering into the audience chamber of God the great creator the almighty eternal one the consuming fire the majestic one before whom the angels hide their faces in Isaiah 6 where Isaiah had his vision of God and the seraphim were there and they called one to another and said holy holy holy is the Lord of hosts the whole earth is full of his glory and they cover their faces in the presence of God the one who is of pure our eyes and to look on iniquity he knows all about us he knows all our thoughts all our actions done in secret before a word is on our tongue he knows it all together nothing is hidden from him and yet we can approach him in humility because of what

Jesus has done because we've been adopted into his family Jesus has made the way for us to come to God how could sinners dare to approach God who's a consuming fire how could we dare it if Jesus had not made a way but he did make the way didn't he and he told us to come he told us to come in his name in John 16 23 and 24 Jesus said whatever you ask in my name you will get you will you will you will have it ask and you will receive and when we close our prayers in Jesus name it isn't a sort of magic formula it's not like abracadabra you know when they send pantomites it's not a magic formula we pray when we pray in Jesus name we're acknowledging that all our hope all our confidence is on what Jesus has done we're saying

I come to you Father trusting only in what Jesus has done trusting only in his merits not my own he is my redeemer he is my high priest he is my substitute who died for me he is the one who has made entry into the presence of the eternal God possible I come and I pray in his name in his name I come to the eternal God in his name there's a wonderful hymn eternal light eternal light how pure the soul must be when placed within thy searching light it shrinks not but with calm delight can live and look on thee the spirits that surround thy throne may bear the burning bliss but that is surely theirs alone since they have never never known a fallen world like this oh how can I whose native sphere is dark whose mind is dim before the ineffable appear and on my natural spirit bear that

uncreated beam there is a way for man to rise to the sublime abode an offering and a sacrifice a holy spirit's energies an advocate with God these these prepare us for the sight of holiness above the sons of ignorance and night may dwell in the eternal light through the eternal love the sons of ignorance and night may dwell in the eternal light through the eternal love so when we come to God in prayer our father who is in heaven we remind ourselves who we are and we humble ourselves before

God but the wonder of the gospel is that this relationship between the infinite thrice holy God and a small sinful man or woman or young person is like a child speaking to his father because Jesus has brought us into God's family and God is our father and he knows what we need before we ask him just as a father cares for his child just as a father knows what the child needs really before the child even gets around to asking so God is a father to all who are in Christ Jesus in verse 8 Matthew 6 in verse 8 Jesus says don't be like those folk who are repeating and going on and on and on he says your father knows what you need before you ask him so we approach with confidence your father knows what you need before you ask him confidence because we have got that assurance that [19:39] God really is our father what a wonderful thing to be able to come to the southern universe and call him father so we come knowing that he's our father but we come as God's children with confidence because well we know that he delights to bless us much more even than an earthly father we know he's more ready to give than we are to ask we know he's totally concerned about our welfare he looks down from heaven to show himself strong on our behalf he cares for the birds he cares for the flowers how much more does he care for us and we know that he hears us seek my face he said yes Lord your face will we seek he knows about our needs even before we ask him and we come with confidence because with him all things are possible he is the king of kings and lord of lords he is the infinite eternal

God nothing is impossible with God so we come with confidence now some people might ask well if God already knows what we need why do we need to pray well we need to pray first of all because God has told us to pray seek ye my face Jesus prayed and set us an example to pray secondly God God God God God God God has created us for him for himself and he wants us to come into his presence in prayer so when we come as children to our father that's part of that relationship that's forming that relationship that's because we want to have that relationship and he wants that relationship it's an amazing thing that God gets pleasure out of having a relationship with you and me isn't that amazing in

Proverbs when wisdom is speaking about the creation of the world wisdom said he was rejoicing in mankind God rejoices in his relationship with his people with us and thirdly we pray because God has promised to hear and to answer prayer Jesus said some things we do not have because we don't ask some things we don't have because we don't ask so we ask because prayer changes things and because we have been told we must come to our heavenly father so we approach with confidence because our father has purchased our ultimate good in the death of Christ and how much more will he not hear us in our lesser needs Jesus said when you pray pray like this our father in heaven we pray to our father we pray to our father in heaven our

God we pray with humility and with confidence how much we miss because we do not pray as we should may God make us a people of prayer may God make us a congregation who pray that this church might be a church of a people a people who pray may God make us a people of prayer let's pray father we do thank you now that we can call you father that we come as children to our father come knowing that you know our needs before we even ask them you know before there's even word in our tongue you know what it's going to be and Lord we thank you that you love to bless we thank you Lord for the privilege of prayer forgive us Lord that we are not the people of prayer that we ought to be forgive me

Lord that I'm not the man of prayer that I ought to be and come among us Lord and make us a people who pray and father how we thank you that you are a God who hears and answers prayer bless your word to all our hearts this morning Lord write it on our hearts we pray we ask it in Jesus name amen let's sing from sing psalms 103 which is on page 135 on page 135 sing psalms 103 and we're going to sing from verse 8 to the end of the psalm the Lord is merciful and kind to anger slow and full of grace he will not constantly reprove or in his anger hide his face he does not punish our misdeeds or give our sins our just reward how great is love as high as heaven towards all those who fear the

[25 : 16] Lord then in verse 13 we read just as a father loves his child let's praise God together psalm 103 verse 8 and sing songs